

DRAFT
Improvement of Fish Salvage Operations

Description

Fish salvage operations return fish entrained at the export pumps to the Delta through transport by tanker trucks. Currently, salvage operations occur only at the export pumping plants of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the State Water Project (SWP) in the south Delta. Fish are trucked to the west Delta where they will not be reentrained. Fish entrained at other diversions are returned to the river at the point of entrainment, so no transport is required. Salvage operations have been incrementally improved in recent years, but further improvements may reduce further losses of fish.

This category includes the following actions:

- improve design of salvage facilities,
- improve operation of salvage facilities, and
- improve fish hauling and release procedures.

Purpose

Improvements in fish salvage operations could increase the health and survival rates of certain species of anadromous and resident fish that are collected at CVP and SWP pumping plants and would result in the take of fewer endangered species. Increases in health and survival of salvaged fish would contribute to enhanced populations of these species.

Constraints

In general, modifications to improve fish salvage operations are likely to have relatively little incremental benefit to the fish populations susceptible to salvage. Changes in the location of diversions are more likely to improve fish survival and to meet other Bay-Delta objectives. Improved salvage of some non-native fishes, such as striped bass, may reduce survival of species of special concern, such as delta smelt and winter-run chinook salmon. New physical facilities and equipment are costly; improved handling and hauling procedures are likely to be both costly and labor intensive.

Linkages to Other CALFED Action Categories

Improvements in fish salvage operations could be implemented in combination with improved fish screens to greatly reduce the take of fish and reduce the cost of salvage operations. In addition, these actions could be combined with changing the location of the Delta export diversions so that fewer fish are entrained.

Linkages to Other CALFED Action Categories

Actions to remove and control aquatic predators can be made more effective by being linked with on-stream storage (to reserve flows for critical periods of vulnerable native species), management of agricultural drainage (to avoid warmwater discharges to sensitive river reaches during critical periods), and changes in harvest regulations (to increase recreational take limits for non-native fish that prey on native species).