

# ROC on LTO BiOp and Preliminary Effects Analysis Briefing

Director-level Briefing  
May 6, 2019

**Draft May 3**

# Species and Critical Habitat

## Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon and Critical Habitat

- Endangered

## Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon and Critical Habitat

- Threatened

## California Central Valley steelhead and Critical Habitat

- Threatened

## Southern DPS Green Sturgeon and Critical Habitat

- Threatened

## Southern Resident Killer Whale

- Endangered

# Shasta Reservoir Cold Water Pool Management

**Location:** Sacramento River between Keswick Reservoir and Clear Creek

**Species/Life Stages most affected:** Endangered winter-run egg incubation early fry

**Response:** Temperature dependent mortality (showing the widest range of 25 and 75 percentiles for 2 different models)

- **Tier 1:** 0-6% ~68% of years
- **Tier 2:** 2-26% ~17% of years
- **Tier 3:** 7-59% ~7% of years
- **Tier 4:** 70-93% ~7% of years

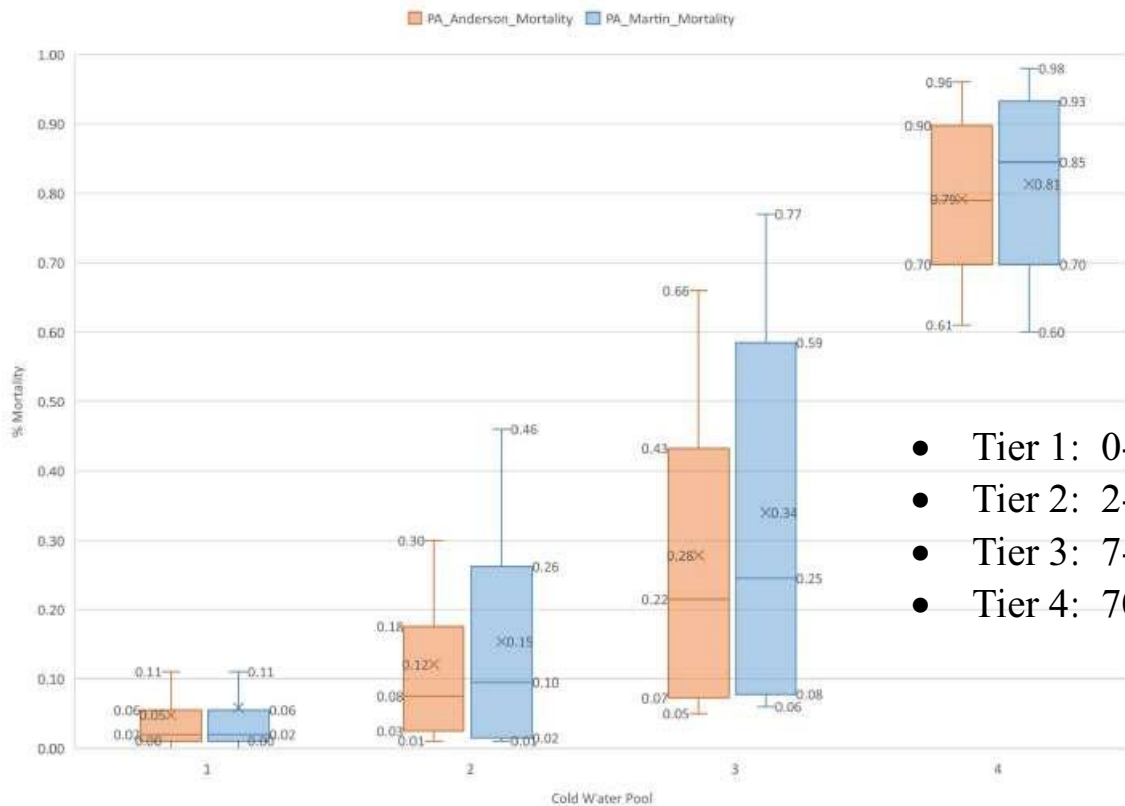
**Severity of Response:** High

**Weight of evidence:** High-supported by multiple models and scientific publications

**Talking points/areas of concern:**

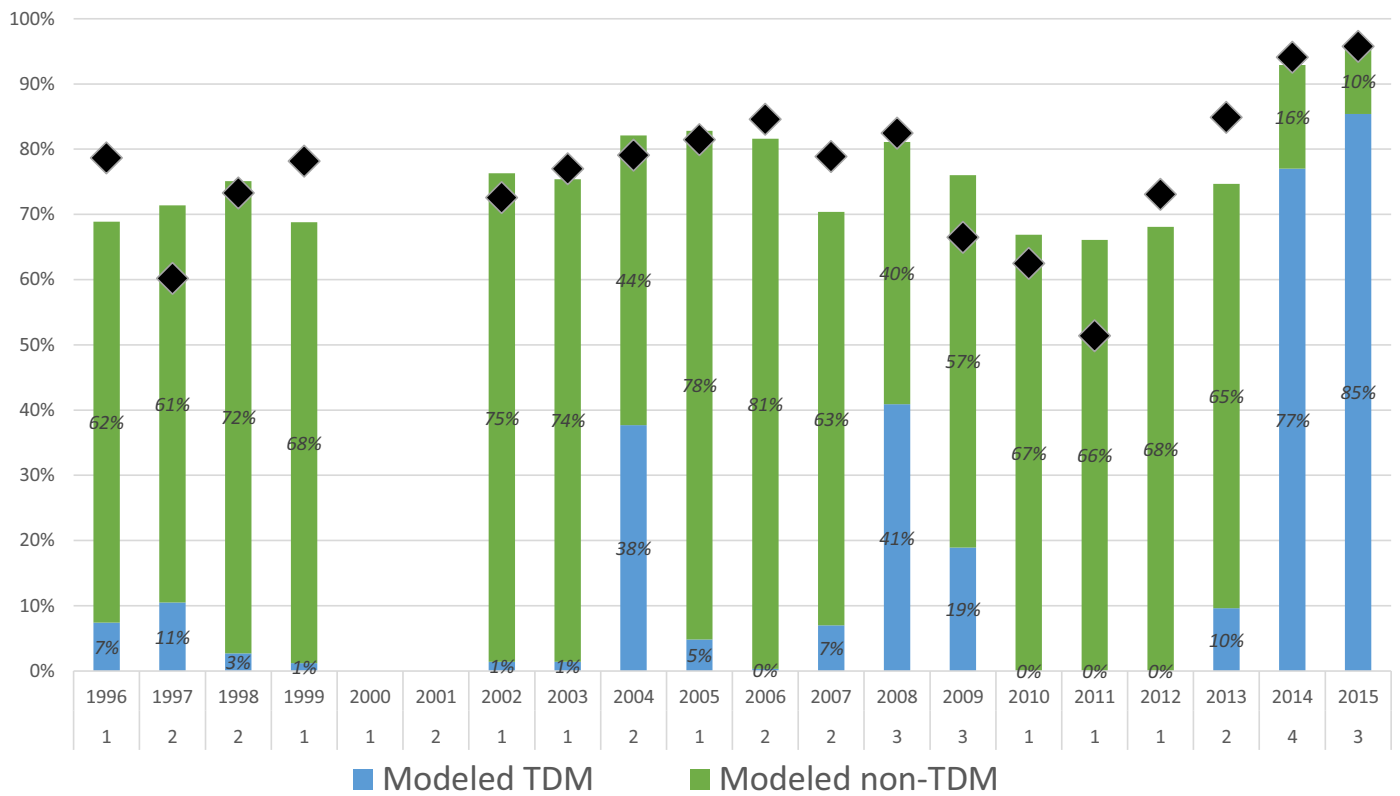
- No specific performance metrics.
- No clear strategy or commitment to build storage, especially in spring months
- There is no commitment to stay within a given Tier for Shasta Cold Water Pool Management. Therefore, the modeled temperature dependent egg mortality in Reclamation's biological assessment levels are skewed low.
- The Anderson approach for hatch protection is novel and untested.
- The characterization of current operations, COS, and the PA in physical modeling

# Temperature-dependent egg mortality by Tier



- Tier 1: 0-6% ~68% of years
- Tier 2: 2-26% ~17% of years
- Tier 3: 7-59% ~7% of years
- Tier 4: 70-93% ~7% of years

