

# Biological Effects of Flows Proposed Water Quality Standards for the Lower San Joaquin River & Tributaries



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The Bay Institute

# Main Points

- No evidence that flows <50% UIF will achieve salmon doubling targets or ensure a functioning south Delta ecosystem
- Even at higher flows, salmon doubling is possible only if accompanied by very precise manipulation of flow (aka “shaping”) & massive investments in physical restoration of habitat
- Rearing habitat restoration is necessary, but at flows <50% UIF, restoration acreage & costs skyrocket
- High temperatures limit egg incubation and juvenile rearing habitat at flows <50% UIF – this constrains tributary carrying capacity and the ability to shape flows without producing negative effects

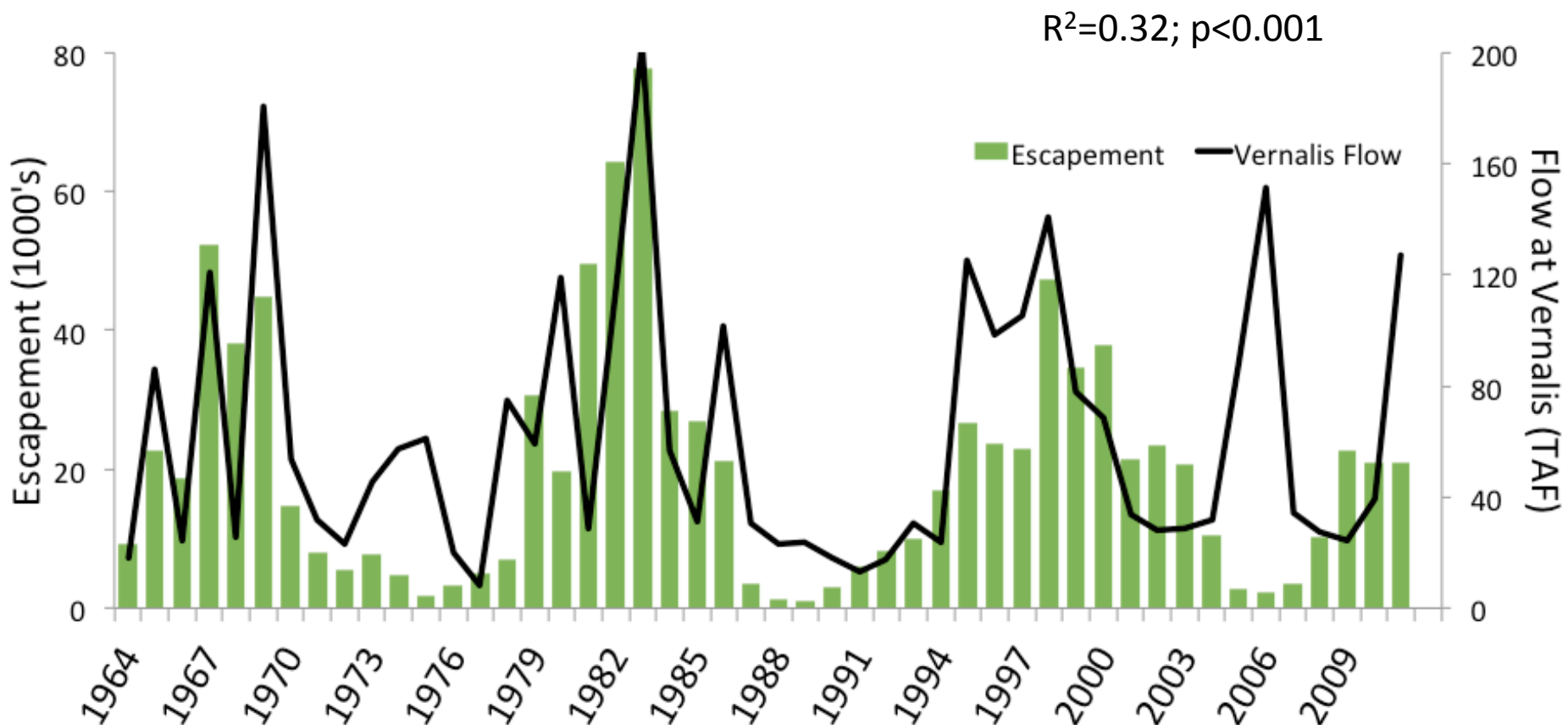
# Analyses

Numerous lines of evidence demonstrate that 40% UIF is inadequate.

- Strong correlations between winter-spring flows and:
  - Adult escapement
  - Juvenile survival on tributaries
- Strong functional connections between flow and carrying capacity via:
  - Temperature
  - Inundated off-channel habitat

# San Joaquin Salmon Escapement

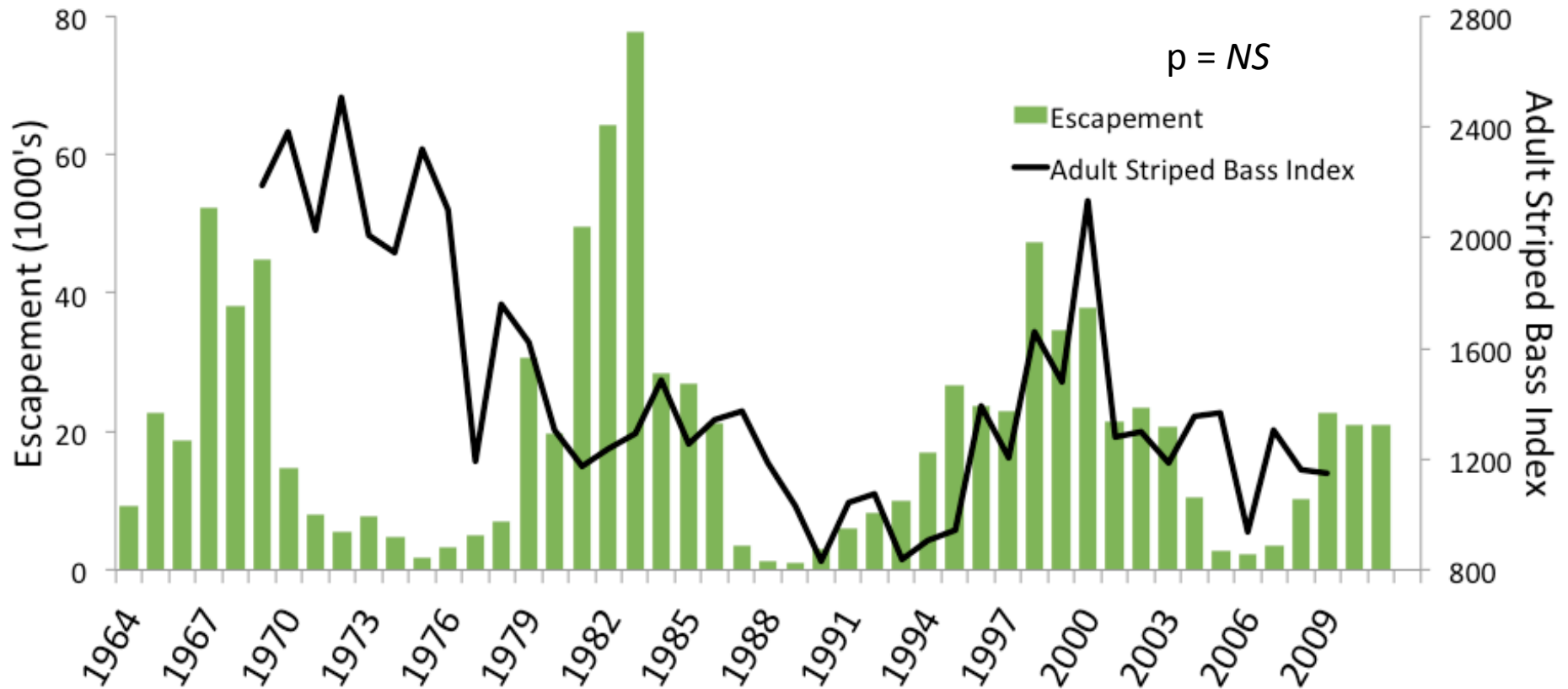
*strongly correlated with winter-spring flows*



Redrawn from Sturrock et al. 2015

# San Joaquin Salmon Escapement

*not strongly correlated with striped bass abundance*



Also, not correlated with

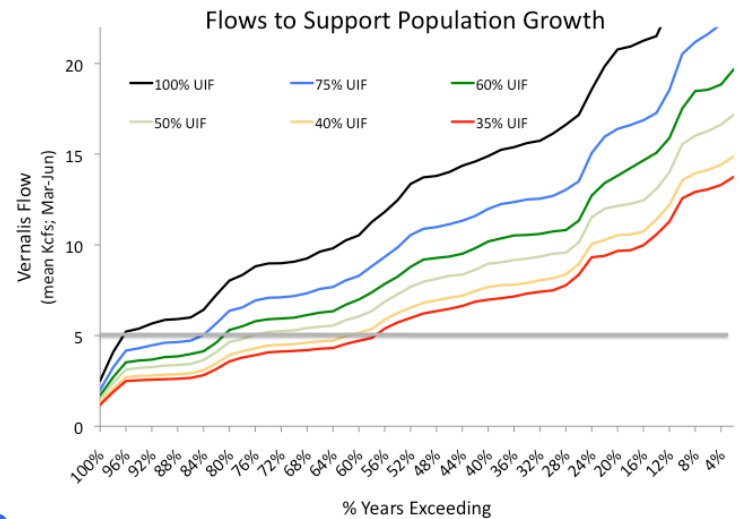
- “Ocean conditions” (North Pacific Gyre Oscillation or NPDO)
- Hatchery releases (Merced or Mokelumne hatcheries)

