



American River Group Notes

Conference Line: +1 (321) 209-6143; Access Code: 985 598 947#

Webinar: Join Microsoft Teams Meeting

Thursday, April 17, 2025

Action Items

PSMFC

1. Prepare updated rotary screw trap data for 5/1 ad-hoc meeting.

Kearns & West

1. Send calendar invite for ad-hoc spring pulse flow planning meeting on 5/1/2025 at 1:30 p.m.

Introductions

1. USBR: Drew Loney, Elissa Buttermore, Kevin Thielen, Mechele Pacheco, Myrna Giraldo Perez, Peggy Manza, Randi Field, Spencer Marshall, Todd Plain, Zarela Guerrero
2. NMFS: Barb Byrne, Rachael Alcala, Paula Higginson
3. USFWS: Erika Holcombe
4. CDFW: Andrew Gaan, Crystal Rigby, Duane Linander, Emily Fisher, Gary Novak, Jennifer O'Brien, Nick Bauer, Tracy Grimes, Travis Apgar
5. DWR: Mike Ford
6. SWRCB: Natalie Niepagen
7. California State Parks: N/A
8. EBMUD: I-Pei Hsiu, Max Fefer
9. City of Sacramento: Anne Sanger, Brian Sanders
10. Sacramento County: N/A
11. Environmental Council of Sacramento: Ted Rauh
12. City of Folsom: Marcus Yasutake

13. City of Roseville: Sean Bigley
14. Cramer Fish Sciences: Kirsten Sellheim
15. PCWA: Darin Reintjes
16. PSMFC: Hunter Morris, Logan Day
17. SMUD: N/A
18. USACE: Casey Nyquist
19. cbec Eco Engineering: Chris Hammersmark
20. Watercourse Engineering: Mike Deas
21. Water Forum: Ashlee Casey, Erica Bishop
22. Water Districts: Greg Zlotnick, Paul Helliker
23. Regional Water Authority (RWA): N/A
24. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: N/A
25. CSUS: Dede Birch
26. Kleinschmidt Group: Craig Addley, Vanessa Martinez
27. WAPA: N/A
28. BKS Law Firm: Jennifer Buckman
29. Sunzi Consulting: Yung-Hsin Sun
30. Other: Eric Mork, Rod Hall, Ryan Lucas

Announcements

- N/A

Housekeeping

- Meetings will not be recorded going forward.

Fisheries Update

CDFW Updates

1. Carcass Surveys
 - a. N/A
2. Chinook spawning
 - a. N/A

3. Redd surveys
 - a. N/A
4. Nimbus Hatchery Operations Update
 - a. CDFW is in the process of coded wire tagging Chinook salmon.
 - b. The first hatchery releases will occur during the first week of May.

Questions/Comments

1. N/A

Cramer Fish Sciences Updates

1. LAR Steelhead Spawning and Stranding Surveys
 - a. Steelhead redd spawning surveys have been completed for the season.
 - i. The season total of 29 steelhead redds was the lowest count in recent history (due to river flows).
 - ii. A few lamprey redds were observed.
 - b. The majority of steelhead redds were found in Nimbus Basin and the rest were found scattered around the upper river. Several were seen at the River Bend Side Channel.
 - c. The Water Forum noted that 83% of steelhead redds observed during ground surveys were in restoration sites, which is promising to see post-construction.
 - d. Two stranding surveys were completed in March; another will take place after flows stabilize in the near future.
 - e. Cramer rescued 3,712 stranded Chinook salmon during stranding surveys mid-March. Approximately 1,200 Chinook were in a side channel and unable to be rescued due to thick vegetation, which prevented effective seining.
2. Snorkel Surveys
 - a. A third snorkel survey will take place in the week of 4/21/2025. These serve as effectiveness monitoring for restoration sites.
 - b. Cramer is seeing fish using the constructed, large, woody habitat structures placed in restored project areas, which is encouraging.

Questions/Comments

1. NMFS asked for details about the woody habitat structures at the restoration sites.
 - a. The Water Forum responded that constructed, large, woody habitat structures are firmly anchored using telephone poles that are keyed into the bank at least 15 feet. Attached to the anchor logs are repurposed, whole almond trees. The exception is at Ancil Hoffman, where they are anchored using boulders due to shallow slopes of the rearing alcove lacking overburden for wood anchors.
2. CDFW asked if snorkel surveys are planned for mid-to-late May. If a pulse flow does happen, they would be curious to see numbers after the pulse.
 - a. Cramer answered yes, it's tentatively scheduled for 5/20 – 5/22/2025. It may be possible to schedule after a pulse flow, depending on timing.

PSMFC Updates

1. Two trap efficiency trials were completed in April at approximate flows of 1,350 cfs (12% efficiency) and 7,000 cfs (1% efficiency).
 - a. Fish from the Nimbus Fish Hatchery were used for the trials.
 - b. Raw catch was 100-200 Chinook salmon, although much higher passage was likely occurring due to the change in efficiency rate.
2. PSMFC plans to start another efficiency trial on 4/17/2025 at flows of 5,350 cfs with fish measuring ~50 mm.
3. See meeting handout for additional detailed information.