# Shasta: Tier Performance 1996-2015



Tier 1: 45%    Tier 2: 35%    Tier 3: 15%    Tier 4: 5%

# Spring Seasonal Operations

**Location:** Sacramento River – upper reaches

**Species/Life Stages most affected:** Endangered winter-run egg incubation early fry

**Winter-run Response:** Latent effects on temperature dependent mortality

**Severity of Response:** High

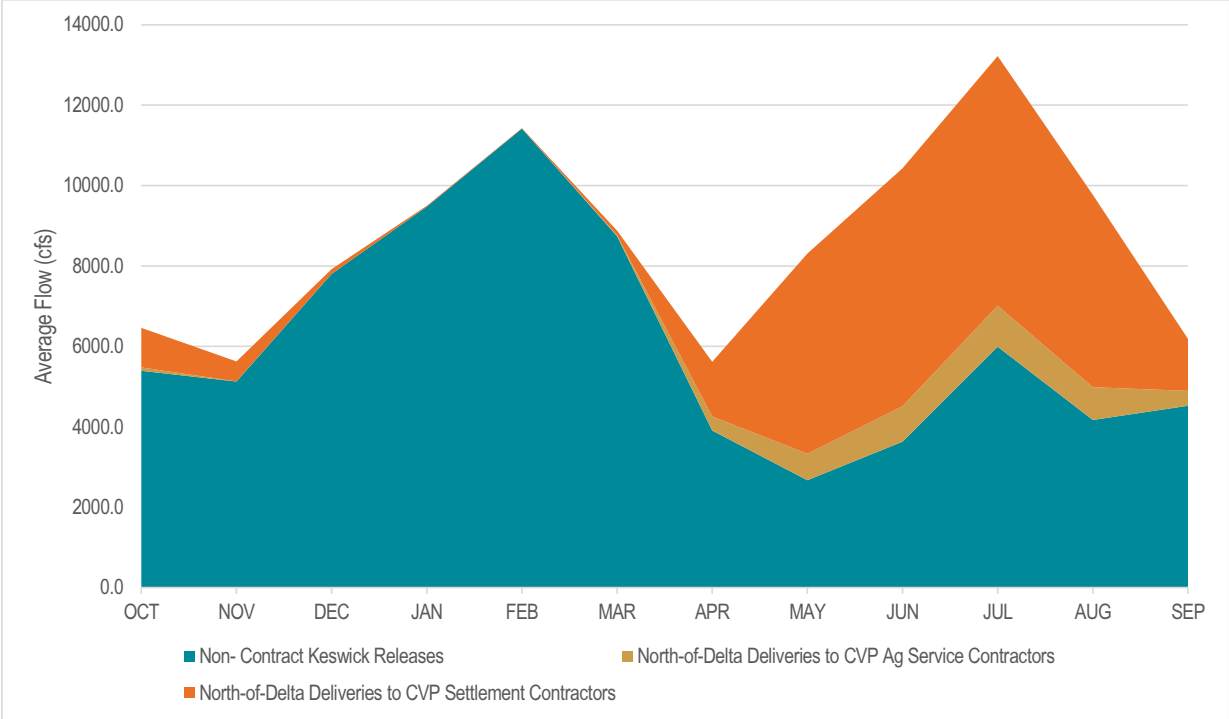
**Weight of evidence:** High: Supported by modeling results and review of past practices

**Talking points/areas of concern:**

- The COS modeling does not reduce deliveries to north-of-Delta discretionary agricultural service contractors, an action that is an option in annual operations.
- The COS does not prioritize releases from Folsom and Oroville reservoirs (rather than Shasta releases) to meet in-Delta water quality or flow requirements; this is a management option and mandate for current operations.
- The COS model does not reflect management options to limit Keswick releases to 7,500 cfs or less in June and July of dry and critical years, and it does not characterize the potential to change the temperature compliance point during drier years.
- By not characterizing these actions in the COS modeling, the resulting comparisons of Shasta Reservoir storage for the PA versus the COS are skewed low.
- This lack of certainty in process to protect Shasta Reservoir storage and build its cold water pool, increases the risk to the species regarding upstream temperature management.

# Depicting Shasta Uncertainties

Proportion of monthly flows below Keswick, as either north-of-Delta deliveries to CVP Settlement Contractors, North-of-Delta deliveries to CVP Agricultural Service Contractors, or Non-Contract Keswick releases.



## Delta Cross Channel Operations

**Location:** Delta at the Delta Cross Channel Gates

**Species/Life Stages most affected:** Winter-run smolts but spring-run and steelhead also affected

**Response:** Mortality due to routing and altered hydrodynamics into the delta interior

- Effects exist from October-April
- DCC may be open 10 additional days Dec-Jan in all years
- If the 10 additional days corresponds with a pulse of endangered winter-run then the magnitude of effect could be very high

**Severity of Response:** Variable, Low to medium under most conditions, but potentially very high

**Weight of evidence:** High - There are a number of publications regarding the relative survival in various North Delta and Central Delta migratory routes; conclusions supported by modeling results.

**Talking points/areas of concern:**

- The potential for the DCC to be open an additional 10 days in Dec-Jan has the potential to expose and entrain winter-run into the south Delta, resulting in lethal effects. Depending on the exposure, the severity of effect could be quite high.



## South Delta Operations: CVP/SWP Exports

**Location:** Sacramento River, SJ River, Delta

**Species/Life Stages most affected:** Spring-run, steelhead, winter-run,

**Response:** Mortality related to routing effects from altered hydrodynamics into the delta interior (predation) and entrainment loss at the pumping facilities

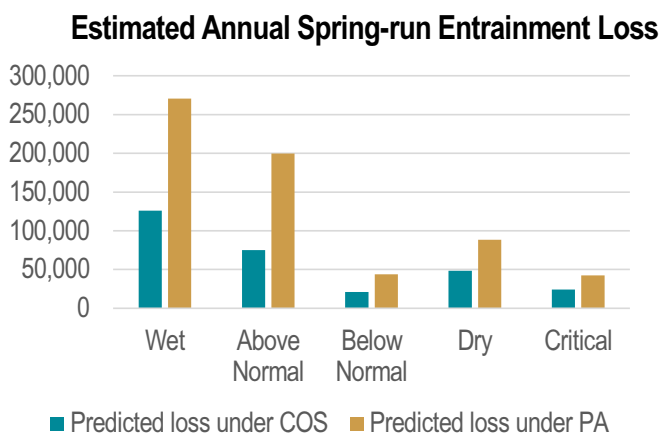
- Effects occur from October through May and most significant for spring-run and steelhead in April and May
- Spring-run
  - April: 162% increase
  - May: 133% increase
- Steelhead
  - April: 165% increase
  - May: 134% increase

