Final Report

Pre-Screen Loss and Fish Facility Efficiency for Delta Smelt at the South Delta's State Water Project, California

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CALFED Science Program Grant Agreement # 1048
Pilot Mark-Recapture Study to Estimate Delta Smelt Pre-screen Loss and Salvage Efficiency

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September 2010

Abstract

Water conveyance operations have long been implicated in the decline of fish populations in the upper San Francisco Estuary, where the State Water Project (SWP) and Federal Central Valley Project (CVP) are located. We conducted the first experimental evaluation of the relation between delta smelt salvage at the John E. Skinner Fish Protective Facility (Skinner Fish Facility or SFF) and underlying entrainment losses at the SWP in the south Delta. We tested the use of cultured delta smelt in mass mark-recapture experiments in February and March 2009 (adults) and June 2009 (juveniles) to estimate: 1) the percent of fish recaptured at SFF of the total released at the entrance of SFF (fish facility efficiency), 2) the percent of fish recaptured at SFF of the total released at the entry point of Clifton Court Forebay (CCF), a reservoir for SWP exports (percent recovery), and 3) the fish losses in CCF (pre-screen loss). All fish released (n) were calcein-marked; adults were also marked using injectable fluorescent paint (photonic marks) and strontium (trans-generational mark). Mean fish facility efficiency estimates declined in successive releases: February (53.2%, n = 400), March (44.0%, n = 200) and June (24%, n = 800). The mean percent recovery of fish released in CCF declined greatly over time: February (3.01%, n = 5,707); March (0.41%, n = 2,849) and June (0.03%, n = 14,413). Correspondingly, mean pre-screen losses increased in successive releases: February (94.3%); March (99.1%) and June (99.9%). Juvenile mark-recapture tests conducted in June 2008 and 2009 showed consistently higher fish losses with increasing release distance from the fish facility. We concluded that: 1) entrainment losses of delta smelt could be much higher at times compared to other species previously studied at the SWP; 2) pre-screen loss was overwhelmingly the largest source of mortality for delta smelt; 3) Distance from the SFF and increased residence time in CCF and decreased exports were strongly associated with decreased percent of recovered fish at the SFF. We hypothesize that these losses were primarily due to increased predation mortality within CCF as concluded in previous studies. Entrainment monitoring in CCF could be readily applied to interpret and validate critical relations between salvage statistics and the magnitude and variability of direct entrainment losses for delta smelt.

Introduction

Although water diversions for urban and agricultural uses have long been a common feature of aquatic ecosystems, the long-term implications of reduced fresh water inflow and increased entrainment losses on aquatic organisms present challenging management trade-offs for ecosystem sustainability and water use reliability (e.g. Lund *et al.* 2010; Vörösmarty *et al.* 2010). Due to record low fish population abundance indices for several pelagic species in the 2000's, this challenge has become increasingly critical for the Delta of the upper San Francisco Estuary (hereafter Delta), one of the most intensively water-managed estuarine systems in the world. The water diversions by the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP), including water export from the south Delta for agricultural and urban use have long been considered factors contributing to the decline of fishes in the upper San Francisco Estuary (Erkkila *et al.* 1950; Stevens and Miller 1983; Moyle *et al.* 1992; Arthur *et al.* 1996; Bennett and Moyle 1996; Sommer *et al.* 2007).

Limiting entrainment losses of fish has been central for the management of species in the Delta, particularly for listed species such as the delta smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*), an endemic osmerid and predominantly annual species. It was listed as threatened (federal and state) in the early 1990's, endangered in 2009 (state). Delta smelt was also deemed to warrant federal endangered status in 2010. Estimated salvage data from the Skinner Fish Facility (hereafter SFF) has been commonly used as an index of direct entrainment of some fish, including delta smelt, into Clifton Court Forebay, hereafter CCF, a SWP reservoir located in the south Delta (37.8298^{o} N - 121.5574^{o} W, Figure 1). A percentage of the fish entrained into CCF is lost and unable to reach the screens of the SFF. Such loss has been termed pre-screen mortality or pre-screen loss (Tillman 1993; Brown *et al.* 1996). Fish subject to pre-screen loss along with a fraction of the fish that enter the SFF remain unaccounted for in the salvage. Results of 11 studies conducted for juvenile fishes between 1976 and 2007 in CCF (Chinook salmon, striped bass and steelhead) revealed consistently high pre-screen losses ranging from 63% to 99% (Gingras 1997; Clark *et al.* 2009).

The reliance on fish salvage data as index of fish entrainment has been widespread (e.g. Moyle *et al.* 1992; Brown *et al.* 1996; Sommer *et al.* 1997; Bennett 2005; Grimaldo *et al.* 2009). Efforts aimed at interpreting salvage data in terms of their effectiveness (Brown *et al.*1996) or in terms of population level losses (Kimmerer 2008) have been challenged by the significant uncertainty due to the lack of empirically derived pre-screen loss estimates for delta smelt. The extent and

variability of entrainment-related losses not accounted for in salvage statistics at the SWP, including pre-screen losses, remain long-standing critical unknowns for delta smelt (e.g. EWA Review Panel 2001; Hymanson and Brown 2006; IEP Delta Smelt Review 2006; Kimmerer 2008; Independent expert panel review 2009). Thus, emphasizing the critical need for empirical estimates on the magnitude of the direct export losses resulting from pre-screen loss and fish facility efficiency. Complementary information - such as hydrodynamic particle entrainment models, fish surveys and water quality data have also been used to infer fish entrainment by SWP and CVP (Kimmerer 2008; USFWS 2008). Yet, process-oriented methods are needed to validate the hypothesized relations between reported delta smelt salvage and underlying entrainment losses inferred through distribution and particle tracking based methods. The lack of empirical tools to quantify entrainment losses for delta smelt has prevented basic understanding on the magnitude and variability of such losses.

As part of a two year pilot study, we conducted the first mark-recapture experiments to gain knowledge on the entrainment losses of delta smelt at the SWP. This investigation provided the first empirical estimates for two unaccounted sources of entrainment losses of delta smelt at the SWP: whole-fish-facility losses and pre-screen losses in CCF. Other unaccounted water project impacts include near- and far-field losses in the south Delta and the entire Delta-system, coinciding with changes in the quality of the physical habitat (e.g. Feyrer et al 2007; Nobriga *et al.* 2008). In addition, the short-term losses occurring to salvaged fish (collection, handling, trucking and release, CHTR) have been investigated at the SFF (e.g. Miranda *et al.* 2010; Morinaka, In progress, California Department of Fish and Game, Stockton).
Our ultimate goal is to empirically quantify entrainment losses of delta smelt at the SWP.
Specific objectives of this study were to obtain mark-recapture estimates for:
1- Salvage efficiency of juvenile and adult delta smelt at the SFF.
2- Percent recovery of juvenile and adult delta smelt for releases in CCF.
3- Pre-screen loss for juvenile and adult delta smelt in CCF.

Study area

The SWP in the south Delta comprises CCF, SFF, the Harvey O. Banks Pumping Plant and seasonally, temporary barriers in several Delta channels. The SFF and CCF are located close to the CVP Tracy Fish Collection Facility (TFF, Figure 1). The CCF is a 38.24 million m^3 reservoir (31,000 acre feet) primarily used for off peak pumping storage (i.e., it stores diverted water so that most export pumping can occur at night when electricity is less costly). For a fish

entrained into the SWP to be salvaged, it must first pass through CCF avoiding predation and other potential mortality sources and then it must be directed into holding facilities at the SFF (Figure 1).

Inflow into CCF from the Old River is regulated by 5 radial gates positioned side by side at the southeast corner of the reservoir, with a combined operational limit of 339.8 m^3/s (12,000 cfs). The SFF is a system of primary louvers, secondary louvers, perforated plates and connecting pipes that can direct some of the entrained fish into holding tanks where they are counted and subsequently transported by trucks to two locations in the west Delta where these salvaged fish they are released with the purpose of reducing entrainment losses.

The TFF and the SFF were originally designed to report salvage for juvenile Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), (Brown *et al.* 1996), not the much smaller delta smelt. Juvenile delta smelt < 30 mm FL seem particularly undersampled in the salvage process at these fish facilities (Kimmerer 2008), including the SFF (J. Morinaka, in progress. California Department of Fish and Game, Stockton).

Methods

Culture and Marking

All delta smelt used for this study were produced at the U.C. Davis Fish Conservation and Culture Lab (FCCL), located adjacent to the SFF and a short distance to other release locations used throughout this study (Figure 1).

We used cultured delta smelt because the number of delta smelt needed to conduct mark-recapture experiments far exceeded the number of wild fish we would have been able to obtain due their limited abundance and take restrictions. Delta smelt were spawned during 2008 to provide ca. 4,000 juveniles for the June 2008 experiments, 16,200 juveniles for the June 2009 experiments and 11,200 adults for the February-March 2009 experiments. Production of delta smelt was based on rearing methods developed at the FCCL (Lindberg *et al.*1999; Baskerville et al 2004).

