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Nov 20, 1999
Gates opens @ Dec. 15, 1999

January 11, 2000

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Chronological Account of Recent Delta Cross-Channel Gates Operations and Related CVP and SWP Operations Decision-Making

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This memo provides an account of recent operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, including the Delta Cross-Channel gate operations and to describe the CALFED Ops Group process for making decisions regarding CVP and SWP operations. It chronicles the discussions, recommendations and basis for the decisions made during the later part of November and early December. The basis for many of those decisions is not easily separated from other factors. For example, DCC closures are governed by several agreements and regulatory mechanisms including the Delta Accord, biological opinion for winter-run chinook salmon, and the State Water Resources Control Board water right order 98-9. DCC operations are also covered in the CALFED Ops Group Spring-run Protection Plan.

California
· Department of
Fish and Game
· Department
of Water Resources
· State Water
Resources Control
Board staff

The SRPP was first developed in 1996 to provide additional protection for emigrating spring-run yearlings. In 1997, a new strategy for protecting spring-run by operating the DCC gates based on real-time fishery, hydrologic, and water quality data was developed. This strategy was also incorporated into the Anadromous Fish Restoration Plan as Delta Action #6. The plan was updated again in 1998 (no additional changes were made to the plan for 1999).

Federal
· Fish and Wildlife
Service
· Environmental
Protection Agency
· National Marine
Fisheries Service
· Bureau of
Reclamation

Currently, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Water Resources are in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and Department of Fish and Game for protection of spring-run. The spring-run race of chinook was listed by the State Fish and Game Commission as a threatened species under the California Endangered Species Act in February 1999. NMFS listed it as a threatened species under the federal ESA in October 1999. DWR and USBR began consultation on a one-year opinion from NMFS and a one-year permit from DFG in the winter of 1999. A final opinion and permit are expected soon.

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The USBR owns the DCC gates and has transferred on-site responsibility for DCC gates operations to the San Luis Delta-Mendota Canal Authority. While USBR retains ultimate responsibility for decision-making for DCC gate operations, USBR must operate the DCC gates consistent with the provisions of the regulatory mechanisms mentioned above. The USBR is also compelled to coordinate the gate operations with NMFS as part of the ongoing consultation on spring-run. Ensuring compliance with the above provisions, which are sometimes in conflict, requires USBR to coordinate DCC gate operations closely with potentially affected State and federal agencies and stakeholders. Such coordination occurs on an as needed basis to ensure that DCC gate operations are carried out based on the most up-to-date fishery and water quality information. This coordination primarily occurs within the CALFED Ops Group and its various subgroups that include the Data Assessment Team, the No Name Group, and the CALFED Water Operations Management Team.

Enclosed is a detailed account of decisions made and the basis for those decisions. We have also enclosed summaries of the Data Assessment Team and No-name Group discussions regarding salmon protection and a summary of water quality and operational data.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call Larry Gage at (916) 653-8583 or Lowell Ploss at (916) 979-2199.

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Enclosures