



(USGS photo)

NMFS has issued its long-awaited revised biological opinion on the effects of operation of the Central Valley and State Water Projects on species under its supervision. The entire opinion is available [here](#), and the NMFS press release is [here](#). The opinion concludes that current project operations jeopardize the survival of “winter and spring-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead, the southern population of North American green sturgeon and Southern Resident killer whales, which rely on Chinook salmon runs for food.” According to NMFS, the Bureau of Reclamation has already accepted its recommended alternatives, which will reduce deliveries by about five to seven percent.

[Aquaforia](#) has compiled some initial reactions to the new biological opinion, so far all from water users. California’s Department of Water Resources thinks the new restrictions will actually cut deliveries by another 10% (on top of the smelt restrictions). Westlands Water District claims that, “If it were allowed to stand, this Biological Opinion would be a death sentence for large parts of California’s economy.” The Association of California Water Agencies describes the opinion as “eliminat[ing] about \$100 million worth of previously available supplies,” and says:

We need new approaches to ESA implementation that reduce these unacceptable economic impacts, and we need them now.

The Metropolitan Water District takes a less hard line:

We read the underlying message of this biological opinion loud and clear, which is that a comprehensive approach is necessary to restore our salmon runs and create a sustainable ecosystem in the Delta.

Like many other water users, Met is hoping that the [Bay-Delta Conservation Plan](#) will provide that comprehensive approach.