Fish marking was conducted at the FCCL and involved three types of marks: 1) calcium (Sutphin and Morinaka 2010; Castillo *et al.* In progress, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Stockton, CA). SE-MARK™ Calcein was the primary mark used for all juvenile and adult delta smelt, 2) photonic marks used in all adult delta smelt to differentiate days and/or location of fish releases (Sutphin 2008) and 3) trans-generational marking (Hobbs *et al.* in progress, UC Davis,

CA). An SE MARK^{TM} detector (Western Chemical) was used to distinguish calcein marked and unmarked fish. Photonic marking was conducted using pressurized CO_2 guns (model BMX2000 POW'R-Ject System, New West Technologies) and BMX2000 Photonic Marking Solutions (Cobalt Green, Cobalt Blue and Titanium White). All recaptured delta smelt were independently examined for marks by at least two persons. All unmarked delta smelt were considered wild fish. Although it was considered unlikely, it was deemed possible that adults could successfully reproduce in CCF and bias the subsequent juvenile salvage. Thus, all adults were trans-generationally marked with strontium chloride hexahydrate to provide a means to distinguish between wild and culture origin offspring salvaged at the SFF. Trans-generational marking was conducted to resolve the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) concerns that salvage of juvenile delta smelt resulting from the release of cultured adult delta smelt into CCF, rather than actual entrainment of wild fish, would count against their ESA-mandated take limits. The effectiveness of trans-generational marking in distinguishing marked and unmarked fish was tested in the lab and results showed no overlap in Sr isotopic ratios between the offspring from marked and unmarked fish. Hence, the method is considered valid (Hobbs *et al.* In progress, UC Davis, CA).

Calcein marking during the 2009 mass mark-recapture experiments was based on calcein marking protocols developed as part of this project under the Investigational New Animal Drugs Program (INAD): 1) a 3 minute bath (full immersion) in a 1% salt solution and 40 mg/l ms-222 (pre-treatment) and 2) a 5 minute bath in calcein 5.0 g/l (adults) and 2.5 g/l (juveniles), (treatment). Extensive tests revealed 100% mark retention for at least 3 months, that is, far beyond the entire period in which fish were recaptured (up to 20 days), (Castillo *et al.* In progress, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Stockton, CA).
Photonic marking was only used for adult delta smelt as preliminary tests showed increased mortality for juveniles. Although the visibility of photonic marks tends to decrease over time, we observed 100% retention of photonic marks for adult delta smelt for all recovered calcein-marked fish released in February and March 2009.

Fish releases

We released juvenile and adult fish during actual export conditions to assess fish facility efficiency and pre-screen loss. Marked fish were released in CCF (Figure 1) and downstream of the Trash Rack in front of SFF primary louvers (Figure 2). We released fish at the SFF to assess fish facility efficiency. Five gallon black buckets secured with a rope in the handle and

another rope attached to the bottom of the bucket were used to empty the bucket just above the water surface.

Juvenile delta smelt were released midday at two CCF locations in June 2008 to obtain initial estimates of loss in CCF: near intake channel (location 2) and near the center of CCF (location 3), (Figure 1). A total of 500 marked juveniles were transported by boat (ca. 250 fish / 20 gallon carboy) to the west side of Clifton Court Forebay and released on June 12, 2008. A total of 2,647 marked juveniles were transported by boat in 20-gallon carboys (ca. 500 fish per carboy) to the middle of CCF and released on June 26, 2008 (Figure 1). In 2009, adult and juvenile fish were released in CCF from the boat ramp adjacent to the radial gates to assess percent recovery at the SFF and to estimate pre-screen losses (location 4, Figure 1). Fish were released in CCF in early afternoon hours in February, March and June, coinciding with a period of day-to-day export operations.

Control groups of marked fish were held at ambient water temperature to evaluate post release survival of marked fish. These control fish were held in tanks at the FCCL. Water originally diverted into CCF was pumped to the control tanks from the export channel immediately downstream of the primary louvers of the SFF.

Fish recapture

Fish were consistently recaptured from routine Department of Water Resources (DWR) fish counts during their arrival to the SFF (Figure 2). Whenever possible we inspected all the salvaged fish collected in the fish holding tanks and from the routine DWR fish counts (total census). The total census of the holding tanks was completed just prior to loading of transport truck and release in the Delta. Due to constraints on the authorized take of other listed species, routine DWR counts were only used to estimate the number of marked fish recovered from the March 2009 experiment. The number of marked fish recovered was calculated by multiplying the number of marked fish observed in each routine count by the time period of fish collection divided by actual duration of the counts (usually a fraction of the collection time). This formula is the same procedure used to estimate fish salvage. A few of the marked fish were also obtained alive from the SFF's secondary louver channels as part of DWR's weekly predator removal operations. No attempt was made to examine stomach contents of potential delta smelt predators.

Data analyses

Fish facility efficiency (*FFE*) was computed as:

$$FFE = 100\frac{TRrec}{TRrel};$$

where *TRrec* is the total number of marked fish that were released at the trash rack and recaptured in the regular counts, total census and in the weekly predator removal operations. *TRrel* is the number marked fish released at the trash rack.

Percent recovery (*PR*) was computed as:

$$PR = 100\frac{CCFrec}{CCFrel};$$

where *CCFrec* is the number of marked fish recaptured at the SFF that were released at a particular location in CCF and *CCFrel* is number of marked fish released at the corresponding location in CCF.

Percent pre-screen loss in CCF (*PSL*) was computed as:

$$PSL = 100\left[1 - \left\{\left(\frac{RGrec}{RGrel}\right)\left(\frac{1}{0.01FFE}\right)\right\}\right];$$

where *RGrec* is the number of marked fish recaptured at the SFF that were released in the radial gate area and *RGrel* is number of marked fish released at the radial gate area and *FFE* is as defined earlier.

Bypass ratio (*BR*) for primary or secondary louvers at SFF is defined as:

$$BR = \frac{Vb}{Vc};$$

where *Vb* is the water velocity entering the primary or secondary bypass openings and *Vc* is the average channel velocity upstream of the louvers (Bates *et al.* 1960). Bypass ratios above 1.0 provide a “capture velocity” for fish near the bypass entrance (Bowen *et al.* 2004). More detailed formulas used to compute *BR* and water velocities are included in the appendix.

The daily residence time for entrained water in CCF over each recapture period (T) was computed as:

$$T = \frac{V}{Q};$$

where *V* is the estimated volume of CCF at 12:00 a.m. and *Q* is the daily average outflow (export). Because changes in outflow and residence time of CCF often exceeded 100% over

the course of a mark-recapture experiment, average T was computed over different periods to evaluate hydrodynamic patterns during mark-recapture experiments. Daily exports were obtained from the Day-flow database (http://www.water.ca.gov/dayflow/). Daily water volume of CCF was obtained from two sources: Tracy Hinojosa (DWR, Sacramento, CA) and Michael McWilliams (River Modeling, Environmental Consulting).

Results

Fish Facility Efficiency, Percent Recovery and Pre-Screen Loss

Juvenile Experiments (June 2008-2009)

Only 24% to 30% of the juvenile fish released upstream (in front) of the primary louvers at the SFF in June 2008-2009 were recaptured at the SFF, indicating low fish facility efficiency (mean = 27.0%, SE= 3.0, Table 1). The recovery of all juvenile delta smelt released in CCF - west side (intake channel area), center and east side (radial gate area) - took place within 4 days in 2009 and 7 days in 2008. Increasing distance between the release location and SFF did not result in consistent increase of recovery time (Table 2). Juvenile experiments in June 2008 and 2009 occurred during a period of lower water exports and higher residence time in CCF when compared to adult experiments (Table 2). Moreover the daily peak in percent recovery of juveniles occurred just one day after the releases, both in the west side and center of CCF (Figure 3A) and in the east side of CCF (Figure 3B). The juvenile delta smelt group released in June 2009 showed extremely low percent recovery (0.03%) and extremely high pre-screen loss (99.88%).

Daily survival of juvenile delta smelt controls in years 2008 and 2009 remained consistently high at ambient temperatures below 27 ^{O}C for 5 days following the last fish recovery. Yet, survival declined strongly when maximum water temperatures reached a threshold (c.a. 27.5-28.0 ^{O}C). Subsequent decrease in water temperatures below that threshold did not prevent further decline in juvenile survival (Figures 4A, 4B).

Adult Experiments (February-March 2009)

Photonically-marked fish groups released at the SFF in February and March 2009 had recapture rates ranging from 36% to 84% (Table 1). The average fish facility efficiency was slightly higher in February (53.2%, SE= 12.2) than in March (44.0%, SE= 1.0). Hence, overall fish facility efficiency was only about 50% for adult delta smelt.

The percent recovery for adult delta smelt released at the radial gate area over four consecutive days from February 24 to 27, 2009 was very low (mean= 3.01%, SE=0.78). The peak recovery per group occurred 2 or 3 days after the release and except for one fish, all fish were recovered within 10 days (Table 2, Figure 5A). The pre-screen loss for the February 2009 release group was very high (mean= 94.3%, SE=1.5). On the other hand, the survival rate (S) of control marked fish held at the lab remained very high until the control was terminated on March 16, 2009 (S = 99.3%, n = 400). Thus, the very low recovery can not be attributed to experimentally induced post-release mortality (i.e., the handling and marking).

Compared to February experiments, the recaptures from radial gate area releases conducted on March 26 and 27, 2009 occurred over a shorter period and only within five days from the releases. March experiments coincided with a period of lower exports and higher residence time in CCF (Figure 5B). Although take restrictions on Winter-run Chinook salmon prevented total census in March 2009 experiments, regular fish counts sub-sampled approximately 25% of the fish salvaged at the SFF. Even after expanding mark-recaptured fish in DWR counts to the total salvage time, the percent recovery for both fish groups released in March was extremely low (mean= 0.41%, SE=0.41, Table 2). Hence, the estimated pre-screen loss for the March 2009 release group was extremely high (mean= 99.1%, SE=0.9). Similar to the February 2009 experiment, the survival rate of the control fish held in the lab in March 2009 was still very high on March 31 (S=100%, n=100), which was the last day marked fish were recovered and survival was still 98% by April 20, 2009, when the control experiment was terminated.