# Seasonal Flows Correlate with Escapement

## Average Spring flows at Vernalis of:

- 5 Kcfs → Population growth
  - (desired recurrence occurs @ 50-60% UIF)
- 10 Kcfs → AFRP Production Target
  - (desired recurrence occurs @ >60% UIF)

Flow shaping will not change  
*seasonal average flows*

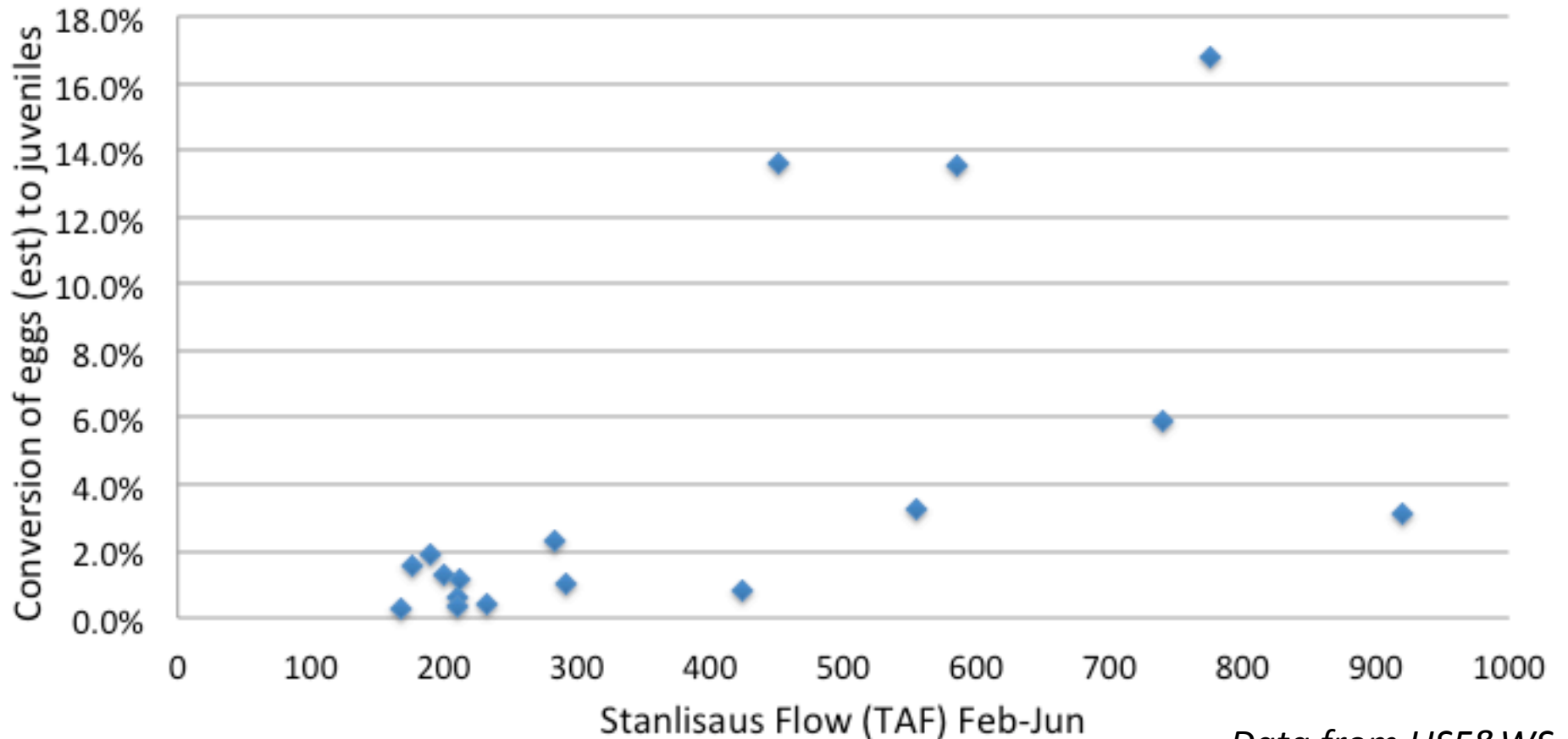


TBI presentation to SWRCB March 2013

“Available scientific information indicates that average March through June flows of 5,000 cfs on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis represent a flow threshold at which survival of juveniles and subsequent adult abundance is substantially improved for fall-run Chinook salmon and that average flows of 10,000 cfs during this period may provide conditions necessary to achieve doubling of San Joaquin basin fall-run. Both the AFRP and DFG flow recommendations to achieve doubling also seem to support these general levels of flow....”

# Juvenile Salmon Productivity (Survival) *strongly correlated with winter-spring flows*

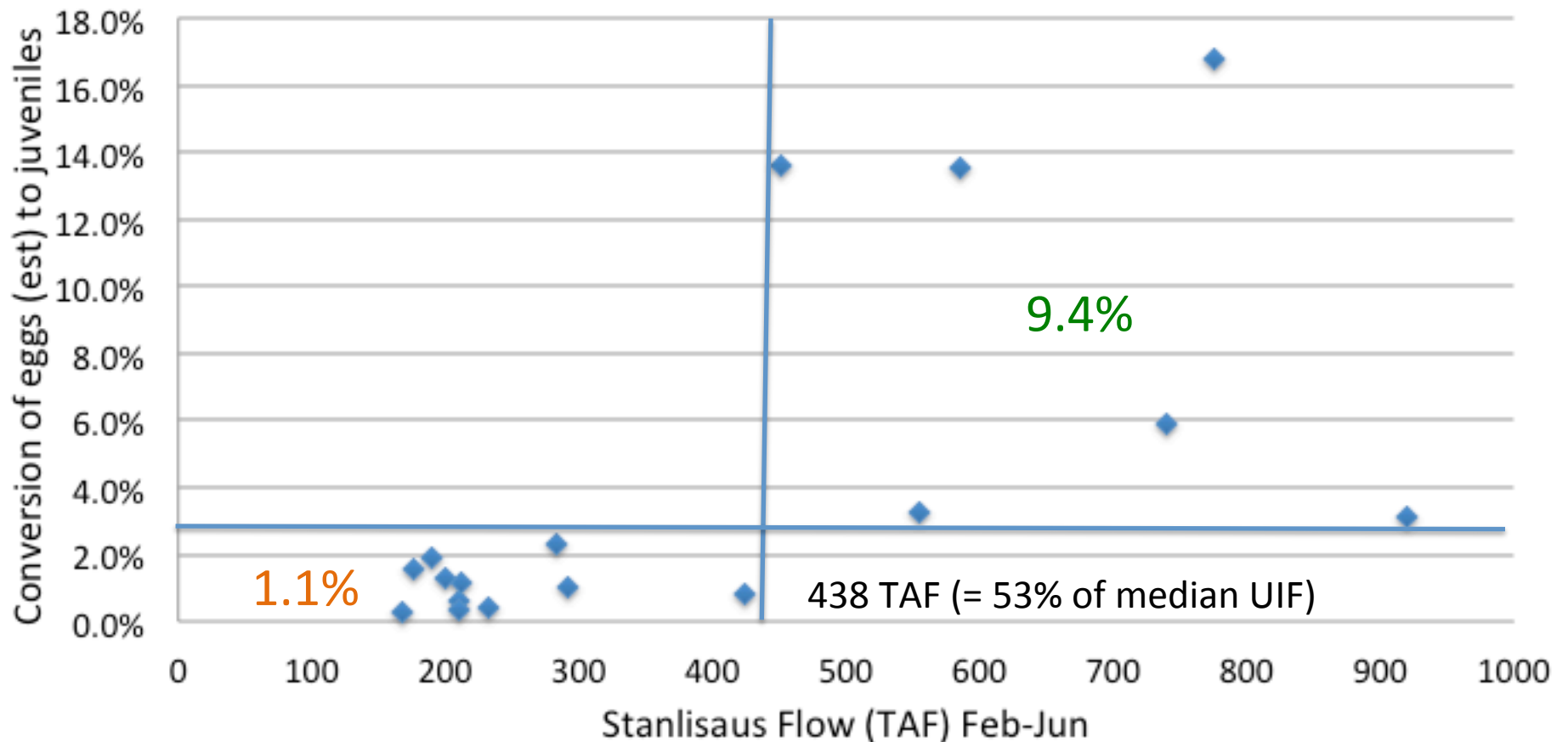
## Stanislaus River Chinook salmon Productivity v. Flow 1996-2012