**Severity of Response:** High

**Weight of evidence:** High

**Talking points/areas of concern:**

- Higher export levels, increased negative OMR flows
- Effects exacerbated by no South Delta steelhead protection measures



# Modeled monthly loss at export facilities

CV spring-run Chinook salmon				
Month	Predicted loss under COS	Predicted loss under PA	PA-COS	% change
October	31	45	15	48
November	0	0	0	--
December	0	0	0	--
January	0	0	0	--
February	879	919	39	4
March	27,504	25,787	-1,717	-6
April	64,198	168,313	104,115	162
May	31,710	74,038	42,328	133
June	1,650	1,657	7	0
July	0	0	0	--
August	0	0	0	--
September	0	0	0	--

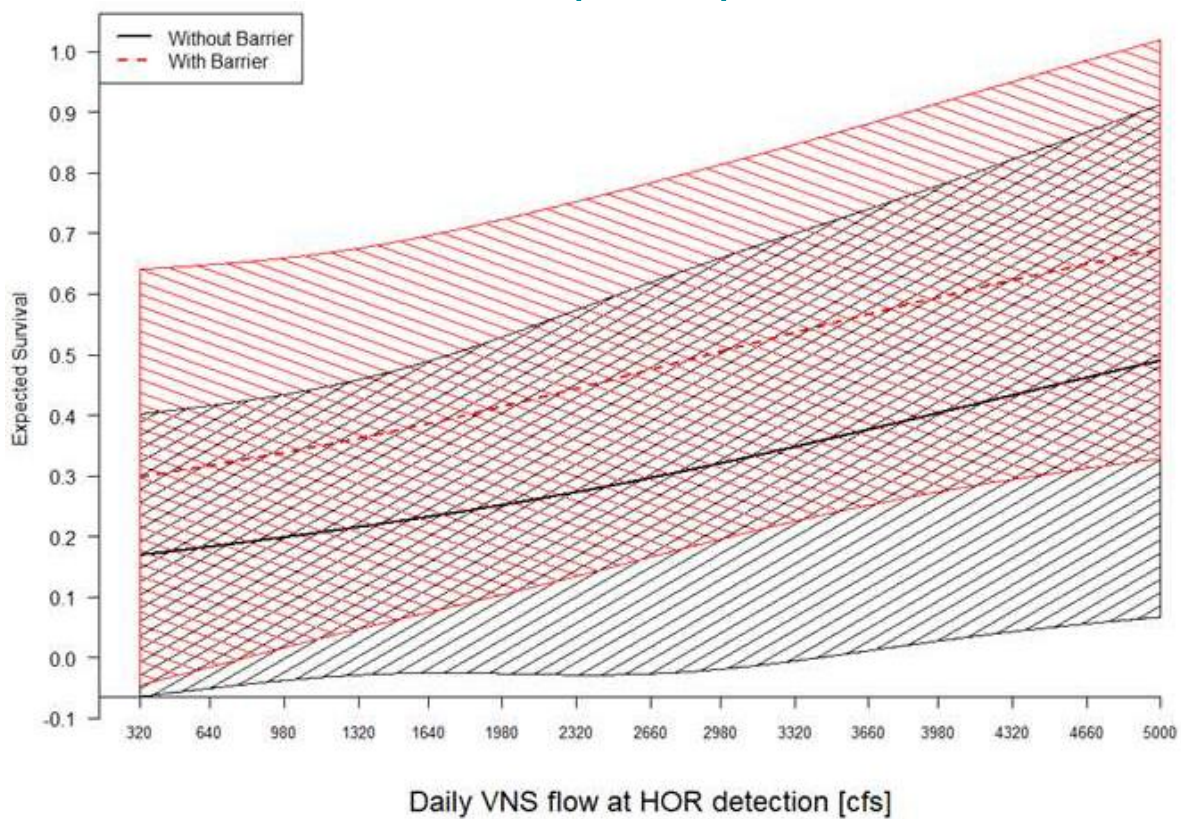
CCV steelhead				
Month	Predicted loss under COS	Predicted loss under PA	PA-COS	% change
October	175	260	85	48
November	52	60	9	17
December	167	147	-21	-12
January	5,558	5,927	369	7
February	6,696	6,992	296	4
March	7,197	6,731	-466	-6
April	2,108	5,586	3,478	165
May	1,326	3,109	1,783	134
June	975	982	7	1
July	37	36	0	-1
August	12	12	0	-1
September	17	17	0	2