Size Composition of Delta Smelt

The size composition of recaptured delta smelt overlapped with that of unmarked wild delta smelt when the later were also reported at the SFF (Figure 6). Juvenile delta smelt

released in CCF in the radial gate area and in the center of CCF and subsequently recaptured at the SFF seemed slightly larger relative to the original size composition of all released juvenile delta smelt. No evidence of differential size at release and recapture was suggested for adult delta smelt (Figure 6).

Factors Influencing Percent Recovery

The percent of recovered delta smelt at the SFF declined significantly with increasing distance from the release site, both for juvenile releases (Figure 7A) and combined adult and juvenile releases (Figure 7B). Despite the higher fish facility efficiency for adults, the percent recovery for the six groups of adults released at the radial gates between February and March 2009 was consistent with the very low percent recovery of juveniles released in the center of CCF and in the radial gate area.

To further evaluate the short-term influence of residence time and export flow on the percent recapture, three day averages were considered for these parameters as all mark-recapture experiments showed a peak in recapture within 3 d from the time of release (except for one of the releases conducted in March 2010 where no fish were recaptured over the entire salvage season). The percent recovery of delta smelt also declined exponentially with increasing residence time in CCF for seven groups of fish released at the radial gate area between February and June 2009 (Figure 8A). Predictably, increased exports were associated with higher percent recovery (Figure 8B). Relative to the number of fish released at the radial gate area, the number of adult delta smelt recovered showed nearly a ten-fold decrease from February to March 2009. A similar ten-fold decrease was observed from March to June 2009 (adult and juvenile stages, Figures 8A and 8B).

Discussion

Residence time in CCF and the attendant export levels seem to be key factors controlling the extent of entrained delta smelt accounted for at the SWP. Thus, depending on residence time and export levels, similar levels of fish recoveries in the salvage could represent substantially different levels of underlying entrainment losses into the SWP. The mark-recapture experiments conducted concurrently at the SFF and CCF in the years 2008 and 2009 revealed

significant spatio-temporal variability in fish recapture. The substantially lower recoveries for fish released in CCF relative to SFF are ascribed to extremely high pre-screen losses in CCF. Hence, only a negligible number of juvenile and adult delta smelt released into CCF were subsequently recovered at the SFF. The percent recovery of delta smelt showed a consistent decline from February (adults) to March (adults) and then to June (juveniles). Such decreased recovery is primarily attributed to increased residence time in CCF which increases exposure time to predators and other potential mortality sources. Mean daily water exports from CCF decreased moderately from February to March 2009. However, water exports and CCF storage volume in June were significantly lower. The extremely high loss of juvenile delta smelt in June 2009 was likely due to predation in CCF, which may have been enhanced by unusually low water levels in CCF (coinciding with low exports and high residence time) and extensive aquatic vegetation coverage and increasing temperature in CCF relative to previous adult mark-recapture experiments in 2009. The lower percent recovery juvenile delta smelt in the June 2009 experiment is secondarily attributed to decreased SFF efficiencies through time, as expected, as the size of the test fish decreased.

All past studies to estimate pre-screen loss at the SWP also made use of cultured fishes and a combination of fluorescent dye; coded-wire tags; fin clips (Gingras 1997) and PIT tags (Clark 2007). In addition, release and recapture locations were not constant among all studies. Importantly, all past studies also relied on fish releases at the SFF to derive pre-screen loss estimates. Despite methodological differences among studies, our reported pre-screen losses in CCF are consistent with the high pre-screen losses reported in all previous studies. However, juvenile fish used in previous studies generally had larger mean sizes and experienced lower average pre-screen losses than those reported in our study: 86.7% *PSL* for 88.1 mm FL Chinook salmon; 82% *PSL* for 53.5 mm FL striped bass (Gingras 1997) and 80% *PSL* for 217 mm FL steelhead (average PSL of two estimates by Clark *et al.* 2009).

Relative to fish facility efficiencies for juvenile Chinook salmon (Brown *et al.* 1996), our estimated fish facility efficiencies were generally low for adult delta smelt and substantially lower for juvenile delta smelt. On the other hand, our fish facility efficiency estimates for both adult and juvenile delta smelt at the SFF were substantially higher than those estimated for adult delta smelt at the TFF (13.4 % *FFE*, M. Bowen, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, personal communication).

Interestingly, CCF was not part of the original SWP operations in the South Delta. Fish were originally entrained into the SWP from the Delta through the Italian Slough (Heubach ca. 1973). When the SFF facility was disconnected from the Italian Slough and became connected to CCF, Heubach further reported both a significant decline in the salvage of salmon and a significant increase in the salvage of striped bass at the SFF relative to the TFF.

Several potential mortality sources and experimental biases could individually or in combination account for the pre-screen losses and facility efficiencies reported in our study: 1) predation; 2) starvation; 3) unfavorable physical-hydrodynamic conditions; 4) emigration through CCF intakes; 5) post-mark release induced mortality; 6) potential biases due to the use of cultured fish; and 7) calculation biases. These factors are discussed below:

1) Potential predation mortality: pre-screen loss has been largely explained in terms of predation in CCF (e.g. Kano 1990; Brown *et al.* 1996; Clark *et al.* 2009). The highest population estimates of predators reported by Kano (1990) were white catfish (*Ictalurus catus*, range: 67,000 - 246,000) and striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*, range: 35,000 - 118,000). However, predation by striped bass may account for much of the pre-screen loss (Kano 1990; Brown *et al.* 1996) while white catfish feed opportunistically on a broad food base, including invertebrates (Turner 1966). Five other species of potential piscivores reported in Kano's (1990) study were: channel catfish (*I. punctatus*), black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), brown bullhead (*I. nebulosus*), and Sacramento pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus grandis*). In addition, the potential for avian predation in CCF has also been recognized (Mayfield 2008, unpublished data, California Department of Fish and Game, Stockton, CA; Clark *et al.* 2009).The extremely low recovery of juvenile delta smelt released at the radial gate area in June 2009 took place only within four days from the release. Despite the extended residence time and reduced exports, such short recovery time seems surprising for a release of nearly 14,000 fish. However, examination of fish present in the regular DWR secondary bypass flushing to remove predators in June 2009 revealed over 2,000 juvenile striped bass, virtually all of them less than 50 mm FL. Age-0 striped bass may rely on invertebrates and fish as prey (Stevens 1966). Thus the possibility that they may have preyed upon marked juvenile delta smelt (median size c.a. 25 mm FL, Figure 6) cannot be ruled out. Given the volume of CCF relative to the SFF, the population striped bass in CCF could have been substantially higher than at the SFF.

2) Potential starvation: Based on the regular influx of water containing plankton and pelagic organisms from the Delta into CCF and the high export/outflow ratio for phytoplankton carbon in the Delta (Jassby *et al.* 2002), and the very short period of fish recapture following the releases in CCF, evidence on starvation induced mortality to account for the observed very high pre-screen losses is lacking. However, fish that have been well fed in captivity, such as the cultured delta smelt used in our experiments, are unlikely to have experienced quick starvation mortality.

3) Unfavorable physical-hydrodynamic conditions within CCF: although CCF cannot be considered a physically favorable area for delta smelt, the very high pre-screen loss experienced by adult delta smelt in March 2009 (Figure 5B, Table 2) a period of low temperatures, rule out temperature as the cause of high pre-screen loss. Based on temperature controls for juveniles, ambient water temperatures above 27 ^{o}C could have significantly reduced juvenile survival. However, all recaptured juvenile fish released at the radial gate area in 2009 were recovered between June 23 and 25, in spite of the fact that most control juvenile fish were still alive by June 30 (Figures 3B, 4B). Temperature gradients in different areas of CFF, if large enough, could have potentially resulted in survival differences for delta smelt, irrespective of their origin (wild or cultured). We observed entrained wild juvenile delta smelt being salvaged at the SFF for several days after our last recaptures of marked fish in 2008 and 2009. On the other hand, increased temperatures in CCF could have interacted synergistically with predation. The hydrodynamic characteristics of CCF also seem conducive to unfavorable conditions for delta smelt to be salvaged. Based on simulated 3D water circulation patterns for CCF during June 2007 (McWilliams and Gross, In progress), and drifter trajectory during our June 2008 experiments (Cathy Ruhl, USGS, unpublished data) a basin wide counter-clockwise circulation in CCF seemed a persistent hydrodynamic feature. Conceivably, such wind-driven circulation pattern in combination with low exports could enhance dispersion and residence time of entrained fish within CCF, increasing the likelihood of pre-screen loss.

The observed low reservoir level and excessive aquatic vegetation in June 2009 could have contributed to increased mortality through lack of pelagic habitat and by reducing access to the salvage facility. Other potentially lethal conditions such as contaminants or reduced dissolved oxygen, if present, should have been also reflected in lower than observed juvenile control survival, making such mechanisms unlikely.

The lack of detection of any trans-generationally marked juvenile delta smelt in salvage operations at SFF supports the conclusion that the likelihood successful reproduction and rearing to the juvenile stage in CCF is very remote (Castillo 2009; Hobbs *et al.* In progress).