Data from USF&WS

# Juvenile Salmon Productivity (Survival) *strongly correlated with winter-spring flows*

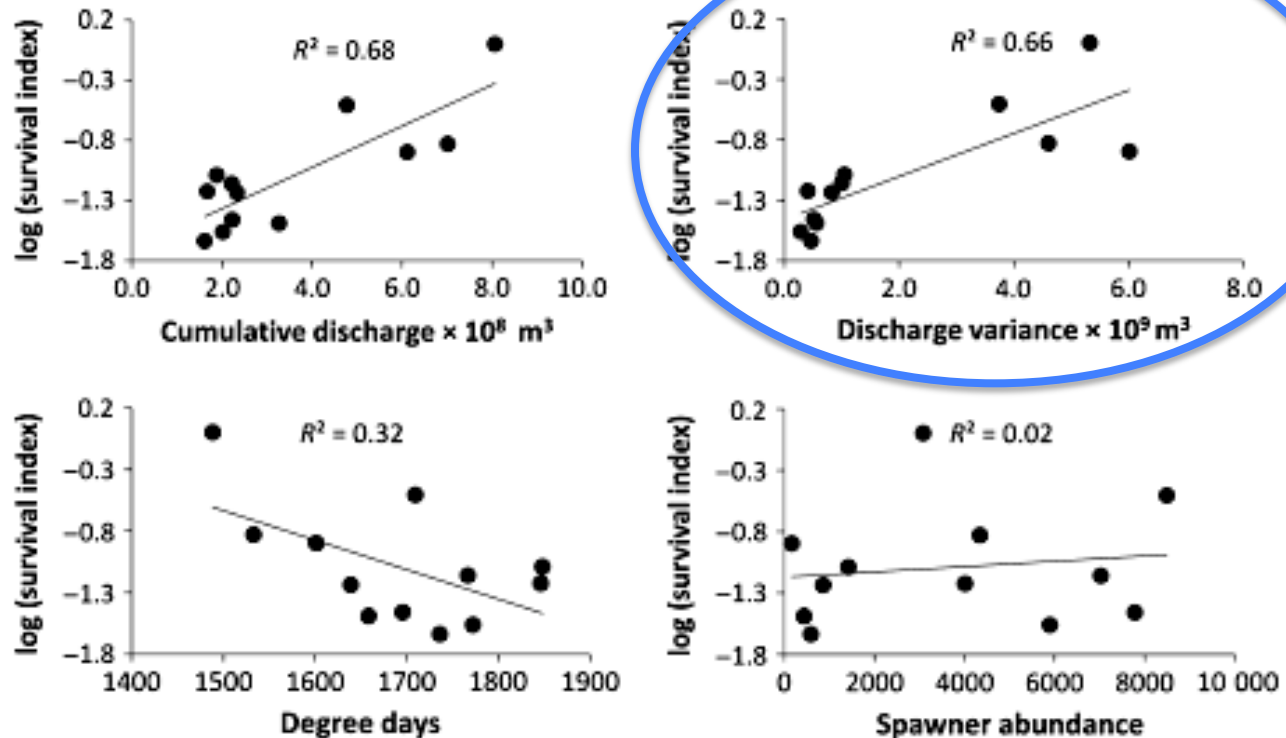
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# Juvenile Salmon Productivity (Survival) *strongly correlated with winter-spring flows*



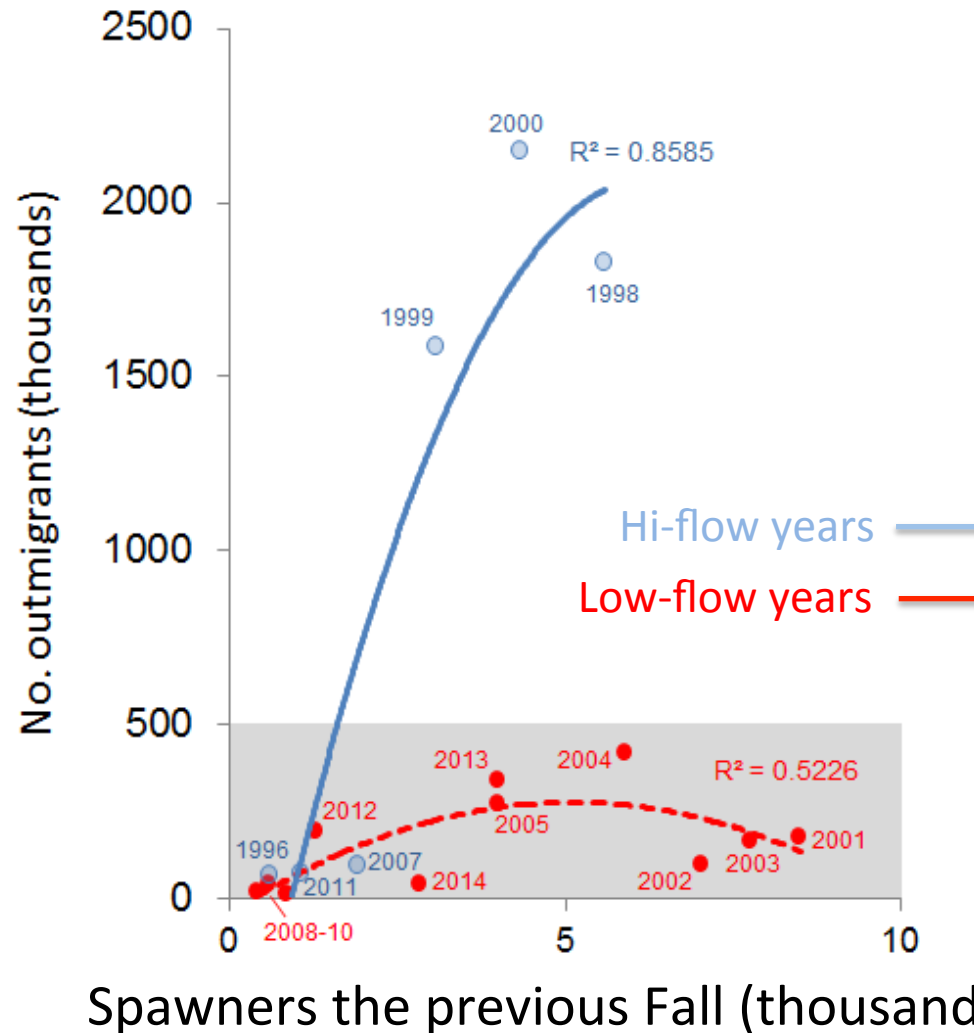
**Figure 3.** Relationships between the juvenile Chinook salmon survival index and four predictor variables.

## Flow Shaping Tends to Reduce Flow Variation

Zeug et al. 2014. *Response of juvenile Chinook salmon to managed flow: lessons learned from a population at the southern extent of their range in North America.* Fisheries Management and Ecology. 21: 155–168.

# Juvenile Salmon Productivity (Survival)

*Mechanism: flow-mediated carrying capacity*



# Flow and Carrying Capacity Mechanistic Relationships

Carrying Capacity = Habitat Suitability \* Space \* Time

- **Limited inundated off-channel habitat** limits capacity for:
  - Juvenile migration and rearing

# Rearing Habitat Area

## *Analysis of changes in inundated acreage must link to biological outcomes*

Minimum habitat acreage required to support “doubled” salmon populations

- Estimated for Conservation Strategy of DWR’s Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (Available at: [http://www.water.ca.gov/conservationstrategy/docs/app\\_h.pdf](http://www.water.ca.gov/conservationstrategy/docs/app_h.pdf))

“Habitat” ≠ “wetted acre days”

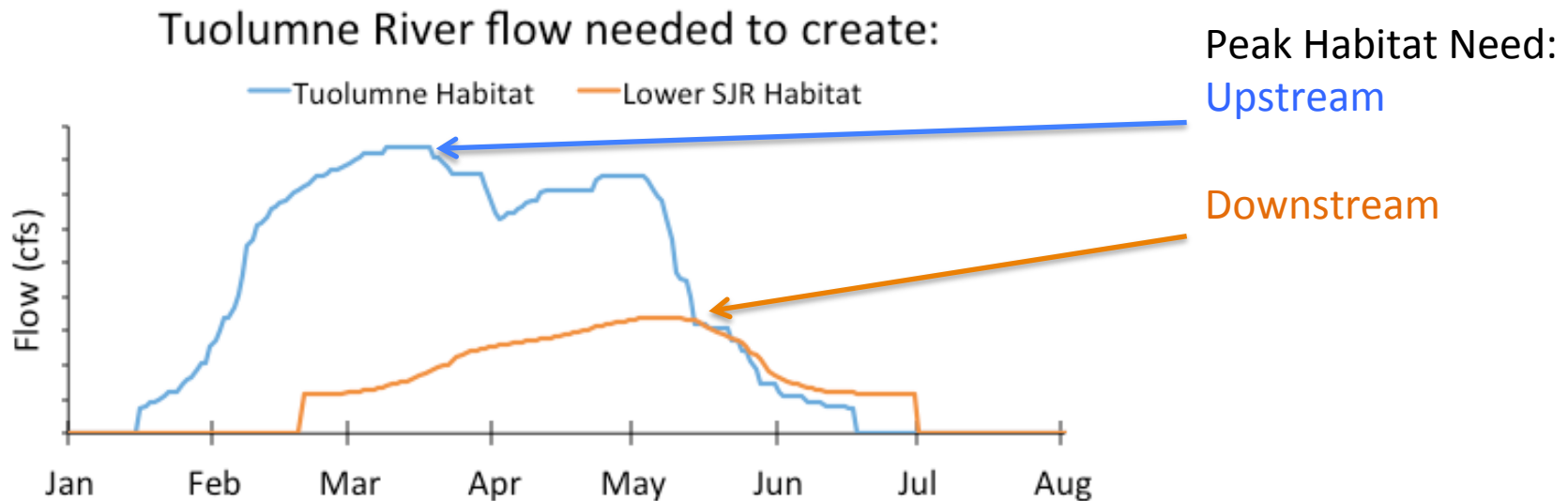
- The acreage required to support “doubled” salmon population must inundate:
  - at least 10 consecutive days (for low-gradient habitat)
  - at least 1/2 of years (i.e., in the median year)
- We assumed habitat suitability was at the high end of that currently available (HSI = 30%)
  - Field studies indicate HSI range from 7-30% (SJRRP 2012)