## Agricultural Barriers and Head of Old River Barrier (HORB)



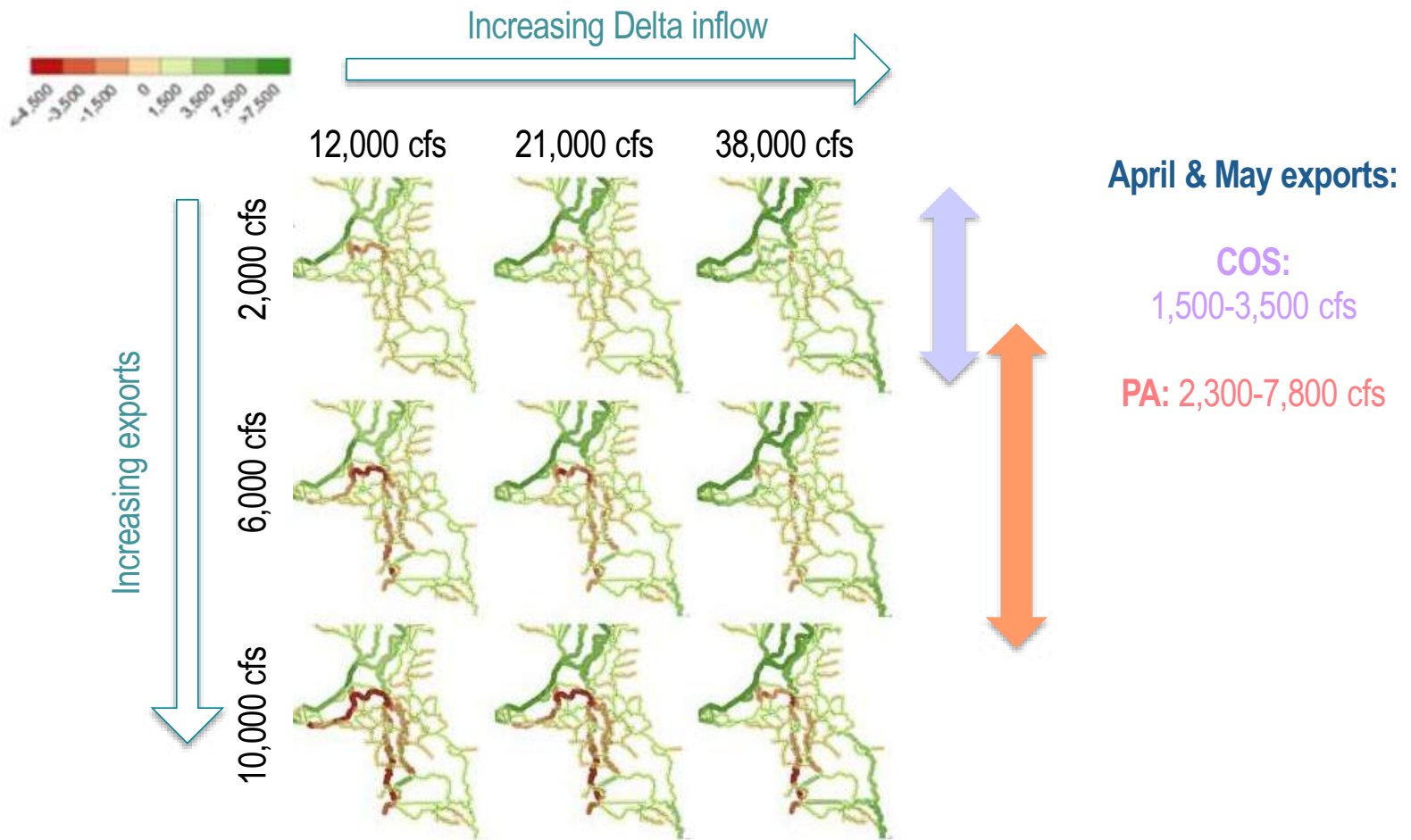
**Source:** November 2018 report "Effect of the South Delta Agricultural Barriers on Emigrating Salmonids"