Although estimates of development time for delta smelt larvae vary (Mager *et al.* 2004; Bennett 2005), a newly hatched delta smelt in CCF would most likely be exported from CCF to the pumps rather than being detected in salvage at SFF.

4) Potential emigration though CCF intakes: Emigration from CCF has been documented for radio-tagged striped bass (Gingras and McGee 1997) and steelhead (Clark *et al.* 2009), two strong swimming species. Clark *et al.* 2009 further estimated that steelhead emigration from CCF through the radial gates could result in a reduction of pre-screen loss from 82% to 78%. However, they suggested that this lower estimate could underestimate pre-screen loss given the uncertainty of the radio telemetry data used in such calculation. Given the substantial inflow into CCF when the gates are open, the small size and limited swimming potential of delta smelt (Swanson *et al.*1998, Young *et al.* 2010) potential emigration of delta smelt through the CCF intakes is very unlikely.

5) Potential marking induced mortality: based on the extremely high survival of control adult fish and the very high survival of juvenile marked fish at temperatures below 27°C, this scenario seems unlikely. Further, we conducted laboratory tests designed to evaluate striped bass predation on marked and unmarked delta smelt. These revealed no significant differences between marked (calcein and photonic marking) and unmarked delta smelt. Moreover, these tests suggested no significant differences on predation among the photonic mark colors used in our field experiments (Castillo *et al.* in preparation).

6) Potential biases due to the use of cultured fish: the extent to which potential differences between cultured and wild delta smelt may have affected our results is unknown. Predator avoidance in other species seems more developed in fish habituated to predators (e.g. Patten 1977; Healey and Reinhardt 1995; Berejikian 1995; Alvarez and Nicieza 2003). However, the extent of potential differences in predation vulnerability between wild and cultured delta smelt is unknown. Results from other species and environments may not be safely extrapolated, particularly if the habituated fish have not been recently exposed to predators in the wild. Comparison of secondary louver efficiency at three different speeds between cultured and wild delta smelt revealed no significant differences (Bowen 2005). These results lend support to use of cultured delta smelt to approximate the behavior of wild fish to louver systems. On the other hand, the CHTR experiments revealed that wild delta smelt experienced higher levels of cortisol response and took longer to recover than cultured delta smelt (Afentoulis and Rockriver, In

progress, California Department of Fish and Game, Stockton, CA). Therefore, cultured and wild delta smelt may differ in their physiological responses to human-induced stress. Given the lack of wild delta smelt for research purposes at the time of our study, any experiments to further address this bias would require careful design.

7) Calculation Biases: pre-screen losses were inferred from the number of recovered fish released at the radial gate area and from facility efficiencies. Facility efficiencies were estimated a few days before fish released in CCF were recovered at the SFF. Therefore, short-term changes in fish facility efficiency could have affected actual pre-screen loss. Yet, such estimation biases are negligible when considering the relatively smaller contribution of facility losses relative to the pre-screen losses in CCF (Tables 1 and 2). Our estimated fish facility efficiencies also accounted for potential predation losses. Nevertheless, our results should reflect the prevailing facility efficiencies under normal operation conditions. Over the course of our experiments, DWR continued conducting routine weekly removal of predators from the secondary bypasses. Continued search of marked delta smelt was conducted by DWR operators in regular counts through the end of the salvage season.
Because we only considered fish recovered from the regular counts, total census and weekly secondary bypass flush, subsequent salvage related losses due to the hauling, transport, and release fish in the Delta are not accounted for in our fish facility efficiency estimates.

Reservoirs can delay fish migration, increase the role of predation and fish disease and favor exotic fishes to the detriment of native fishes (Gray and Rondorf 1986; Li *et al.* 1987). Our finding of decreased percent recovery of delta smelt with increasing residence time of CCF or decreased exports (Figures 8A and 8B) is consistent with the inverse relations between survival of outmigrating salmonids in impoundments and their residence time (e.g.Trefethen 1968; Mullan 1980) and with the overall pattern of lower water exports from CCF resulting in higher prescreen losses (Gingras 1997). Residence time and exports act as key forcing factors on pre-screen loss. The estimated magnitude and variability of the pre-screen loss strongly suggests that using salvage alone as an entrainment estimate results in significant, and inconsistent, underestimates of delta smelt entrainment into CCF.

Management Implications

The record low abundance of delta smelt since the early 2000s and the high level of pre-screen losses reported for delta smelt in this study, and for other species in previous studies, point out the critical need to reexamine current management practices. Such assessment could accelerate the development of new management options to better account for delta smelt entrainment losses and reduce or eliminate pre-screen losses.
We found that the number of entrained fish per salvaged fish in different periods could potentially vary 10-100 fold. This is evidence that the continued use of salvage as an index of delta smelt entrainment could compromise the intended management purpose of the salvage process and derived delta smelt take estimates. Despite the very low estimated detection of entrained fish in the salvage at the SWP, one initial option would be to consider using correction factors for unaccounted pre-screen losses and fish facility efficiencies similar to those developed for Chinook salmon.

The implications of our study are relevant to some long-standing management issues in CCF involving residence of delta smelt in CCF. For instance, in response to elevated salvage for juvenile delta smelt in May 2007, SWP exports were discontinued from May 31 to June 9, 2007. However, upon resumption of exports, elevated levels of delta smelt salvage continued for several days. Whether the seasonal salvage reported from June 10 onwards resulted from potential delta smelt residing in CCF prior to May 31, or due to newly entrained delta smelt, or a combination of both, is unknown. Retrospective assessment of this salvage event suggests that adaptive management could have been considered. For instance, rather than stopping pumping on May 31, continued pumping from CCF while keeping the radial gates closed, to some extent, would have reduced residence time in CCF and enhanced potential detection of entrained delta smelt in the salvage during the period in which the radial gates were closed.

Evaluation of management efforts to effectively limit fish entrainment through flow restrictions in the south Delta could be improved by considering complementary management options, namely, reducing pre-screen losses and promoting enhanced detection of entrained fish at the salvage facilities. Suggested options to reduce prescreen losses in CCF have included: 1) removing predators from CCF (Tillman 1995); 2) export operational criteria to minimize exposure of entrained fish to predators within CCF (Gingras 1997) and 3) alternative

configuration of the SFF and CCF (SDFFF 2003). These management options are discussed below:

1) Predator removal: this option was suggested as a measure to reduce SWP impacts on winter-run Chinook salmon and delta smelt (Tillman 1995). However, predator removal to limit pre-screen losses has been deemed unfeasible (Gingras 1997). Moreover, predator removal from CCF seems counterproductive given the additional potential take of listed species; the substantial water storage of CCF and the immigration of predators through the radial gates of CCF.

2) Export operational criteria: the rationale of this option is based on a review of eight studies in which Chinook salmon were released in CCF to evaluate pre-screen loss (Gingras 1997). This review indicated that export level is inversely related to pre-screen loss. In addition, Gingras (1997) further concluded that operational criteria are warranted to minimize the time entrained juvenile salmon are exposed to predation in CCF. Our results are also consistent with the potential development of operational criteria to reduce pre-screen losses of delta smelt in CCF.

3) Alternative intake channel configuration: a number of alternative designs to the existing SWP have been proposed to significantly reduce predation losses in CCF (SDFFF 2003). If implemented, this option could also reduce exposure to other potential stressors in CCF. Importantly, given the significant decline of delta smelt in salvage since the mid 2000s, the likelihood of detecting entrained delta smelt in salvage could be substantially lower relative to pre-decline years. Thus, management actions to eliminate or greatly reduce pre-screen losses could result in enhanced detection of entrained delta smelt and other species at the SFF. This in turn, could facilitate active adaptive management through improved evaluations on the effectiveness flow restrictions to limit fish entrainment (e.g. Old and Middle river flows).

Future Entrainment Monitoring and Evaluations

Our results strongly support the need for additional entrainment monitoring and evaluation of experimental methods to better interpret and validate critical relations between salvage statistics and the magnitude and variability of direct delta smelt losses in CCF. We recommend further studies to evaluate month-to-month pre-screen losses and fish facility efficiencies over the seasonal salvage periods for juvenile and adult delta smelt. Such studies would be useful to further quantify the extent to which additional entrained fish into CCF could be salvaged by manipulating CCF residence time, exports and SFF operations. However, initial analyses could be readily performed by combining our results with previous studies (Gingras

1997,Clark *et al.* 2009). We further recommend modeling of population-level effects of entrainment based on empirically derived estimates, coupled with further research on population estimates. Additional studies are critically needed to enhance the larval fish sampling and to quantify larval loss at the SWP and CVP. Moreover, the survival of salvaged delta smelt following their release in the Delta remains an important question.

Acknowledgements

Many volunteers from DFG, USFWS, UC Davis and USBR were essential to conduct this study. USBR biologists led by Dr. Brent Bridges (Rene Reyes, Michael Trask and Brandon Wu) were instrumental in conducting photonic marking. Naoaki Ikemiyagi, Ashley Ratcliffe and Levi Lewis (UC Davis) provided invaluable timely assistance performing trans-generational marking. Cathy Ruhl (formerly USGS), Dr. Ed Gross (Bay Modeling Environmental Consulting) and Dr. Michael McWilliams (River Modeling Environmental Consulting) and Tracy Hinojosa (DWR) provided hydrodynamic information. Paul Cadrett and Kim Webb (Stockton USFWS Office) provided useful comments. They also, along with Sacramento USFWS staff (Victoria Poage, Roger Guinee and Leigh Bartoo) and DWR Staff (Cassandra Enos; Russ Stein and Carl Torgerson) greatly facilitated study implementation. Jewel Huckaby and Sheryl Moore (DWR) provided timely field coordination with DWR operators. Matt Nobriga (Bay Delta USFWS Office) provided very helpful comments on the draft. This project was funded by the Bay Delta (CALFED) Science Program, USBR and USFWS.