Questions/Comments

1. N/A

Operations Forecast

SMUD

1. See meeting handout for detailed information.

Questions/Comments

1. N/A

PCWA

1. See meeting handout for detailed information.

Questions/Comments

1. N/A

Central Valley Operations

USBR

1. USBR conducted a dive attempt on 4/4/2025 to remove debris impeding TCD shutter operations but the effort was unsuccessful. They are currently contracting to allow for a larger removal effort the week of 4/21/2025.
2. See meeting handout for detailed information.

Questions/Comments

1. NMFS asked if the flood management volume for April is still to be determined and if that will be incorporated into the Minimum Required Release (MRR) for May.
 - a. USBR confirmed this is correct.

Discussion

Spring Pulse Flow

1. The following materials were distributed to ARG members after the 3/25 ad-hoc meeting:
 - a. A draft Spring Pulse Flow planning memo from the Sacramento River Temperature Task Group (SRTTG)
 - b. A copy of the input fish agencies provided USBR regarding spring pulse flows.
2. Flows are currently high due to flood control operations. The American River has been meeting the volume and peak flow of the pulse flow, but there may be an opportunity in May to revisit the variability of the flow.
3. CDFW expressed interest in scheduling a pulse flow for the week of 4/28. There was additional interest in scheduling pulse flows for the weeks of 5/9 and 5/19 to coincide with the draft pulse flows scheduled proposed on the Sacramento River.
4. USBR noted there may not be much flexibility given current conditions.

Questions/Comments

1. USBR noted that the American River is likely to see higher flows through the end of April but there may be a potential window in late April/early May where flows drop below 3,500 cfs.

2. The Water Forum asked what the anticipated benefit of a pulse flow action would be given the recent high flows may have already helped with outmigration, and temperature and habitat conditions continue to be favorable for rearing.
 - a. USBR said the variations would help with outmigration.
 - b. CDFW noted that the rotary screw trap data would help with decision making based on the number of fish still in the river after the recent high flow events, once the river is out of flood control operations and flows decrease.
 - c. K&W proposed scheduling another ad-hoc meeting towards the end of April/early May to see what, if anything, has changed and if a pulse flow is desired/feasible.
 - i. CDFW suggested that communication could start via email
 - d. USBR asked if hatchery release timing from Nimbus is still the same as in April
 - i. CDFW responded that it's based on current growth projections so they're looking at early May.
 - e. PSMFC asked for the fish target size.
 - i. CDFW responded that the target size is 60 fish to the pound, or 96 mm (total length).

Presentation: Central Valley Project (CVP) Water Temperature Modeling Platform (WTMP), Session 3

1. Sunzi Consulting and USBR presented a third session on the WTMP Facilitated Adoption, focusing on parallel analysis of the WTMP models vs. the legacy model (iCPMM). Additional details can be found in the presentation slides shared with the ARG.
2. Detailed information about the project can be found on the project website: <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/bdo/cvp-wtmp.html>
3. The presentation team will present additional parallel analysis again at the May ARG meeting. In the meantime, questions should be directed to Randi Field, USBR.

Question/Comments

1. The Water Forum asked about the temperature control shutter configurations at different points of the year for each of the three models. For example, "all units middle shutters" in July/Aug: Does this mean all the top shutters are pulled?
 - a. USBR responded that "all units middle shutters" means all top shutters are pulled out for the 3 units. "All units bottom shutters" means all middle shutters are pulled, etc.

- b. The Water Forum noted that there is still much uncertainty in terms of how the cold water will set up and when shutters will be lowered. They expressed interest in seeing more model runs in May when there is greater clarity regarding conditions for the rest of the year.
- 2. Cbec asked about shifting from modeling space to simulating actual conditions. One thing that's challenging with the iCPMM is dealing with unique conditions, where 2 of 3 units are offline because of the shutter lowering issue. There were ways within iCPMM to strongarm the shutter position. How will the new tools prevent this issue? Should we evaluate potential limitations? Is it possible to fine tune the model to only release water from one unit and have the rest as spill?
 - a. Kleinschmidt Group replied that with the W2 model, there is flexibility to limit how much flow goes through each particular shutter. Those adjustments can be made. They're set up similarly to iCPMM with individual shutter and operations. If you're limited to some odd combination, you probably need to operate them manually outside of the WTMP.
- 3. Kleinschmidt Group noted that the models are showing a different storage level for Folsom Dam by the end of September. It seems as if they should be calculating the same level of storage.
 - a. USBR responded that it's pulling from the Operations Outlook and trying to meet the entire season. There are some slight differences from the Outlook. USBR will look to see what's happening each month to get a different result.
 - b. Cbec suggested using the Nimbus Dam outflow temperature as a surrogate for Hazel Ave for these comparisons. They're not the same but they're very similar.

Next Meeting

The ARG has a tentatively scheduled check-in for 5/1/2025 at 1:30 p.m. to further discuss spring pulse flow planning.

The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on Thursday, May 15. The meeting will be virtual.