# Rearing Habitat Area

*Analysis of changes in inundated acreage must link to biological outcomes*

Inundated habitat is required along the migration route (tributaries and lower San Joaquin River) throughout the migration period

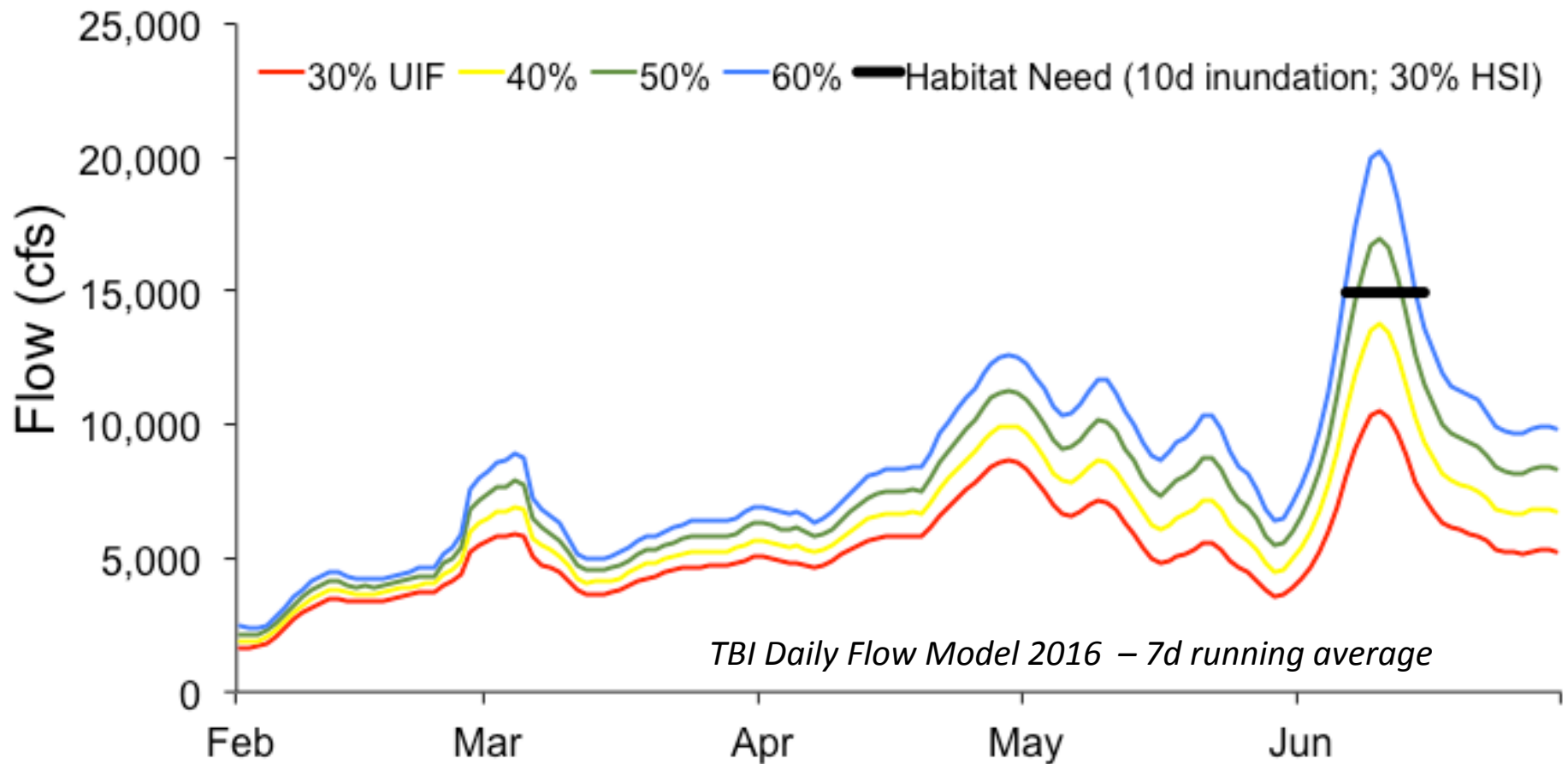
- Habitat required upstream must inundate before habitat required downstream (~1.5 month lag)



# Flow and Habitat are Linked

*Trade-off between physical restoration and required in-stream flows*

## Lower SJR River Chinook Salmon Habitat median year; 30% HSI

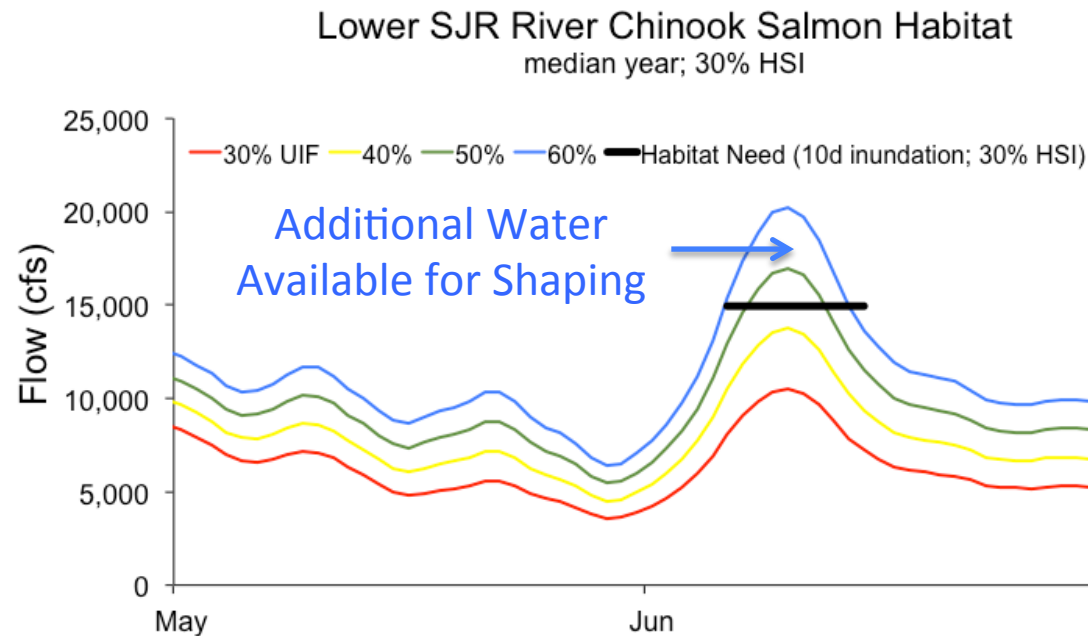


*TBI Daily Flow Model 2016 – 7d running average*

*TBI Daily Flow Model 2016 – 7d running average*

# Flow and Habitat are Linked

Lower flows require more habitat restoration & limit opportunities



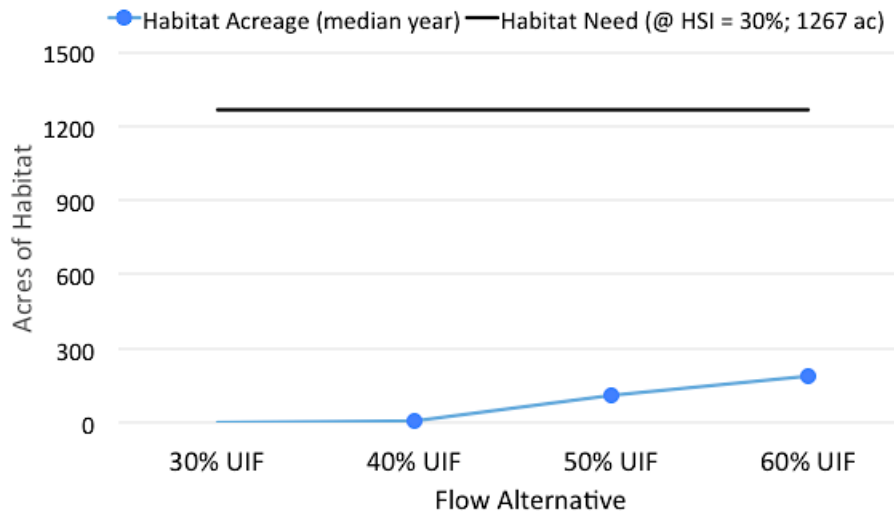
Alternative	Days of Inundation	Additional AF water needed w/o shaping	Additional AF water available for shaping	Acreage shortfall w/o shaping	Acreage shortfall with shaping
60%	8	2,547	54,291	996	0
50%	5	17,534	14,011	3,201	1,766
40%	0	58,791	0	5,131	5,131
30%	0	114,059	0	6,787	6,787