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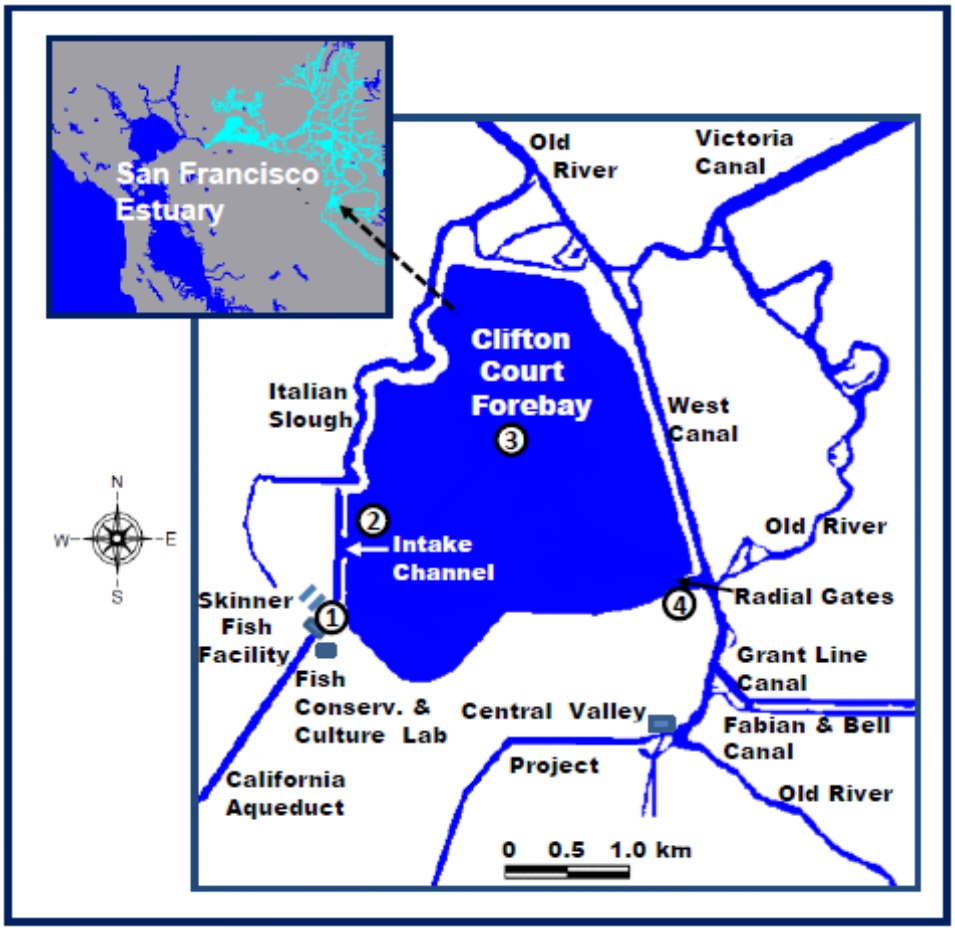


Figure 1. Location of Clifton Court Forebay, the John E. Skinner Delta fish Protective Facility (SFF) in the south Delta of the upper San Francisco Estuary. Locations denoted by numbers are release locations: (1) trash rack upstream of primary louvers; (2) west side of Clifton Court Forebay; (3) center of Clifton Court Forebay and (4) radial gate area. Light color in the upper San Francisco Estuary denotes the distribution of delta smelt (adapted from DFG-IEP).

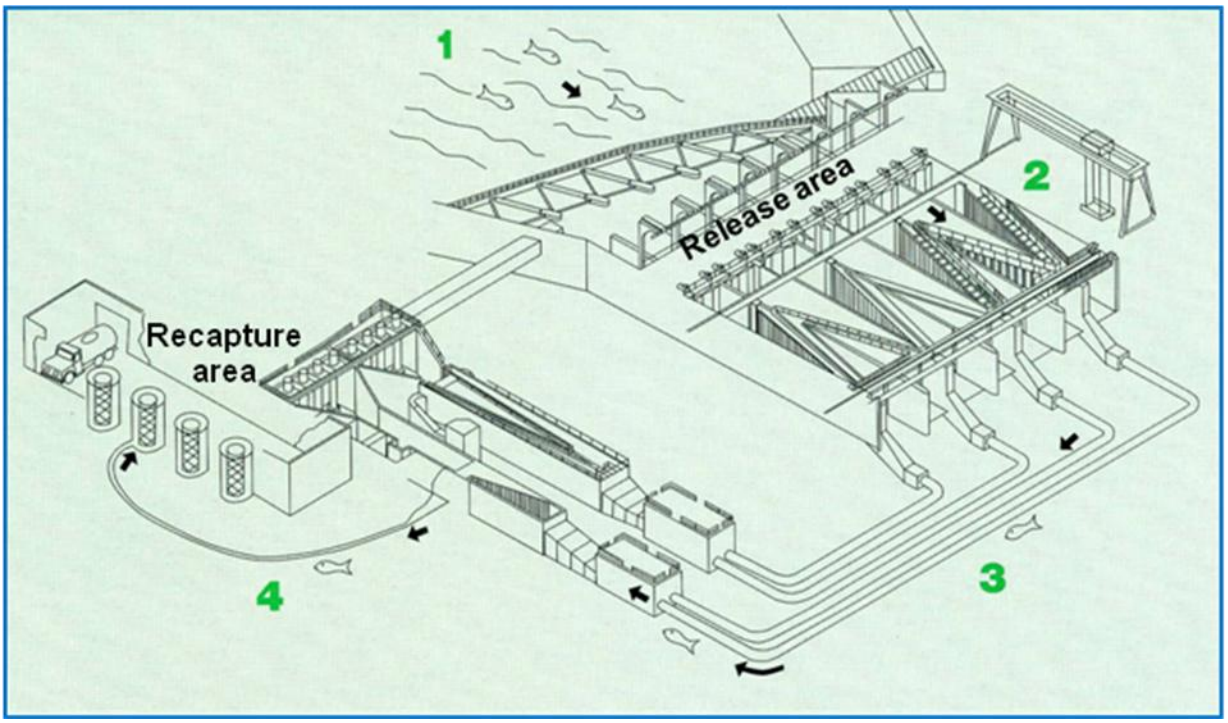
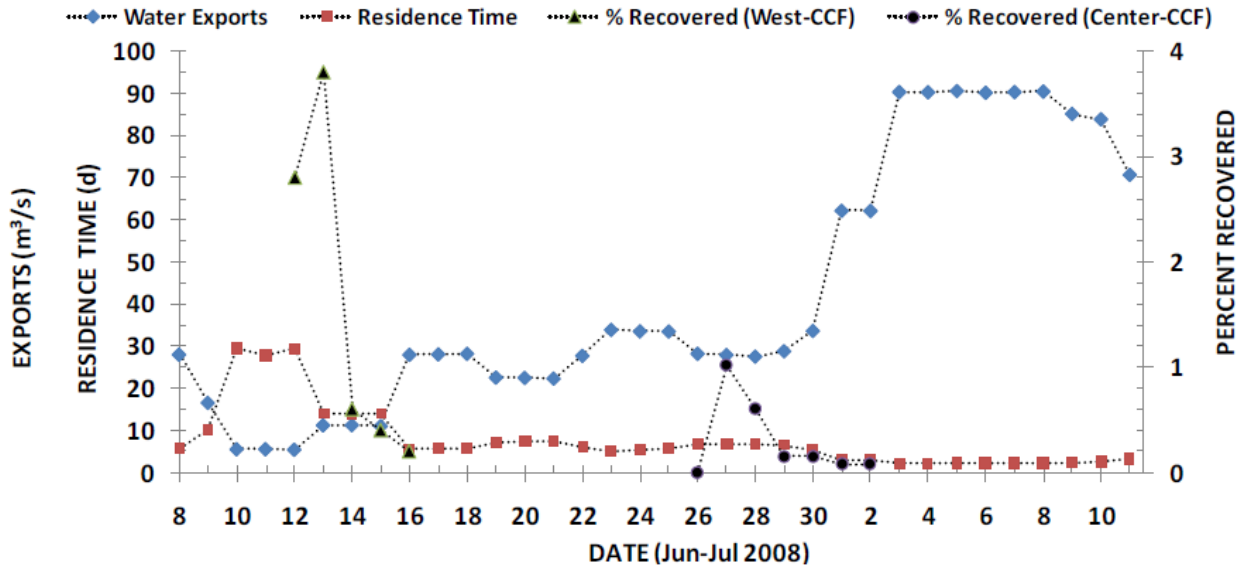


Figure 2. Schematic of Skinner Fish Protective Facility (SFF) and passageway for salvaged fish in the facility. Indicated are release and recapture areas for marked delta smelt. 1: intake channel from Clifton Court Forebay; 2: primary louvers; 3: bypass pipes toward the secondary louvers/screens; 4: holding tanks where fish are collected. Recapture area only shows holding tanks for the old building. The old and/or new buildings were operated by DWR during the present study (adapted from DWR).