## Survival Effects Associated with Head of Old River Barrier (HORB)



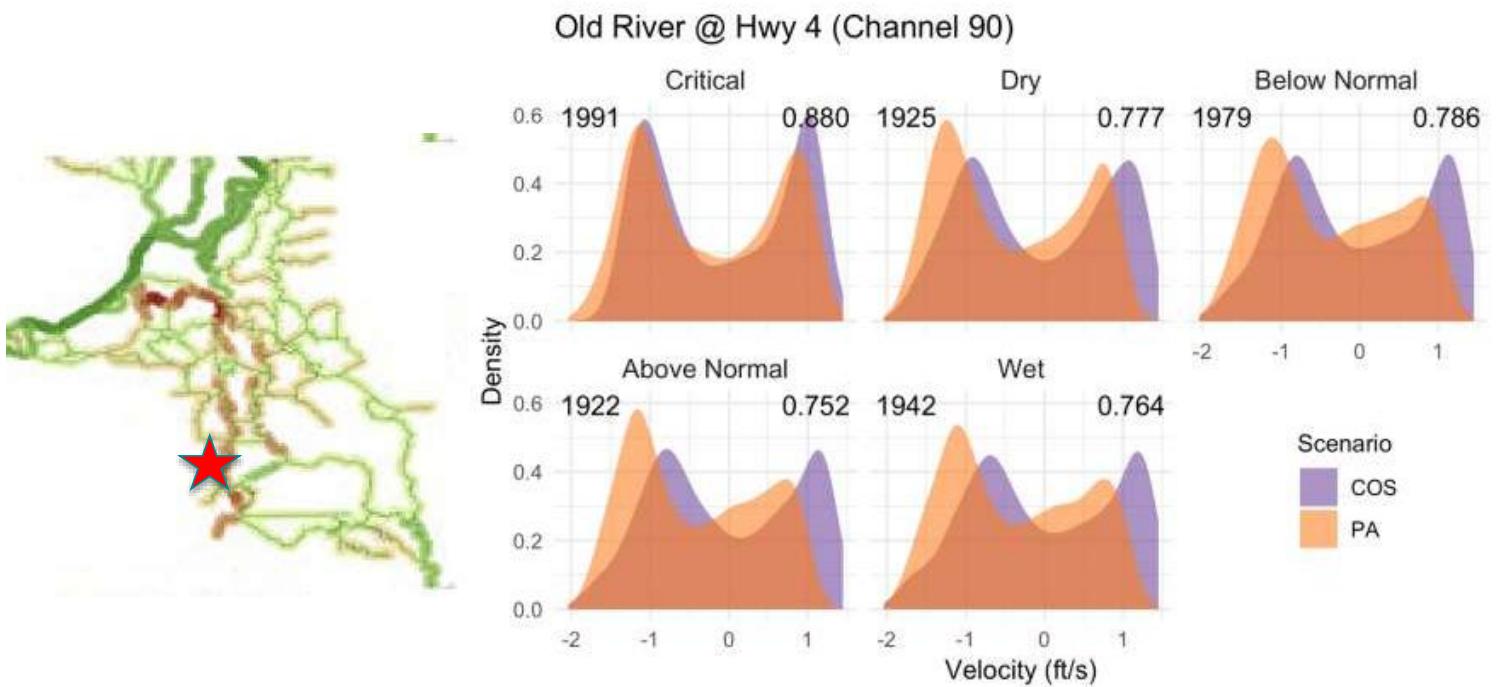
Source: Buchanan 2019

# Hydrodynamic Changes in the South Delta under the PA



Source: Modified from Figure 3-2 of CAMT SST Report Volume I

# Hydrodynamic Changes in the South Delta under the PA



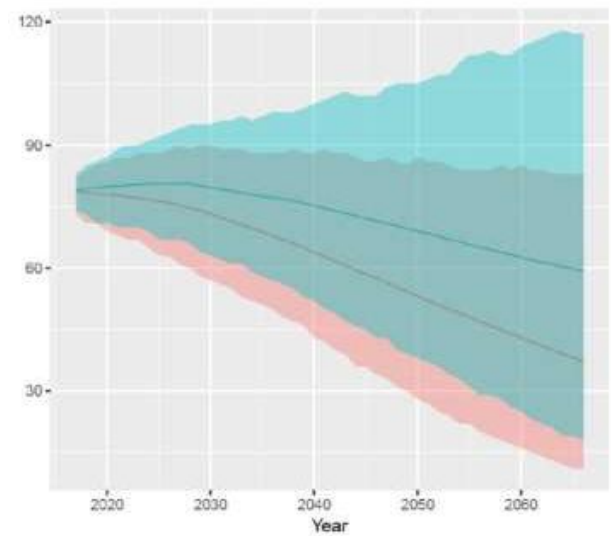
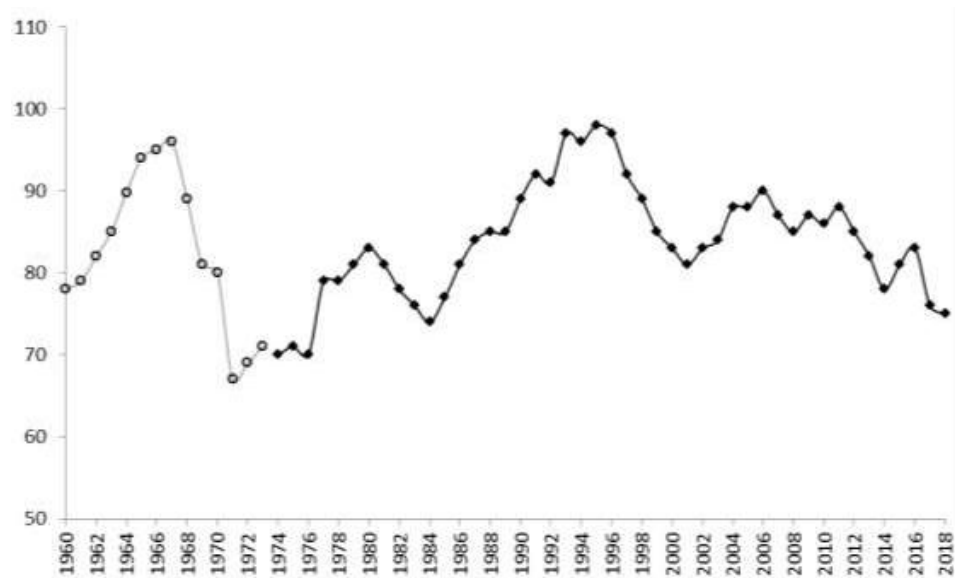
# Significant Effects to Individuals: Green Sturgeon