# Flow and Habitat are Linked

Lower flows require more habitat restoration & limit opportunities

Stanislaus River Inundated Chinook Salmon Habitat

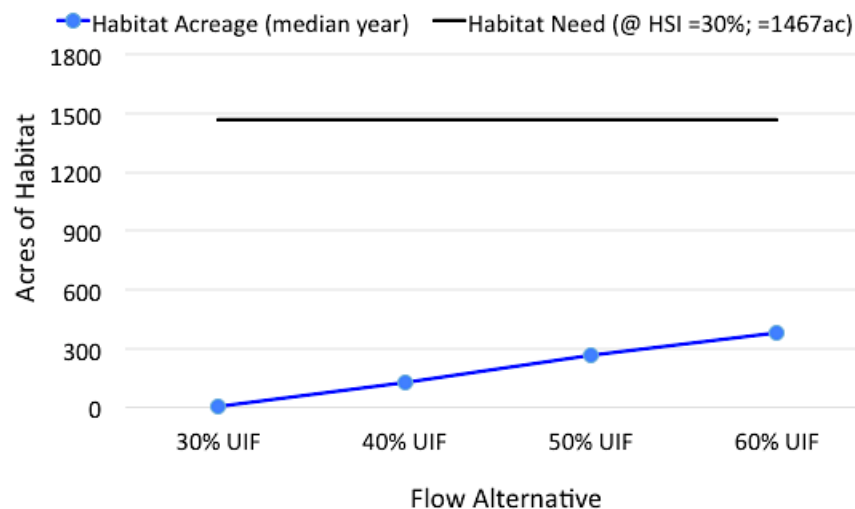
10 consecutive day; 30% HSI



Alternative	Acreage shortfall (@ 30% HSI)
60%	1,080
50%	1,160
40%	1,258
30%	1,267

Merced River Inundated Chinook Salmon Habitat

10 consecutive days; 30% HSI



Alternative	Acreage shortfall (@ 30% HSI)
60%	1,088
50%	1,203
40%	1,344
30%	1,467



# Flow and Carrying Capacity

## Mechanistic Relationships

Carrying Capacity = Habitat Suitability \* Space \* Time

**Limited inundated off-channel habitat** limits capacity for:

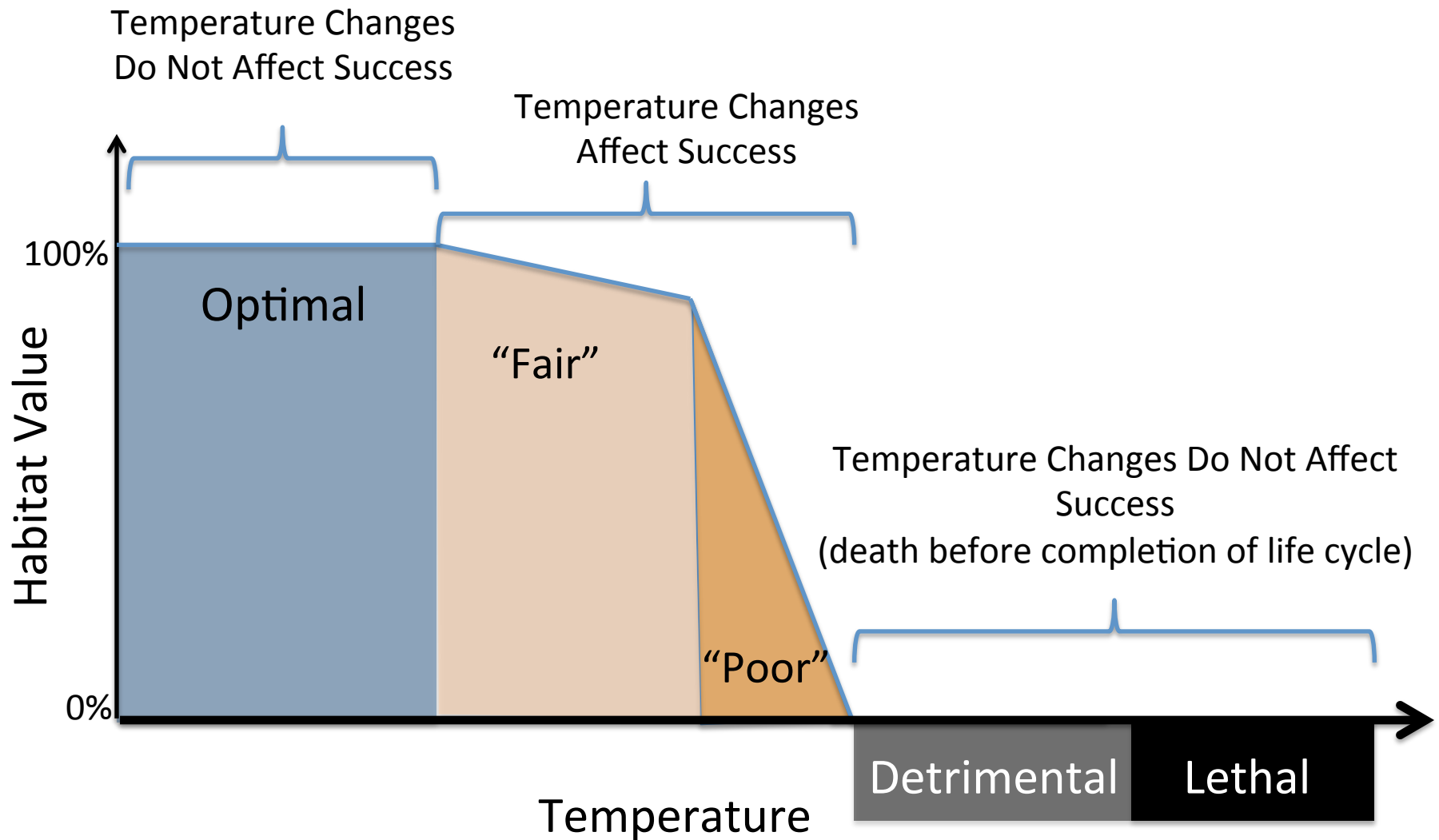
- Juvenile migration and rearing

➤ **High Temperatures** limit capacity for:

- Spawning & incubation
- Juvenile migration and rearing

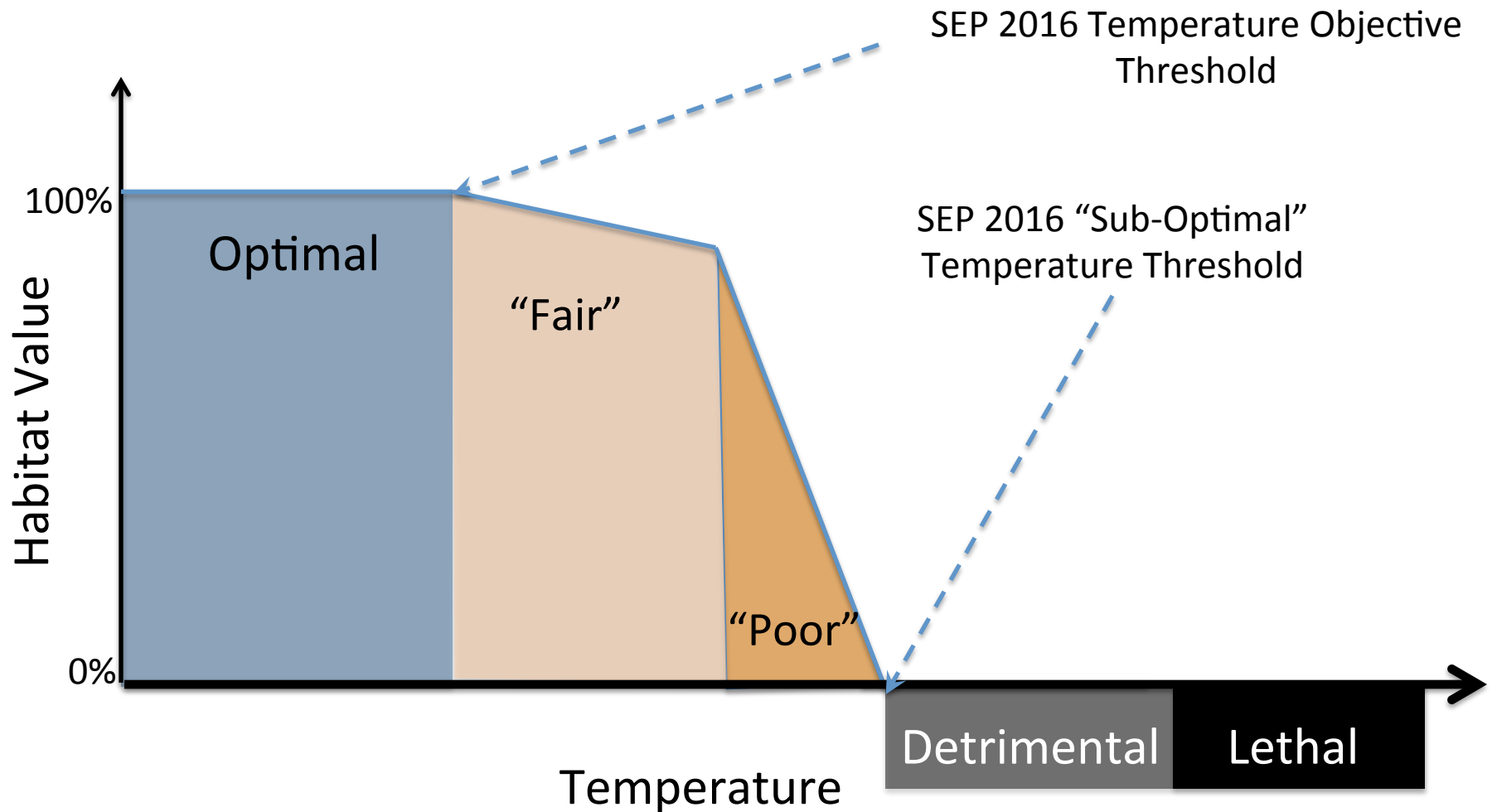
# Temperature: Thresholds v. Continuous Effects