A



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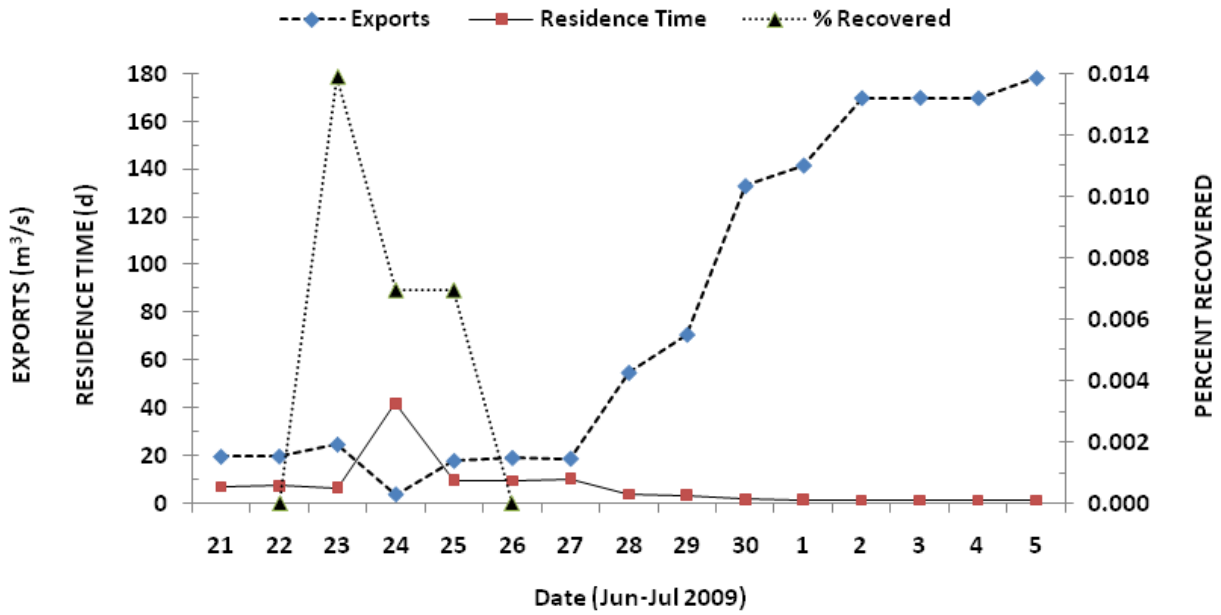


Figure 3. Daily water exports and residence time in Clifton Court Forebay in relation to the percent of calcein-marked juvenile delta smelt recovered at the Skinner Fish Facility: (**A**) Two groups of fish released in the west (n = 500 fish, June 12, 2008) and the center of Clifton Court Forebay (n = 2,647 fish, June 26, 2008). (**B**) One group of fish released in the radial gate area of Clifton Court Forebay (n= 14,413, June 22, 2009).

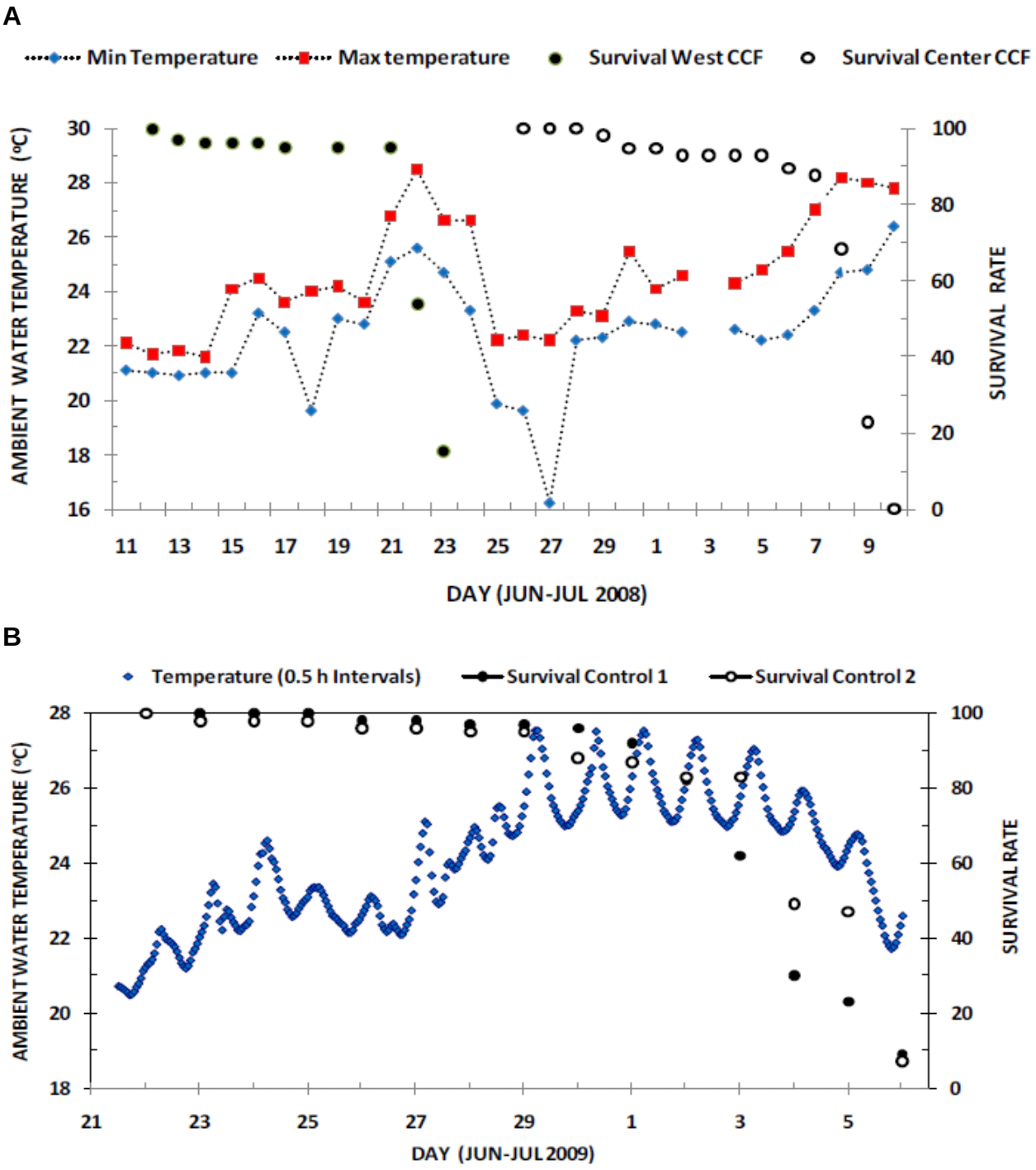


Figure 4. Daily survival of calcein marked juvenile delta smelt controls exposed to ambient water temperature: (**A**) Controls for releases conducted in the west and center of Clifton Court Forebay in June 2008. (**B**) Controls for the releases conducted in the east side of Clifton Court Forebay (radial gate area) on June 22, 2009. Initial number of fish per control was 100 at the time of releases in CCF.

