MANAGEMENT STRATEGY · THE DELTA AS A LIVING PLACE

Relax Delta salinity standards

A management strategy in the COEQWAL scenario library

> This strategy removes the requirement for fall (August-October) X2 salinity conditions as originally set by the 2008–2009 Biological Opinions. Other Delta flow and salinity requirements remain in place and may control system behavior.

This brief describes *a scenario that relaxes part of the set of rules that regulate Delta salinity via the deactivation of fall X2 standards*, one of 28 management strategies in the COEQWAL scenario library. Each strategy is simulated once under each of five hydroclimates; the references note at the end of this brief lists the model runs.

§2 WHAT THIS STRATEGY CHANGES

In recent years, many parties have called for the removal or loosening of the requirement that certain X2 conditions (the location of the 2-ppt isohaline) be met in August through October ("fall X2"), as originally set by the 2008–2009 Biological Opinions. Arguments for their removal include that these fall X2 actions have not had the intended benefit for Delta ecology and fish. The most recent revised USBR proposed operation released in December 2025 ("Action 5"), updating the version released in December 2024, also removes the fall X2 requirement.

This scenario deactivates the rules that set flows required to meet the fall X2 salinity conditions. Other Delta flow and salinity requirements are still in place and may control system behavior regardless of whether the fall X2 requirement is

in effect.

§3 THE CONFIGURATION IN DETAIL

The table compares the eight operational fields that define this strategy against current operations — the strategy that represents existing operational rules, recent (2020) land use, and TUCPs. Rows that match current operations are shown in light gray; rows that differ are highlighted.

ASPECT	CURRENT OPERATIONS	THIS STRATEGY
TUCP actions	Active	Active
SGMA actions	None	None
Land use	2020 LandIQ	2020 LandIQ
Delta regulations	Standard	Standard
BiOps	2019 / 2020 ITP	Modified versions of 2019 / 2020 ITP
Infrastructure	Standard	Standard
Flows	Standard	Fall X2 salinity (and flow) requirements removed
Allocation / priorities	Standard	Standard

§4 LINEAGE AND SOURCE

This strategy was developed by the COEQWAL team using the Current Operations scenario as the base from which changes were made. The key change in this scenario is the deactivation of the flow requirements tied to the fall X2 salinity standards. It is otherwise unchanged from the COEQWAL Current Operations scenario (i.e. it uses the 2020 land use and DWR's historically adjusted hydrology). The CalSim model files for this strategy are referenced by the run IDs in the references note at the end of this brief.

§5 RELATED STRATEGIES

RELATED STRATEGIES — THE DELTA AS A LIVING PLACE

Increase Delta outflows (65% unimpaired flow target). USBR Alternative 3 for the Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project, with Delta outflow requirements set to roughly 65% of unimpaired volume.

Reduce Delta outflows (35% unimpaired flow target). USBR Alternative 3 for the Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project, with Delta outflow requirements set to roughly 35% of unimpaired volume.

Maintain Delta outflows (45% unimpaired flow target). USBR Alternative 3 for the Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project, with Delta outflow requirements set to roughly 45% of unimpaired volume.

Increase Delta outflows (55% unimpaired flow target). USBR Alternative 3 for the Long-Term Operation of the Central Valley Project, with Delta outflow requirements set to roughly 55% of unimpaired volume.

Increase Shasta carry-over storage. Spring CVP allocation reductions that raise the target carry-over storage in Shasta reservoir by 20% relative to current operations.

Delta Conveyance Project. The Delta Conveyance tunnel (6,000 cfs North Delta Diversion capacity) with 2025 voluntary-agreement flows and Sacramento Valley rice-fallowing actions.

§6 WHAT THIS DOESN'T SAY

This brief describes a scenario representation in CalSim, not a real-world policy proposal or implementation plan. The strategy as modeled may not capture all details necessary to support direct translation to actual operations. The brief does not predict, evaluate, or recommend any outcome — it describes what the scenario changes about CalSim's representation of the system. For what the model produces under this strategy, see the result briefs referenced in §7.

§7 SEE RESULTS FOR THIS STRATEGY

To see modeled outcomes under this strategy across all nine key outcomes at the reference hydroclimate, see the *The Delta as a living place* theme brief.

To see outcomes at a specific location of interest, see the relevant LOI briefs — particularly those for Delta locations.

Compare this strategy in the data explorer → (https://coeqwal.org/explore?strategy=s0045)

REFERENCES — MODEL RUNS

Each strategy is simulated once under each of five hydroclimates. The table lists the model run behind this strategy and the current-operations run it is compared against, for each hydroclimate, so any reader can trace this page to specific CalSim runs.

HYDROCLIMATE	THIS STRATEGY	CURRENT OPERATIONS
Historical hydroclimate (adjusted)	s0045	s0020
Moderate climate stress (EC-Earth3-Veg)	s0155	s0134
Moderate-high climate stress (cc50)	s0083	s0047
High climate stress (cc95)	s0103	s0056
Extreme climate stress (TaiESM1)	s0129	s0108