*Analysis of temperature changes must link to biological outcomes*



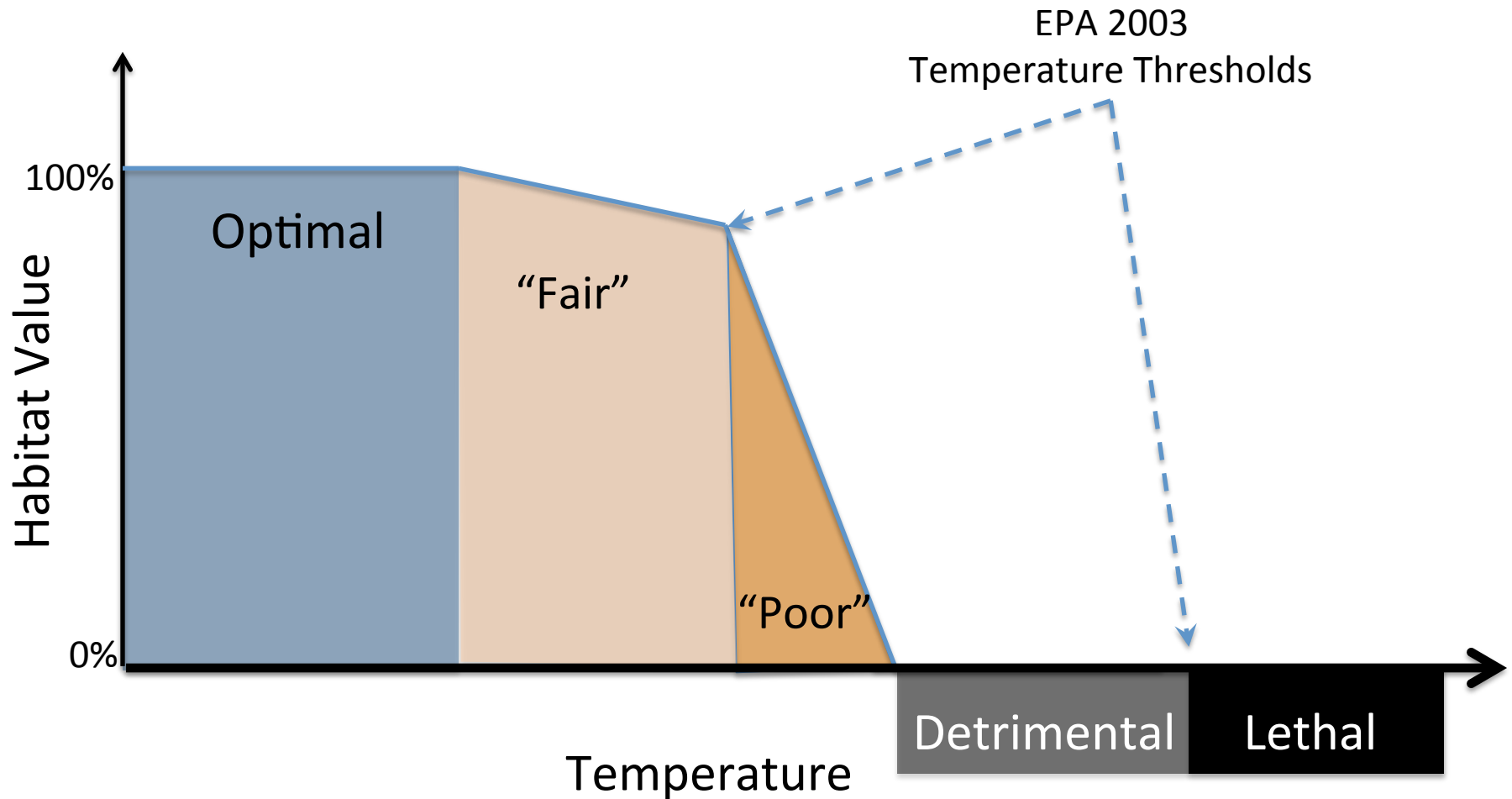
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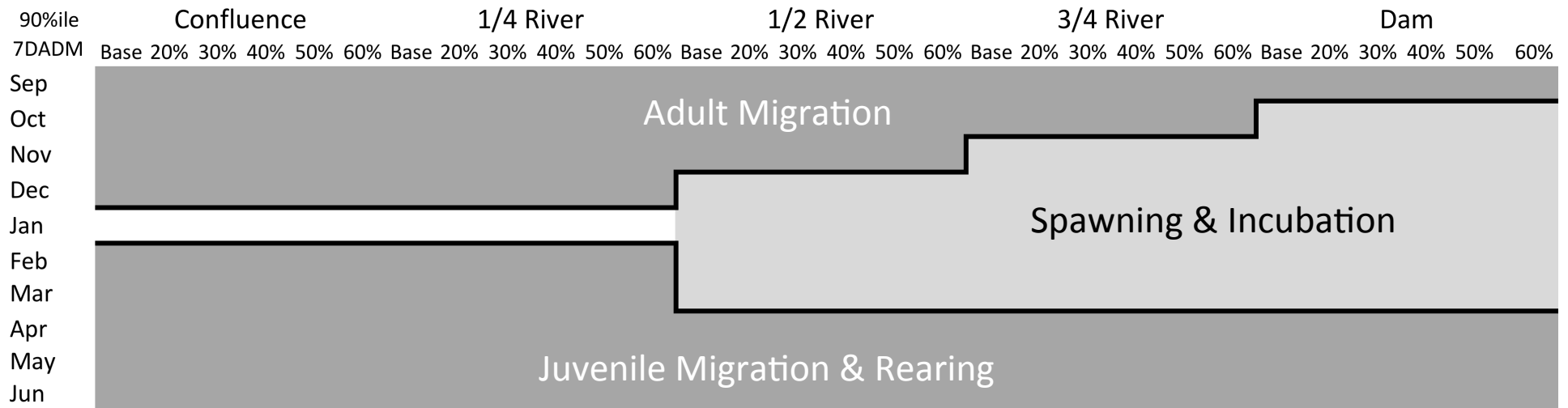


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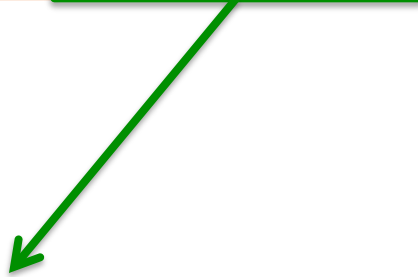
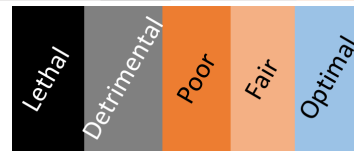