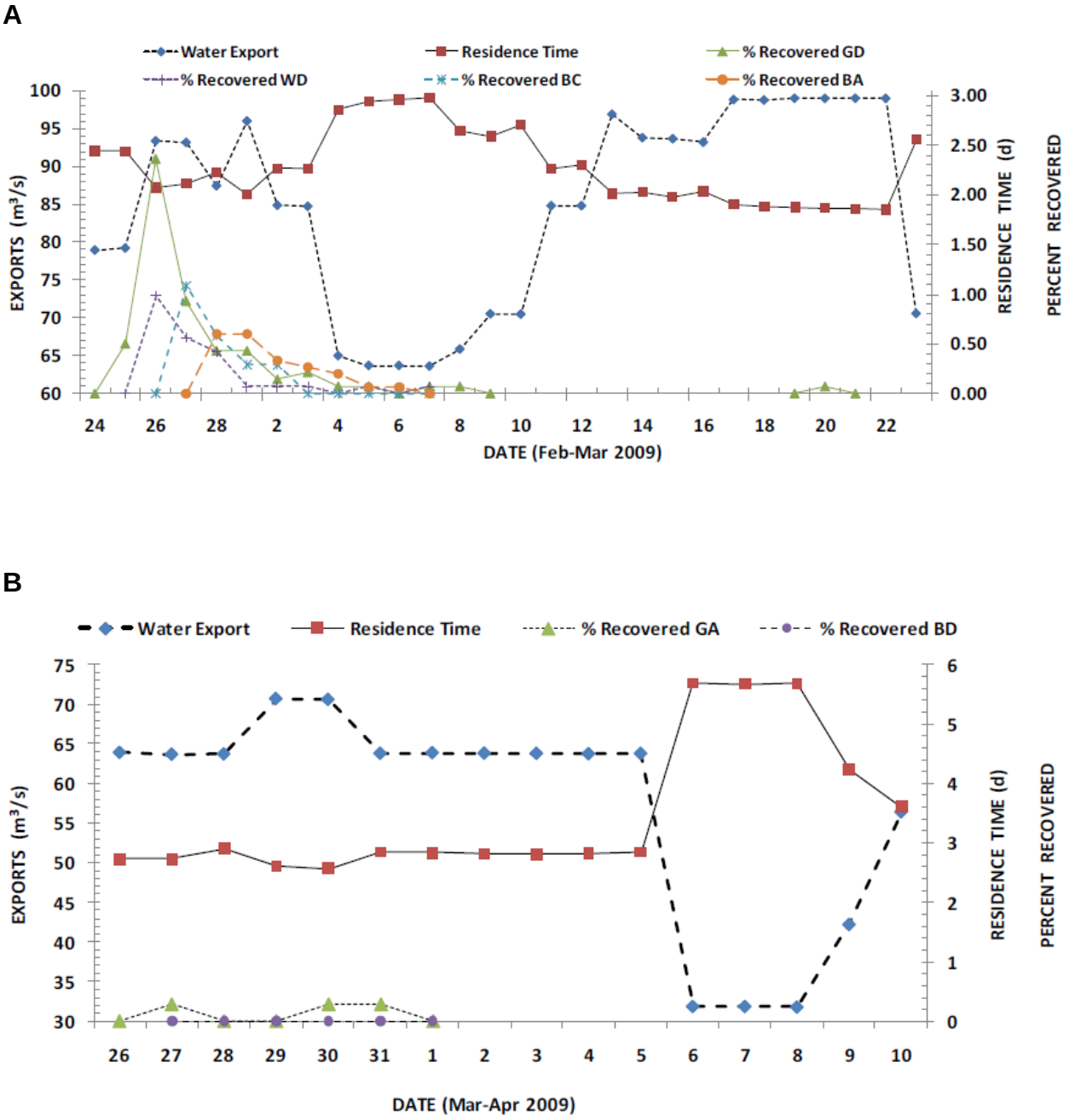


Figure 5. Daily water exports and residence time in Clifton Court Forebay in relation to the percent of recovered calcein- and photonically-marked adult delta smelt released in the radial gate area of Clifton Court Forebay: (**A**) Four fish groups released on February 24-27, 2009. (**B**) Two fish groups released on March, 26-27, 2009. Photonic mark codes are shown in Table 2.

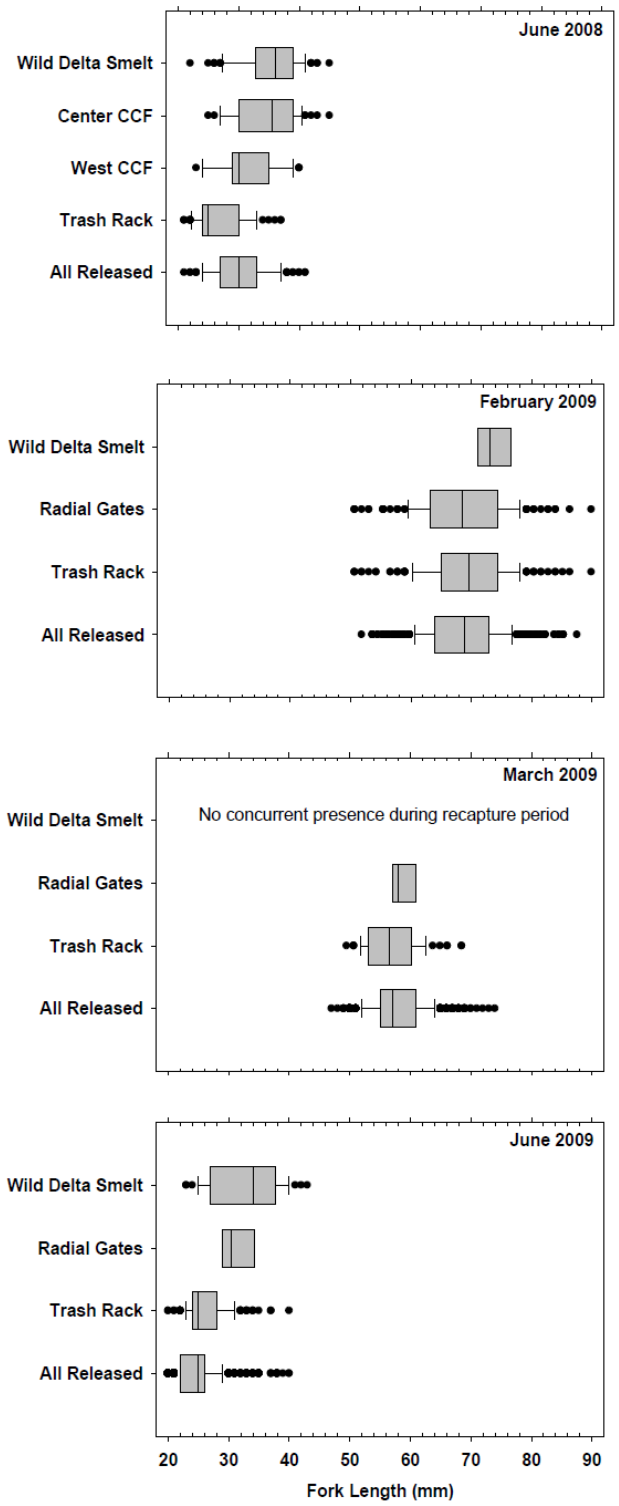
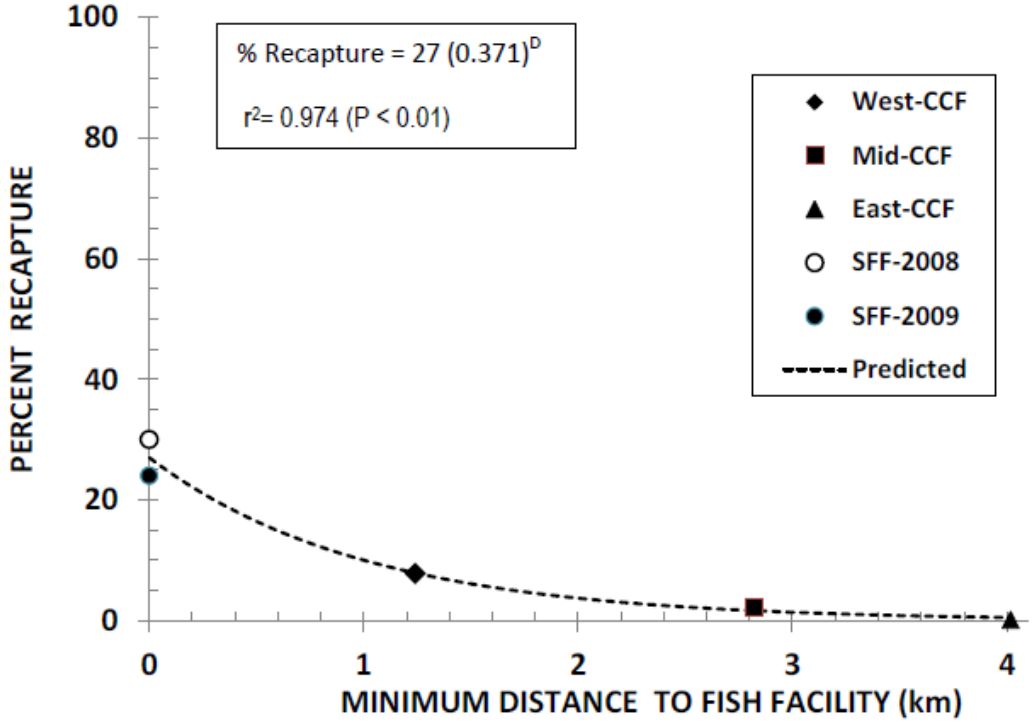


Figure 6. Size composition of marked and unmarked (wild) delta smelt during mark-recapture experiments conducted in June 2008 and 2009 (juveniles) and in February and March 2009 (adults).

