



American River Group (ARG) Notes

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

Webinar: **Join the meeting now**

Thursday, July 16, 2026

Action Items

- All to share additional comments or suggestions for the upcoming Power Bypass SDM process with Theilen (kthielen@usbr.gov) and the Kearns & West team.
- Kearns & West send out scheduling poll for Power Bypass SDM ad hoc meetings to ARG along with the summary of last year's SDM process.

Introductions

1. United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR): Tony Yang, Mandy Migura, Daniel Cordova, Kevin Thielen, Drew Loney,
2. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS): Carrie Skorcz
3. United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Craig Anderson, Erika Holcombe
4. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW): Nick Bauer, Emily Fisher, Crystal Rigby, Travis Apgar, Elaine Jeu,
5. California Department of Parks and Recreation: N/A
6. State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB): Nathalie Niepagen, Travis Dennis
7. Water Districts: N/A
8. City of Sacramento: Anne Sanger
9. Environmental Council of Sacramento: Ted Rauh
10. Sacramento Regional Water Authority: N/A
11. City of Roseville: N/A
12. Cramer Fish Sciences: Mollie Ogaz, Jamie Sweeney

13. City of Folsom: N/A
14. Department of Water Resources (DWR): Mike Ford,
15. East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD): I-Pei Hsiu
16. Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD): Megan Peers
17. Placer County Water Agency (PCWA): Benjamin Barker
18. Western Area Power Administration (WAPA): Eric Mork
19. San Juan Water District (SJWD): Greg Zlotnick
20. Central Valley Project South-of-Delta (CVP SOD) Agriculture Districts: N/A
21. Water Forum: Ashlee Casey, Erica Bishop
22. Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC): Logan Day, Hunter Morris
23. United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): N/A
24. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: N/A
25. Carmichael Water District (CWD): N/A
26. California State University Sacramento (CSUS): DeDe Birch
27. Verdantas: Chris Hammersmark
28. BKS Law Firm: Christopher Cortez
29. Kleinschmidt: Vanessa Marti
30. Watercourse Engineering: Mike Deas
31. Sunzi Consulting: N/A
32. Addley Group: Craig Addley
33. Other: Paul Helliker, Rod Hall
34. Kearns & West (K&W): Karis Johnston, Katy Kennedy, Mia Schiappi

Announcements

- N/A

Housekeeping

- N/A

Operations Forecast

SMUD

1. Precipitation is approximately 90% of average. Snowpack was well below normal this year and is now essentially depleted.
2. Reservoir storage is comparable to last year and is being managed to meet summer requirements.
3. For the remainder of the summer, operations will focus on meeting Chili Bar requirements and managing peak-load releases.

PCWA

1. French Meadows Reservoir is approximately 87% full and Hell Hole Reservoir is approximately 81% full, with combined storage at roughly 102% of average.
2. Inflows are low and seasonally summer-based. Combined storage decreased by approximately 29 thousand acre-feet (TAF) over the last 30 days.
3. Middle Fork American River and North Fork American River releases will begin increasing over the next one to two weeks, with a higher release schedule continuing through September.
4. PCWA is in the petition phase with the State Water Resources Control Board for a 2026 water transfer with Westlands Water District, consistent with transfers conducted over the past 15 years. The petition was submitted on the 5th and the comment period closed 7/15. PCWA is awaiting additional approvals. The transfer involves 21,053 acre-feet (AF) released above baseline operations in August and September.
5. Under its relatively new FERC license, PCWA continues adapting operations to different water year types. For this above-normal year, operations focus on maintaining minimum pool requirements and July 15 target elevations at Hell Hole and French Meadows. PCWA is preparing the required plots for the Forest Service.
6. Since 2020, PCWA has managed shifting hydrology alongside higher reservoir storage requirements. This is a consistent trend which is further influenced by changing market demands and conditions.

Central Valley Operations

Reclamation

1. Folsom Reservoir storage is above last year's level for this time of year, however most of the SWP and CVP facilities are under last year's values for this time of year. The 8-Station Index shows no change and remains near average; a front-loaded hydrograph with early snow melt has meant early runoff despite otherwise near-normal precipitation.