- No Medium to High or Highly Ranked Effects

## Delta Uncertainties

- Lack of trigger thresholds for spring-run and steelhead for the OMR.
- Effectiveness of proposed OMR management actions. Instead of being protective, proposal leads to more risk and loss.
- Impacts of increased April and May export levels. The effects may not be as straightforward as modeled, and may be compounded by the changes in the local hydrodynamics created by the increase in exports.
- Vulnerability of San Joaquin River steelhead to the effects of no I:E ratio, no HORB during the emigration period.
- Many elements of the PA description are vague. 6,000 acres of tidal habitat: we don't know where this will occur, what the success metrics will be, and how we will monitor effectiveness. Also, unclear how "risk assessments" will work for implementing protective actions and how or if NMFS will be involved.

# Southern Resident Killer Whales Population





## Significant Effects: Southern Resident Killer Whales

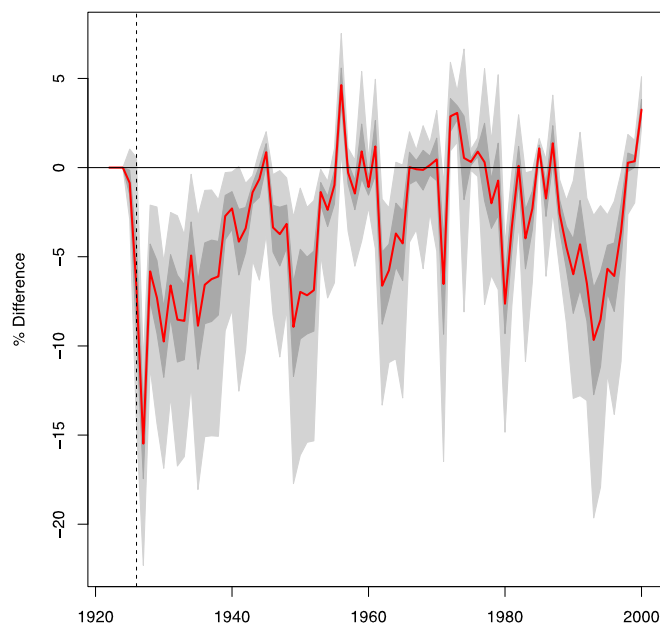
- Overall, the productivity of CV Chinook salmon, especially the dominant fall-run population, appears to be decreasing over time.
- There are fewer measures under the PA to minimize the impacts of operations on the non-ESA listed populations.
- The potential benefits of proposed restoration activities that have been proposed are uncertain at this time and most are actually in the Environmental Baseline (previously consulted on)
- For ESA-listed Chinook salmon ESUs in the Central Valley, we conclude that population level effects for ESA-listed species and critical habitats overall under the PA are significant across multiple VSP parameters, including abundance.
- Reductions and limitations in the abundance of Chinook available as prey as a result of the PA will increase over time.

# Integration and Synthesis: Winter-run

## Key Findings

- One remaining population at high risk
- High level of biological uncertainty
- PA is expected to result in concerning levels of egg mortality:
  - **Tier 1:** 0-6% ~68% of years
  - **Tier 2:** 2-26% ~17% of years
  - **Tier 3:** 7-59% ~7% of years
  - **Tier 4:** 70-93% ~7% of years
- No commitment to stay within a Tier
- No commitment to build Shasta storage
- Entrainment Index 7-38% higher at Delta pumping facilities
- DCC may be open up to an 10 additional days Dec-Jan all years
- LCM shows a 3% reduction in average abundance
- The PA is likely to reduce the abundance and diversity VSP parameters (and habitat quality)