A



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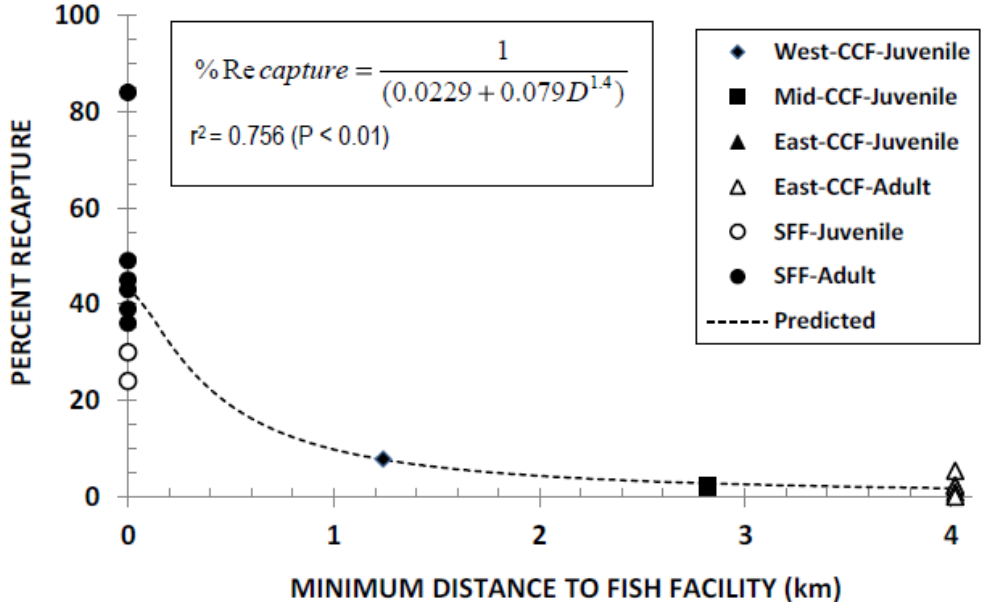
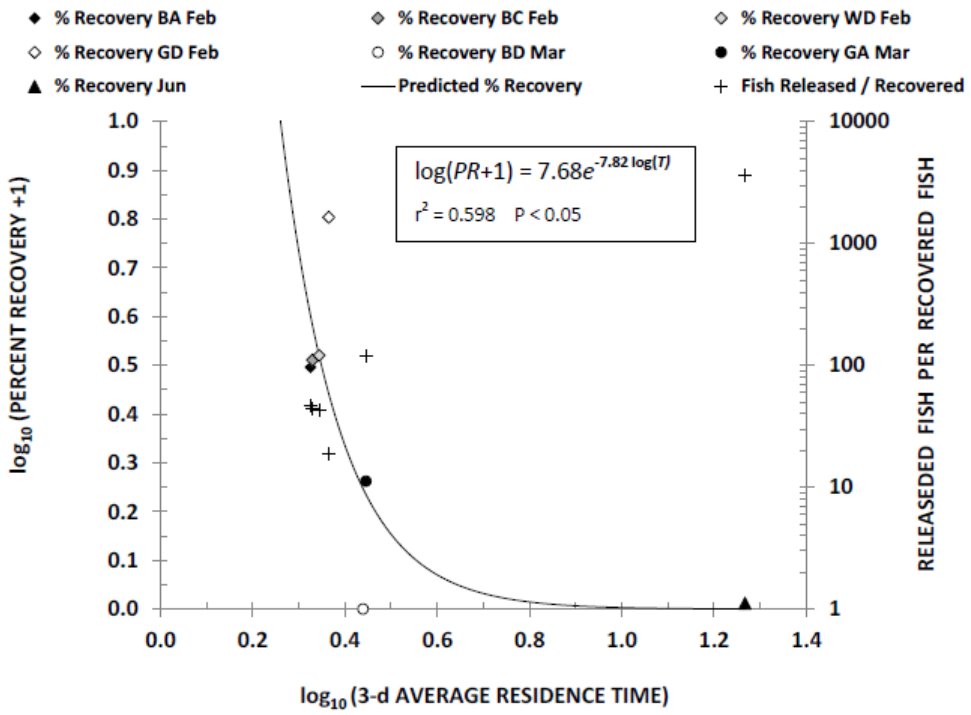


Figure 7. Percent of recaptured delta smelt at the Skinner Fish Facility as a function of the minimum distance (D) from each release site to the Skinner Fish Facility: (**A)** Juvenile delta smelt. (**B)** Combined juvenile and adult delta smelt.

A



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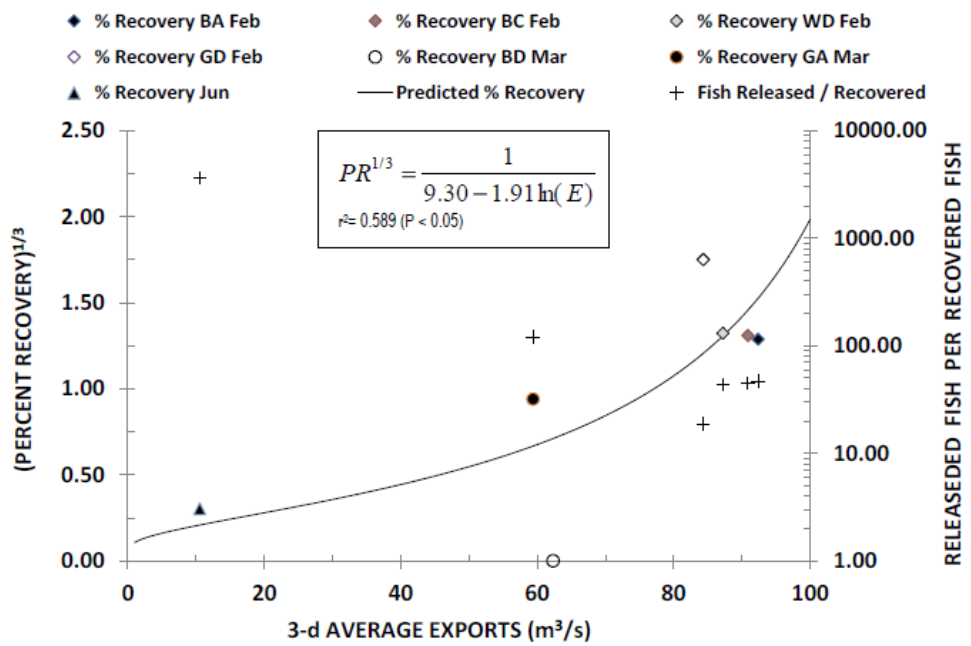

Figure 8. Observed and predicted percent recovery of delta smelt ($\log_{10}$ or cube-root transformed) as a function of: (**A**) residence time and (**B**) exports for releases conducted from February to June 2009. The total number of released fish per recaptured fish is indicated in the right axis (excluding the BD group released in March in which no fish were recovered).

Table 1. Delta smelt released and recaptured at the Skinner Fish Facility, south Delta, in February (adults), March (adults) and June 2008-2009 (juveniles) and concurrent mark-recapture results and hydrodynamic conditions.

Experiment	Mark[1]	Release Date	Mean daily Export (cfs)	Channel Velocity[2] (ft/s)	Primary Bypass Ratio	Secondary Bypass Ratio		No. Fish Released	No. Fish Recaptured[3]	Facility Efficiency
						Old Bldg	New Bldg			
SFF1	GA/D	2/23/09	2896	3.27	1.22	1.24	0.61	100	39	39
SFF1	W-A/D	2/23/09	2896	3.27	1.22	1.24	0.61	100	36	36
SFF1	B-C/D	2/23/09	2896	3.27	1.22	1.24	0.61	100	84	84
SFF1	B-A/D	2/23/09	2896	3.27	1.22	1.24	0.61	100	49	49
SFF2	G-A	3/23/09	2498	3.10	1.19	1.21	N/A	100	43	43
SFF2	B-D	3/23/09	2498	3.00	1.22	1.21	N/A	100	45	45
SFF0	Calcein	6/04/08	2260	1.70	1.19	1.21	N/A	200	60	30
SFF3	Calcein	6/19/09	532	1.30	1.22	N/A	1.18	800	193	24

[1] First letter denote photonic mark colors: B, G, W (blue, green, white). Second and third letters denote marked fins per fish: A, C, D (anal, caudal, dorsal). All juvenile and adults were calcein marked.

[2] Average channel velocities upstream of louvers at the time of fish releases.

[3] Total time from release to the last recaptured fish < 24 hr.

Table 2. Delta smelt released in Clifton Court Forebay and recovered at the Skinner Fish Facility, south Delta in February (adults), March (adults) and June 2008-2009 (juveniles) and concurrent recapture results and hydrodynamic conditions.

Experiment	Mark[1]	Date of Release	Total Days[2]	Mean Daily Export (cfs)[3]	Residence Time (days)[3]	Fish Released n	Fish Recaptured n	Percent Recovery	Pre-Screen Loss
RG1	G-D	2/24/09	24	2945	2.36	1398	75	5.36	89.9
RG1	W-D	2/25/09	10	2880	2.42	1426	33	2.31	95.6
RG1	B-C	2/26/09	4	2822	2.47	1382	31	2.24	95.8
RG1	B-A	2/27/09	7	2778	2.53	1501	32	2.13	96.0
RG2	G-A	3/26/09	5	2233	2.77	1447	12	0.83	98.1
RG2	B-D	3/27/09	none	2226	2.78	1402	0	0.00	100.0
West-CCF	Calcein	6/12/08	5	674	8.63	500	39	7.80	-
Mid-CCF	Calcein	6/26/08	7	1914	3.89	2647	55	2.08	-
RG3	Calcein	6/22/09	3	957	9.54	14413	4	0.03	99.9

[1] First letter denote photonic mark colors: B, G, W (blue, green, white). Second letter denote marked fins per fish: A, C, D, C (anal, caudal, dorsal). All juvenile and adults were calcein marked.

[2] Total days: days from release to last recapture.

[3] Daily mean over 10 days post-release.

Appendix.

Calculation of primary and secondary bypass ratios

Primary Bypass Ratio Calculations

$$\textbf{Primary flow per bay} = \frac{\text{Primary channel flow}}{\text{No. of bays in use}}$$

$$\textbf{Primary channel approach velocity} = \frac{\text{(Secondary channel flow)}}{\text{(Primary channel depth x Width of 2 primary bypass openings)}}$$

$$\textbf{Water velocity at primary bypass opening} = \frac{\text{(Primary flow per bay x No. bays in use)}}{\text{(Total width of primary bays in use x Primary channel depth)}}$$

$$\textbf{Primary bypass ratio} = \frac{\text{(Water velocity at primary bypass opening)}}{\text{(Primary channel approach velocity)}}$$

Secondary Bypass Ratio Calculations

$$\textbf{Secondary channel approach velocity} = \frac{\text{(Secondary channel flow)}}{\text{(Width of secondary channel x Secondary channel depth)}}$$

$$\textbf{Water velocity at secondary bypass opening} = \frac{\text{(Flow into the holding tank building)}}{\text{(Secondary channel depth x Width of secondary bypass opening(s))}}$$

$$\textbf{Secondary bypass ratio} = \frac{\text{(Water velocity at secondary bypass opening)}}{\text{(Secondary channel approach velocity)}}$$