



## American River Group Notes

Conference Line: +1 (321) 209-6143; Access Code: 596 336 817#

Webinar: [Join the meeting now](#)

Thursday, February 19, 2026

### Action Items

1. N/A

### Introductions

1. USBR: Brian Willard, Drew Loney, Randi Field, Mechele Pacheco, Carolyn Bragg, Peggy Manza, Zarela Guerrero
2. NMFS: Paula Higginson
3. USFWS: N/A
4. CDFW: Emily Fischer, Nicholas Bauer, Crystal Rigby, Travis Apgar, Molly Shea
5. SWRCB: Travis Dennis, Nathalie Niepagen
6. Water Districts: N/A
7. City of Sacramento: Brian Sanders
8. Environmental Council of Sacramento: N/A
9. City of Roseville: N/A
10. Cramer Fish Sciences: Kirsten Sellheim
11. City of Folsom: N/A
12. DWR: John Ford
13. EBMUD: N/A
14. SMUD: Megan Peers
15. PCWA: N/A
16. WAPA: Eric Mork
17. SJWD: N/A

18. CVP SOD Ag Districts: N/A
19. Water Forum: Ashlee Casey, Erica Bishop
20. PSMFC: Hunter Morris
21. USACE: N/A
22. CBEC Engineering: N/A
23. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: N/A
24. CSUS: DeDe Birch
25. BKS Law Firm: Jennifer Buckman
26. Kleinschmidt: N/A
27. Watercourse Engineering: Mike Deas
28. RWA (Regional Water Authority): Michelle Banonis
29. Sunzi Consulting: N/A
30. Kearns & West: Katy Kennedy, Mia Schiappi
31. Other: Rod Hall

## **Announcements**

- Stephen Maurano will be taking a new position. Paula Higginson will serve as the new representative for NOAA at ARG.

## **Housekeeping**

- N/A

## **Operations Forecast**

### **SMUD**

1. Precipitation is approximately 101% of average to date, with additional precipitation from ongoing storm events expected to bring totals closer to average by the end of the month. Snowpack remains well below average at approximately 44% average to-date.
2. Storage is near average for this time of year. SMUD anticipates near-average releases following winter storm activity while preparing for spring runoff.

### **PCWA**

1. N/A

# Central Valley Operations

## Reclamation

1. Current releases from Nimbus Dam are approximately 2,500 cfs. A change order has been issued to increase releases, with flows expected to rise to approximately 5,000 cfs beginning February 23, subject to reevaluation based on storm conditions.
2. Folsom Reservoir storage is approximately 539 TAF, near the 15-year average. Year-to-date inflow is approximately 110% of the 15-year average, and total precipitation is approximately 100% of average (about 40 inches) for WY 2026.
3. Current conditions reflect an active storm pattern, with additional events forecasted. Recent and upcoming storms are expected to be warmer, with freezing levels potentially above 7,000 feet, increasing the likelihood of rain-driven runoff and loss of lower-elevation snowpack.
4. Runoff forecasts show significant uncertainty with projections ranging widely. Flows up to 30,000 cfs are considered more likely. Increased releases may be required to manage anticipated inflows and avoid encroachment. Operations over the past month have reflected shifting conditions, including early January storms driving flood management releases, followed by reduced releases during a dry period, and a return to increased releases in February due to renewed storm activity and Delta outflow requirements (including Port Chicago requirements).
5. Snowpack in the American River Basin remains below median levels and continues to be a key uncertainty affecting runoff timing and reservoir refill potential.
6. Downstream water temperatures have remained relatively stable around 50 degrees Fahrenheit, with minor fluctuations driven by recent weather patterns. Reservoir profiles indicate continued seasonal development of the cold water pool, with improving stratification conditions.
7. MRR for February is approximately 694 cfs, based on hydrologic conditions. Updates are expected as conditions evolve. Forecast confidence remains limited, particularly due to uncertainty around late-season snowpack recovery. Draft operational outlook scenarios indicate:
  - a. Under a 50% inflow hydrologic scenario, refill at Folsom is likely, with reduced risk of operational constraints in late spring and early summer.
  - b. Under a 90% inflow hydrologic scenario (reflecting current snowpack concerns), refill may not be achieved, and storage could remain below planning thresholds into the fall and early winter.

## **Questions/Comments**

1. Water Forum noted appreciation for Reclamation's transparency in implementing updated flow management calculations, acknowledging that results reflect an atypical water year.
2. CSUS asked whether releases may exceed 5,000 cfs.

Reclamation indicated that higher releases are possible but will depend on storm progression and will be reevaluated following weekend conditions.

## **Fisheries Update**

### **CDFW Updates**

1. Nimbus hatchery operations

Initial releases of Chinook salmon fry have begun, with over 1.6 million released at the swim-up stage. Fish are marked using a parentage-based tagging strategy.

Steelhead spawning operations are nearing completion, with one spawn remaining. Approximately 1.3 million eggs have been collected to date, representing approximately 96% of the to-date goal, with a seasonal goal of 1.5 million eggs.

### **Water Forum/Cramer Fish Sciences Updates**

1. Dissolved oxygen (DO) conditions remain stable with no concerns observed.
2. Snorkel surveys are scheduled to begin next week pending suitable conditions. Additional Water Form WaterSmart surveys are also planned.
3. Recent monitoring efforts include spawning and stranding surveys. Approximately 24 steelhead were observed in initial surveys. Elevated turbidity is limiting redd survey visibility, though steelhead redds have been observed in restored side channels.
4. A stranding survey conducted following the January ARG meeting identified approximately 230 stranded Chinook, mostly at Paradise; all were returned to the river. No stranded steelhead were observed.

### **PSMFC Updates**

1. Rotary screw traps sampling has not yet begun due to ongoing funding delays. No timeline for implementation is currently available.

## **Next Meeting**

The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on Thursday, March 19, 2026.