

Draft External Statement for Response to Query

NOAA Fisheries has issued a draft analyses on the Long-term Operations of the Central Valley and State Water Projects Biological Opinion for independent scientific peer review, and Reclamation, DWR, FWS, DFW and CVP/SWP public water agency review. These draft products are components of the biological opinion and subject to revision. NOAA Fisheries has not reached any determination on whether the operations will jeopardize listed salmon, steelhead or sturgeon. NOAA Fisheries and Reclamation continue to work closely together to complete the consultation process and issue a complete and final Biological Opinion on July 1st.

Draft Questions and Answers for Internal Use Only

1. What is the draft analyses?

The draft analyses contain our analyses of the effects of the action on the listed species within our jurisdiction (winter-run Chinook salmon, spring-run Chinook salmon, steelhead, green sturgeon, and southern resident killer whale (due to Chinook salmon prey base)). We use a suite of analytical tools that range from hydrologic and temperature models to floodplain inundation, migration routing, and life-cycle models.

2. Why are we sharing this draft analyses?

It is standard for NMFS to seek external independent peer review of the analysis and approach to analysis for complex consultations. This provides an opportunity for NMFS to have an independent evaluation of whether we appropriately adhere to the approach that we identify in applying and interpreting the science, tools, and uncertainties.

3. Are we doing this in lieu of sharing a draft BiOp?

No. We typically share these sections with scientific peer reviewers. As is standard practice, we continue to work very closely with the Action Agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, and we are sharing additional BiOp sections with them, as they are developed.

4. Who are the independent scientists who will be reviewing these documents?

We have contracted for an external party to canvas and manage the review process. We are fortunate to have Dr. Dave Hankin (Humboldt State University), Dr. Ken Rose (University of Maryland), and Dr. John Skalski (University of Washington) available as reviewers. All three are familiar with Central Valley fisheries and water management challenges and have been on previous reviews through the Delta Science Program.