# Temperature: Life Stage-specific Temperature Thresholds



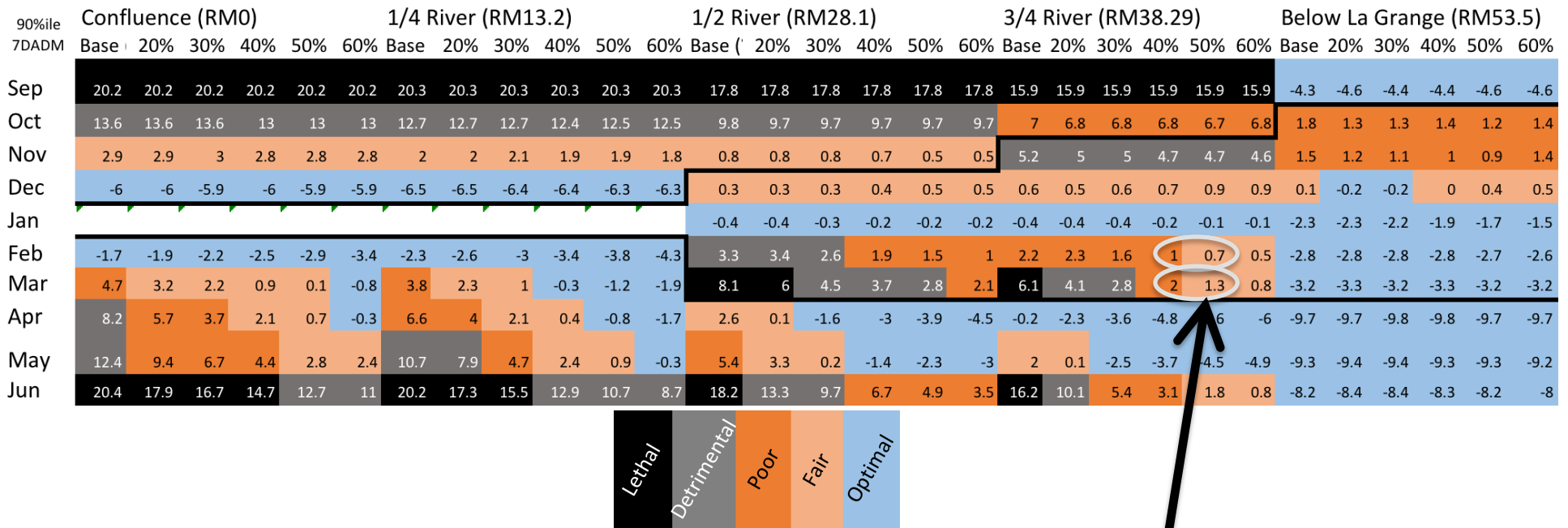
# Tuolumne River Temperature

90%ile 7DADM	Confluence (RM0)					1/4 River (RM13.2)					1/2 River (RM28.1)					3/4 River (RM38.29)					Below La Grange (RM53.5)									
	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%
Sep	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	-4.3	-4.6	-4.4	-4.4	-4.6	-4.6
Oct	13.6	13.6	13.6	13	13	13	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.4	12.5	12.5	9.8	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	7	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.4
Nov	2.9	2.9	3	2.8	2.8	2.8	2	2	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.5	5.2	5	5	4.7	4.7	4.6	1.5	1.2	1.1	1	0.9	1.4
Dec	-6	-6	-5.9	-6	-5.9	-5.9	-6.5	-6.5	-6.4	-6.4	-6.3	-6.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.1	-0.2	-0.2	0	0.4	0.5
Jan													-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-2.3	-2.3	-2.2	-1.9	-1.7	-1.5
Feb	-1.7	-1.9	-2.2	-2.5	-2.9	-3.4	-2.3	-2.6	-3	-3.4	-3.8	-4.3	3.3	3.4	2.6	1.9	1.5	1	2.2	2.3	1.6	1	0.7	0.5	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.7	-2.6
Mar	4.7	3.2	2.2	0.9	0.1	-0.8	3.8	2.3	1	-0.3	-1.2	-1.9	8.1	6	4.5	3.7	2.8	2.1	6.1	4.1	2.8	2	1.3	0.8	-3.2	-3.3	-3.2	-3.3	-3.2	-3.2
Apr	8.2	5.7	3.7	2.1	0.7	-0.3	6.6	4	2.1	0.4	-0.8	-1.7	2.6	0.1	-1.6	-3	-3.9	-4.5	-0.2	-2.3	-3.6	-4.8	-5.6	-6	-9.7	-9.7	-9.8	-9.8	-9.7	-9.7
May	12.4	9.4	6.7	4.4	2.8	2.4	10.7	7.9	4.7	2.4	0.9	-0.3	5.4	3.3	0.2	-1.4	-2.3	-3	2	0.1	-2.5	-3.7	-4.5	-4.9	9.3	-9.4	-9.4	-9.3	-9.3	-9.2
Jun	20.4	17.9	16.7	14.7	12.7	11	20.2	17.3	15.5	12.9	10.7	8.7	18.2	13.3	9.7	6.7	4.9	3.5	16.2	10.1	5.4	3.1	1.8	0.8	8.2	-8.4	-8.4	-8.3	-8.2	-8



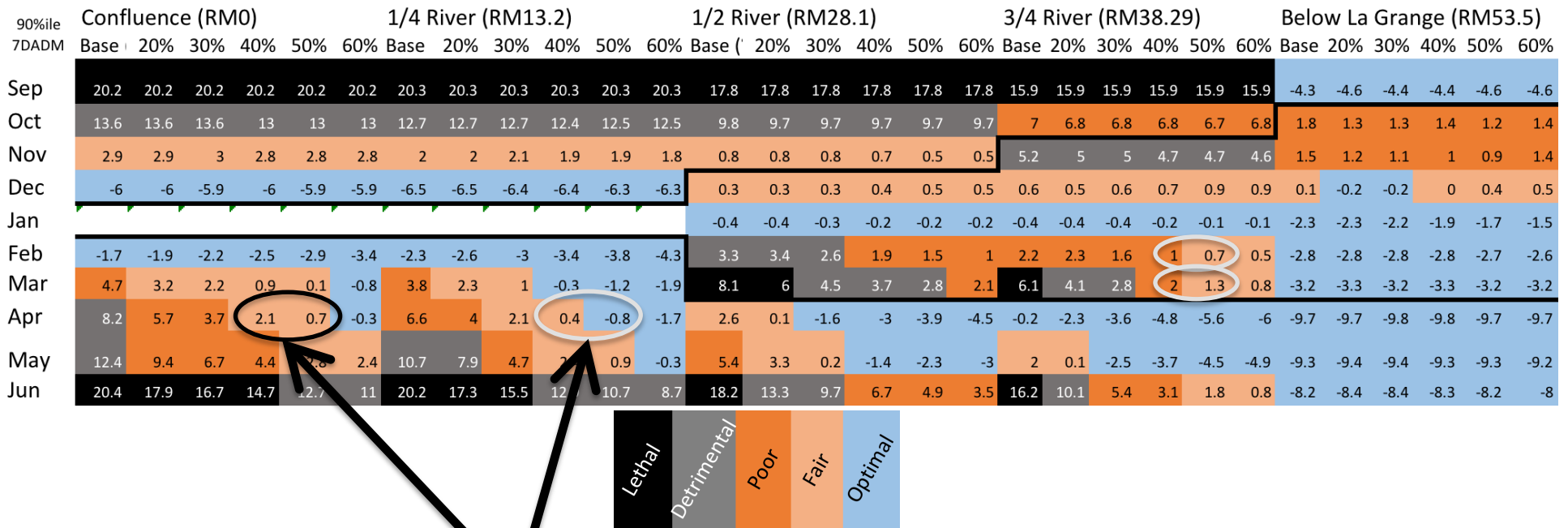
= Modeled Temperature (SED 2016) *minus* Optimal Temperature (SEP 2016)

# Tuolumne River Temperature



Gain miles of incubation  
habitat in Feb & March  
@ 50% UIF

# Tuolumne River Temperature

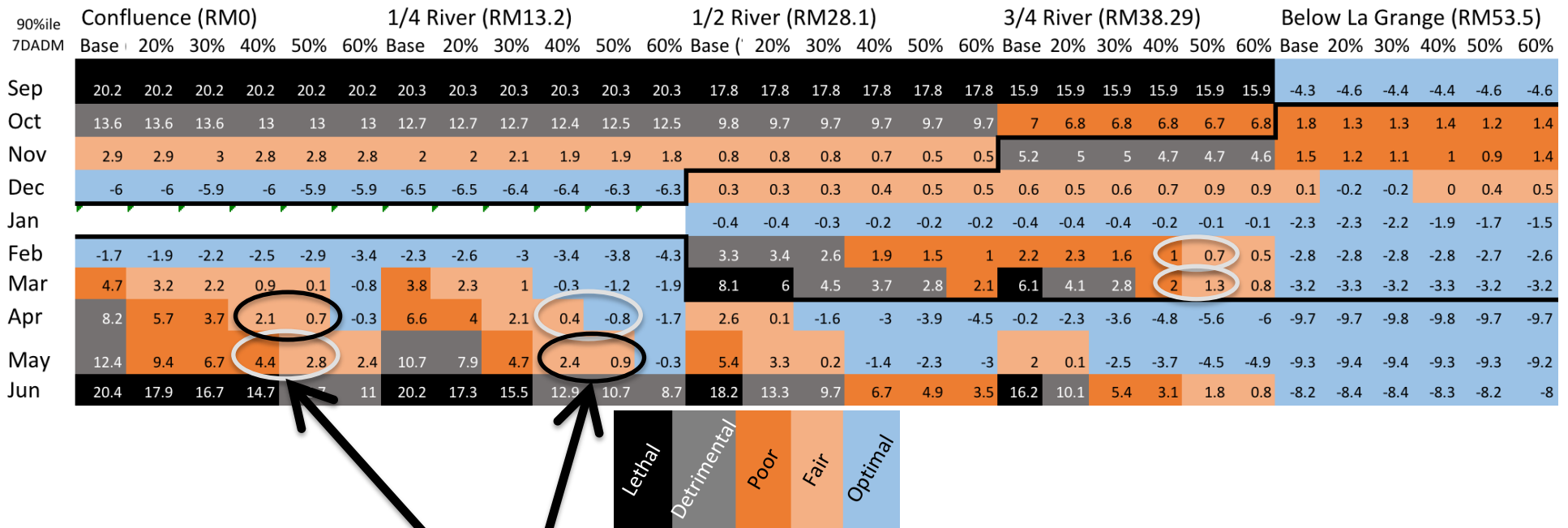


Substantially better rearing  
conditions over miles of  
habitat during April  
@ 50% UIF

Source data from Phase I SED, 2016



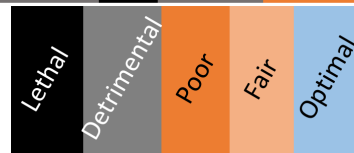
# Tuolumne River Temperature



Successful juvenile rearing/  
migration extended for a  
month @ 50% UIF

# Tuolumne River Temperature

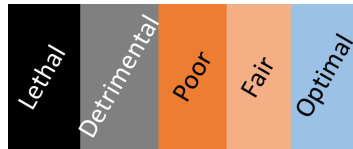
	Confluence (RM0)						1/4 River (RM13.2)						1/2 River (RM28.1)						3/4 River (RM38.29)						Below La Grange (RM53.5)					
	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%
Sep	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	-4.3	-4.6	-4.4	-4.4	-4.6	-4.6
Oct	13.6	13.6	13.6	13	13	13	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.4	12.5	12.5	9.8	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	7	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.4
Nov	2.9	2.9	3	2.8	2.8	2.8	2	2	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.5	5.2	5	5	4.7	4.7	4.6	1.5	1.2	1.1	1	0.9	1.4
Dec	-6	-6	-5.9	-6	-5.9	-5.9	-6.5	-6.5	-6.4	-6.4	-6.3	-6.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.1	-0.2	-0.2	0	0.4	0.5
Jan													-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-2.3	-2.3	-2.2	-1.9	-1.7	-1.5
Feb	-1.7	-1.9	-2.2	-2.5	-2.9	-3.4	-2.3	-2.6	-3	-3.4	-3.8	-4.3	3.3	3.4	2.6	1.9	1.5	1	2.2	2.3	1.6	1	0.7	0.5	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.7	-2.6
Mar	4.7	3.2	2.2	0.9	0.1	-0.8	3.8	2.3	1	-0.3	-1.2	-1.9	8.1	6	4.5	3.7	2.8	2.1	6.1	4.1	2.8	2	1.3	0.8	-3.2	-3.3	-3.2	-3.3	-3.2	-3.2
Apr	8.2	5.7	3.7	2.1	0.7	-0.3	6.6	4	2.1	0.4	-0.8	-1.7	2.6	0.1	-1.6	-3	-3.9	-4.5	-0.2	-2.3	-3.6	-4.8	-5.6	-6	-9.7	-9.7	-9.8	-9.8	-9.7	-9.7
May	12.4	9.4	6.7	4.4	2.8	2.4	10.7	7.9	4.7	2.4	0.9	-0.3	5.4	3.3	0.2	-1.4	-2.3	-3	2	0.1	-2.5	-3.7	-4.5	-4.9	-9.3	-9.4	-9.4	-9.3	-9.3	-9.2
Jun	20.4	17.9	16.7	14.7	12.7	11	20.2	17.3	15.5	12.9	10.7	8.7	18.2	13.3	9.7	6.7	4.9	3.5	16.2	10.1	5.4	3.1	1.8	0.8	-8.2	-8.4	-8.4	-8.3	-8.2	-8