2. Reclamation is in temperature management season. Releases are elevated system-wide but remain at or below the same period last year and are expected to continue increasing to manage Delta water quality and exports.
3. Since the last meeting, releases increased in June and July to support Delta water quality requirements and combined project exports. Releases are expected to hold or increase slightly as Reclamation monitors Delta conditions and exports; July exports increased to approximately 4,500 cfs, with releases expected to rise over the coming week.
4. Folsom storage continues to decline under daily Folsom and Natomas operations, with combined releases increasing to meet requirements. Minimum Release Requirements (MRR) remain unchanged from the prior month; releases were approximately 2,536 cfs in June and 4,217 cfs in July and are expected to continue increasing.
5. A slight spill occurred through the main dam due to negative power pricing. With the Joint Federal Project (JFP) out of service through September, any further spill will be routed through a combination of the river outlets and main dam until the lake elevation drops below the main dam gates when all spill will be through the river outlets. This will be the primary operational obstacle Reclamation is planning around in the coming months.
6. Release temperatures have tracked with the weather and have been generally warm, with a recent cool-down now reversing as a heat wave pushes Lower American River temperatures up. Folsom Dam release temperatures through the upper shutters have continued to increase toward approximately 64°F.
7. The upper shutter on Unit 3 has been removed, representing approximately 17% of the prior day's flow and 10% of the July 13 flow. Reclamation is minimizing its use as the river cools.
8. Reservoir profile monitoring indicates continued warming and drawdown, with additional blending expected. Although more water is in storage than in prior years, it is warmer at depth, with a warming surface layer above a stratified layer below.
9. Reclamation expects to pull the upper shutters at the end of July and the middle shutters in August.
10. The 50% and 90% exceedance forecasts show storage continuing to decline into fall and winter.
11. Operations continue under Automated Temperature Selection Procedure (ATSP) 41, with the target table reflecting a 68°F objective holding until November. Summary plots show downstream temperatures rising through July until the upper-shutter head requirement is reached; some meteorological models anticipate blending mid-July, after which the middle shutters would be removed just before September.

12. A reduction in flows is expected in September but is not anticipated to produce a true temperature spike. Reclamation is still tracking the November target but notes that temperature models indicate it likely will not be met, which is the basis for the Water Year 2026 bypass discussion below.

Questions/Comments

1. N/A

Fisheries Update

CDFW Updates

1. No updates were reported.

Water Forum/Cramer Fish Sciences Updates

1. Dissolved oxygen (DO) monitoring is continuing, with DO measuring above 7 mg/L at all sites. Vertical black lines shown on the monitoring plots indicate data corrections associated with instrument error; additional detail is available upon request.
2. The seasonal DO monitoring logger was installed below Folsom Dam this week. Links to the Environmental Data Initiative (EDI) uploads are available on LIR.
3. Reclamation noted that, following the July 13 upper-shutter pull, lower DO may be observed at Nimbus Dam.

PSFMC Updates

1. No updates were reported.

Water Year 2026 Power Bypass Discussion

Overview

1. Reclamation introduced the Water Year 2026 bypass discussion as a preliminary item rather than an in-depth session. Because temperature models indicate the November target likely will not be met, Reclamation is initiating the evaluation now, with Brian Maharjda supporting the evaluation and tradeoff analysis.
2. Reclamation intends to reuse the prior year's Structured Decision Making (SDM) framework to evaluate alternatives through ARG meetings and ad hoc sessions. An overview of the prior year's SDM process will be provided.
3. Reclamation has capacity to evaluate bypass options and welcomes additional resources, though capacity is limited; participants are encouraged to share input as early as possible. Reclamation committed to documenting all requests and reporting back on whether each can be evaluated.
4. Given an anticipated implementation window of mid-October through November, the process will move quickly, and decisions will be required on a

compressed timeline. The evaluation is expected to start at the August ARG, with a lighter overall effort than the prior year while remaining open to improvements.

5. The Kearns & West team will recirculate the SDM report, place calendar holds for ad hoc meetings and continue distributing agendas that identify the expected topics and outcomes for each meeting.

Questions/Comments

1. Water Forum asked whether the intended outcome of the August meeting is to identify alternatives and how conditions would be assessed at that time.
 - a. Reclamation responded that August will not be the only alternative-development meeting; a later session, likely in early September, is anticipated to finalize alternatives, though participants are welcome to flag alternatives of interest earlier. Updated modeling will be available by August, so any change in the narrative will be reflected. Reclamation does not anticipate a fixed acre-foot constraint but will consider providing guidelines, with a tradeoff analysis like the prior years.

Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on Thursday, August 20, 2026.