

April 8, 2015

FILE MEMORANDUM

FROM: Gary Fredricks, NOAA Fisheries

SUBJECT: Minimum Smolt Condition Monitoring

The 2008 FCRPS BiOp RM&E Strategy 2 includes RPA #53 which states that the Action Agencies shall “Monitor and document the condition (e.g., descaling and injury) of smolts at all dams with JBS systems, identify potential problems, and evaluate implemented solutions.” This required action does not stipulate the level of monitoring necessary to achieve the condition monitoring goals and under most cases, the ongoing Smolt Monitoring Program index sampling has been sufficient. However, there have been a couple of instances where smolt condition monitoring and reporting have become an issue, either at projects where the SMP index sampling does not occur or at projects where this monitoring is postponed for a portion of the juvenile migration season. It is important to NOAA Fisheries that the intent of RPA #53 be achieved at all JBS equipped dams under all cases during the migration season. Therefore, it seems prudent that some guidelines establishing minimum sampling and reporting requirements be included in the Fish Passage Plan which, by reference, is a working part of the Biological Opinion.

These requirements can either take the form of a blanket minimum that applies to all dams with JBS systems or they can be tailored to fit the circumstances at each dam. My preference is to work with the Action Agencies and the regional fishery managers to establish and maintain project specific requirements.

It should be noted that this requirement would not affect the SMP index sampling where that activity already meets or exceeds requirements for minimum condition sampling.

Specifically, for each JBS equipped dam, I suggest that a FPOM task group work out the minimum sampling frequency in terms of days and hours per day, the minimum number of fish per species or predominate species, and reporting schedule, content and routing. This group should also further define the term “condition” stated in the RPA language.

The overall goal should be to minimize the number of fish sampled and the impacts to those sampled fish while maintaining a reasonable estimate of JBS facility impacts. It will be important to keep in mind the terms and conditions of NOAA’s take determination permit for smolt monitoring of ESA listed fish.

This FPP change would primarily effect the 2016 migration season, however, some aspects might be easily adopted by the current 2015 monitoring effort.