Month(s)	Life stage	Result @ 40% UIF	Result @ 50% UIF
Sept-Oct	Adult Migration	Not possible – no difference among alternatives	
Oct-Nov	Spawning/Incubation	Largely inhospitable -- no difference among alternatives	
Dec-Jan	Spawning/Incubation	Largely good conditions – no difference among alternatives	
Feb-Mar	Incubation	Poor incubation @ ¼ river	Good incubation @ ¼ river
Apr	Rearing/Outmigration	Low-stress @ ¼ river; Stressful @ confluence	Optimal @ ¼ river; Low-stress @ confluence
May	Rearing/Outmigration	Stressful @ ¼ river; Poor survival @ confluence	Low-stress @ ¼ river Stressful @ confluence;

# Merced River Temperature

90%ile 7DADM	Confluence (RM2.52)					1/4 River (RM13.41)					1/2 River (RM27.07)					3/4 River (RM37.79)					Below Crocker Huffman (RM)									
	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%
Sep	16.9	16.9	16.9	16.9	16.9	16.9	18.4	18.3	18.4	18.3	18.4	18.5	18.4	18.2	18.2	18.3	18.4	18.6	20.3	19.9	19.9	20	20.2	20.5	7.8	3.8	4	4.2	4.9	7.3
Oct	11	10.3	10.6	10.4	10.5	11	11.8	10.9	11.1	10.8	11	11.7	10.9	9.3	9.5	9.2	9.5	10.6	10.9	8.4	8.7	8.3	8.7	10.6	12.9	6.9	6.6	6.7	7.5	10.5
Nov	2.8	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.7	2.1	3.4	2.3	2.4	2	2.1	2.6	3.3	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.6	2.1	9.9	7.5	7.5	7.2	7.4	7.9	9	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.6	5.5
Dec	-5.6	-6	-6	-6	-5.9	-5.8	-4.9	-5.6	-5.6	-5.6	-5.5	-5.2	0.9	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.4	2.2	0.9	1	1	1.2	1.3	1.6	0	0	0.1	0.2	0.5
Jan													-1.6	-1.6	-1.6	-1.6	-1.6	-1.7	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-2.5	-2.8	-2.7	-2.8	-2.8	-2.9
Feb	-3	-2.9	-3	-3	-3.2	-3.4	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-3.1	-3.3	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.1	1.9	2.9	3	3	3	2.6	2.5	-1.9	-1.5	-1.5	-1.6	-1.7	-1.8
Mar	2.6	2.4	2	1.4	0.9	0.5	2.6	2.5	2	1.4	0.7	0.3	6.9	7	6.7	6	5.5	5.1	6.5	6.7	6.4	5.8	5.2	4.9	0	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.1
Apr	8.8	6.8	5.2	4.1	3.4	2.8	9.5	6.7	4.8	3.6	2.8	2.2	6.8	4.3	2.7	1.8	1.2	0.7	6.4	3.6	1.9	1.2	0.7	0.3	-4.7	-4.7	-5.3	-5.5	-5.3	-5.4
May	13.5	9.8	8.6	7.7	6.8	6.2	14.7	9.9	8.2	7.3	6.4	5.6	12	7.6	6.1	5.2	4.7	4	10.9	6.8	5	4.2	3.8	3.2	-3.4	-3.4	-3.8	-3.9	-3.8	-3.9
Jun	18.1	16.6	15.8	15.1	14.5	13.9	19.1	17.2	16.4	15.4	14.3	13.6	17.3	15.3	14.3	13.2	12	11.3	16.6	14.6	13.3	11.6	10.5	10	-0.3	-1.9	-1.7	-1.2	-0.9	-0.4

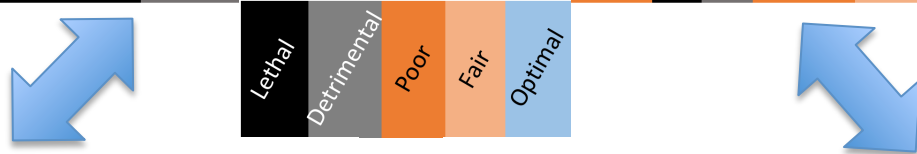


Month(s)	Life stage	Result @ 40% UIF	Result @ 50% UIF
Sept-Nov	Adult Migration	Not possible – no difference among alternatives	
Oct-Nov	Spawning/Incubation	Largely inhospitable -- no difference among alternatives	
Dec-Mar	Spawning/Incubation	Largely good conditions – no difference among alternatives	
Apr	Rearing/Outmigration	Poor survival throughout lower river	Fair conditions throughout lower river
May	Rearing/Outmigration	No juveniles	Some juveniles survive (probably early in month)

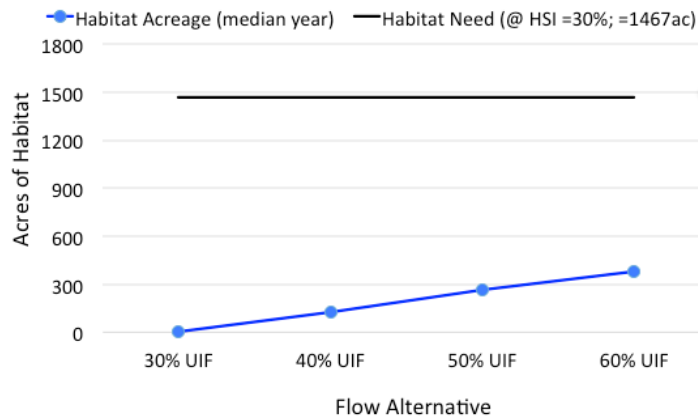
# Analysis of Habitat Effects Must be Integrated

*Aggressive "Flow Shaping" Will Produce Temperature Impacts;  
Likely Harmful @ <50% UIF*

90%ile 7DADM	Confluence (RM0)					1/4 River (RM13.2)					1/2 River (RM28.1)					3/4 River (RM38.29)					Below La Grange (RM53.5)									
	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%	Base	20%	30%	40%	50%					
Sep	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.3	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.8	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	-4.3	-4.6	-4.4	-4.4	-4.6
Oct	13.6	13.6	13.6	13	13	13	12.7	12.7	12.4	12.5	12.5	9.8	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	7	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.4		
Nov	2.9	2.9	3	2.8	2.8	2.8	2	2	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.5	5.2	5	5	4.7	4.7	4.6	1.5	1.2	1.1	1	0.9	1.4	
Dec	-6	-6	-5.9	-6	-5.9	-5.9	-6.5	-6.5	-6.4	-6.4	-6.3	-6.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.1	-0.2	-0.2	0	0.4	0.5
Jan													-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-2.3	-2.3	-2.2	-1.9	-1.7	
Feb	-1.7	-1.9	-2.2	-2.5	-2.9	-3.4	-2.3	-2.6	-3	-3.4	-3.8	-4.3	3.3	3.4	2.6	1.9	1.5	1	2.2	2.3	1.6	1	0.7	0.5	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.8	-2.6	
Mar	4.7	3.2	2.2	0.9	0.1	-0.8	3.8	2.3	1	-0.3	-1.2	-1.9	8.1	6	4.5	3.7	2.8	2.1	6.1	4.1	2.8	2	1.3	0.8	-3.2	-3.3	-3.2	-3.3	-3.2	
Apr	8.2	5.7	3.7	2.1	0.7	-0.3	6.6	4	2.1	0.4	-0.8	-1.7	2.6	0.1	-1.6	-3	-3.9	-4.5	-0.2	-2.3	-3.6	-4.8	-5.6	-6	-9.7	-9.7	-9.8	-9.8	-9.7	
May	12.4	9.4	6.7	4.4	2.8	2.4	10.7	7.9	4.7	2.4	0.9	-0.3	5.4	3.3	0.2	-1.4	-2.3	-3	2	0.1	-2.5	-3.7	-4.5	-4.9	-9.3	-9.4	-9.4	-9.3	-9.2	
Jun	20.4	17.9	16.7	14.7	12.7	11	20.2	17.3	15.5	12.9	10.7	8.7	18.2	13.3	9.7	6.7	4.9	3.5	16.2	10.1	5.4	3.1	1.8	0.8	-8.2	-8.4	-8.4	-8.3	-8.2	



Merced River Inundated Chinook Salmon Habitat  
10 consecutive days; 30% HSI



Lower SJR River Chinook Salmon Habitat  
median year; 30% HSI