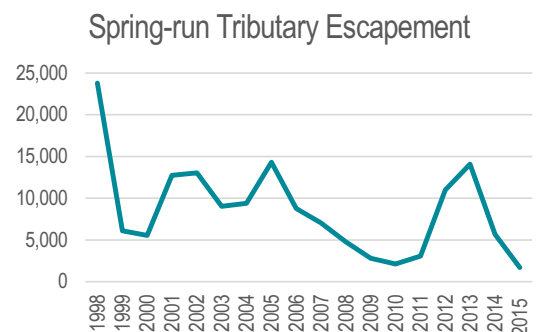
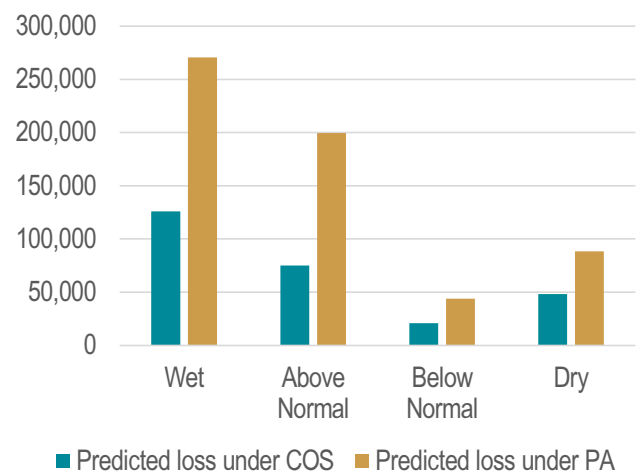
**Annual Percent difference in abundance  
(PA – COS)/COS x 100%**



# Integration and Synthesis: Spring-run

## Key Findings

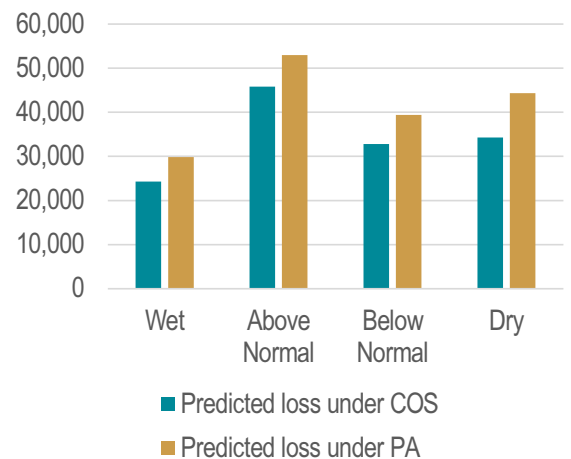
- 2 out of 3 wild populations at high risk, declining trend
- DCC Gates open more frequently (Dec-Jan), increasing entrainment into South Delta
- Modeled Old and Middle River flows (OMR flows) will be approximately 3,500 to 4,000 cfs more negative during April and May in wetter water year types with the elimination of the I:E ratio.
- Clear Creek spawning and holding temperatures often exceeded management approach not current scientific standard.
- OMR flows are modeled to not be positive at any time (monthly average/ exceedance plots).
- PA components are expected to appreciably reduce the abundance and diversity VSP parameters for spring-run populations (and habitat quality).



# Integration and Synthesis: Steelhead

## Key Findings

- DPS at moderate risk of extinction
- DCC Gates open more frequently (Dec-Jan), increasing entrainment into South Delta
- Modeled Old and Middle River flows (OMR flows) will be approximately 3,500 to 4,000 cfs more negative during April and May in wetter water year types without spring protective measures.
- Differential survival is 20% between HORB in vs. out between 3800cfs-5,000cfs at Vernalis
- OMR flows are modeled to not be positive at any time (monthly average/ exceedance plots).
- OMR flows and steelhead density triggers are not protective of the Southern Sierra Diversity Group
- PA components are expected to appreciably reduce the abundance VSP parameter for steelhead populations of the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River basin



# Integration and Synthesis: Green Sturgeon

## Key Findings

- Single population at moderate risk
- Green sturgeon presumably have access to suitable spawning and incubation areas on the Sacramento River under all conditions (e.g., droughts)
- Low and medium magnitude impacts from PA and only a small portion of the population are likely to experience mortality or substantial injury
- Overall, the PA is not expected to exert any additional selective pressures on green sturgeon and the diversity VSP parameter of the population is expected to remain unchanged

# Integration and Synthesis: SRKW

## Key Findings

- Species is at a high risk of extinction
- Recent information indicates that fecundity is low and that the population is expected to decline in the future.
- Chinook salmon are dominant components of available Chinook salmon prey.
- Under the PA, SRKWs will continue to be exposed to a decreasing abundance of CV Chinook salmon during sensitive time period (winter-spring)
- The PA is expected to diminish VSP parameters and increase extinction risk of ESA-listed units.
- The prospect for persistent and escalating risks of reduced survival and reproductive success continuing indefinitely in the future reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of this species.