BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

American River Group Notes

Conference Line: +1 (321) 209-6143; Access Code: 596 336 817#
Webinar: **Join the meeting now**
Thursday, September 17, 2026

Action Items

- Vanessa to model the four preliminary temperature-management scenarios identified during the meeting and provide results for discussion at the September 24 ad hoc meeting.
- Reclamation to support the preliminary modeling effort by providing baseline information and inquire about the potential flexibility for obtaining an updated Folsom temperature profile.
- K&W to circulate meeting notes and materials as quickly as possible to support asynchronous participation for those unable to attend the September 24 meeting.

Introductions

1. BKS Law Firm: Jennifer Buckman
2. California Department of Parks and Recreation: N/A
3. Carmichael Water District (CWD): David Biagi
4. CBEC Engineering: N/A
5. CDFW: Andrew Gaan, Crystal Rigby, Erica Meyers, Jason Julienne, Nicolas Bauer, Skyler Burson, Travis Apgar, Vanessa Lo
6. City of Folsom: N/A
7. City of Roseville: N/A
8. City of Sacramento: Anne Sanger, Brian Sanders, Ryan Palmer
9. Cramer Fish Sciences: Kirsten Sellheim
10. CSUS: DeDe Birch
11. CVP SOD Ag Districts: N/A

12. DWR: N/A
13. EBMUD: I-Pei Hsiu
14. Environmental Council of Sacramento: N/A
15. Kleinschmidt: Vanessa Martinez
16. NMFS: Carrie Skorcz, Sam Pyros
17. PCWA: N/A
18. PSMFC: Hunter Morris
19. Sacramento Regional Water Authority: N/A
20. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: N/A
21. SJWD: Michael Spencer
22. SMUD: Megan Peers
23. Stantec: Adam Witt, Sarah Hamilton, Stephanie Theis
24. Sunzi Consulting: N/A
25. SWRCB: Travis Dennis
26. USACE: N/A
27. USBR: Brian Willard, Drew Loney, Kevin Thielen, Mechele Pacheco, Nadira Kabir, Peggy Manza, Sarah Roy, Steven Melavic, Tony Yang, Wes Harrison, Zarela Guerrero
28. USFWS: Craig Anderson, Erika Holcombe
29. WAPA: Eric Mork
30. Water Districts: N/A
31. Water Forum: Ashlee Casey, Erica Bishop
32. Watercourse Engineering: Mike Deas
33. Other: Rod Hall
34. Kearns & West: Karis Johnston, Katy Kennedy, Mia Schiappi

Announcements

- N/A

Housekeeping

- N/A

Operations Forecast

SMUD

1. SMUD reported that the water year is closing at approximately 90% of average precipitation at Fresh Pond. There is currently no snowpack remaining in the watershed, and storage reservoirs are near average for this time of year.

2. SMUD noted that releases below Chili Bar are projected to remain on the lower side through the fall due to planned powerhouse outages and maintenance.

PCWA

1. No updates were provided.

Central Valley Operations

Reclamation

1. Reclamation provided a systemwide Central Valley Project (CVP) operations update as of September 15. Nimbus releases were 1,834 cubic feet per second (cfs), compared with 1,692 cfs at the same time last year and approximately 1,700 cfs for the 15-year median. Current releases are somewhat higher than last year but generally within the normal range for this time of year. Releases are expected to remain around 1,800 cfs through the end of September to facilitate transfer water, although the current minimum release requirement (MRR) is 1,595 cfs.

2. Folsom Reservoir inflow for the water year is approximately 2,416 thousand acre-feet (TAF), or 97% of the 15-year average. Folsom storage has continued to decline from its May/June peak of approximately 960 TAF as releases have exceeded inflows, although the rate of drawdown is slowing as releases decrease.

3. Releases from Folsom were reduced from 2,500 cfs to 2,100 cfs on September 11 and to approximately 1,800 cfs on September 15. All releases have been through the powerplant. Reclamation noted that increased generation during the September 9 heat event resulted in a small temporary storage gain that was subsequently passed through the system.

4. Reclamation discussed recent temperature conditions, including a three-day exceedance during the September 8-10 heat event. Reclamation increased blending in response to the heat event and subsequently returned to cooler conditions. Releases downstream of Folsom have remained below the 68ºF target, and Reclamation expects temperatures to continue cooling overall, while noting some uncertainty regarding potential warming early the following week.

5. Updated Folsom temperature profiles from August 31 and September 15 indicate that the cold-water pool continues to decline, while warmer water layers between approximately 60ºF and 68ºF are expanding. The September 15 profile was generally within the historical range for mid-September. Reclamation noted that the mixed layer has begun cooling and is expected to continue cooling overall.

6. Reclamation reported that the August monthly average Nimbus release was 4,224 cfs, compared with the September average of 2,339 cfs as of September 16. The controlling MRR remains 1,595 cfs for September and decreases to 795 cfs beginning in October. Reclamation expects releases to continue decreasing as conditions evolve and noted that October begins the period when additional spill may be accumulated for flood-management purposes.

7. Reclamation presented updated 50% and 90% exceedance systemwide operations outlooks. Under the 50% exceedance scenario, Folsom storage is projected to continue declining through November before beginning to refill in December, with additional refill during the spring. Under the 90% exceedance scenario, Folsom storage would decline substantially further, reaching approximately 320 TAF in December and 284 TAF by August 2027. Under the 90% scenario, American River releases would eventually decline toward minimum flows, reaching approximately 800 cfs in December. Reclamation emphasized that these are planning outlooks and actual operations will continue to depend on real-time conditions.

Questions/Comments

1. CDFW raised concerns regarding projected November flows under the 90% exceedance scenario, noting that flows could fall below approximately 1,500 cfs and potentially below 1,400 cfs, representing a roughly 30% decrease. CDFW expressed concerns about redd dewatering and adult fish stranding in the Lower American River.

    a. Reclamation acknowledged the concern and indicated that they would continue to elevate the issue to upper management. Reclamation noted that approximately 800 cfs represents the minimum required release under the current outlook and could occur if dry conditions persist, although they recognized that this would be an undesirable outcome. Reclamation encouraged CDFW to continue flagging the concerns as conditions develop.

2. CDFW asked whether the MRR and associated spill calculation remain the same through the end of the calendar year.

    a. Reclamation explained that the May Bulletin 120 update finalized the American River Index (ARI) and associated spill calculation, which establishes MRR through the end of December. An updated index in January will establish the January MRR, followed by subsequent monthly Bulletin 120 updates.

Fisheries Update

CDFW Updates

1. No updates were provided.

Cramer Fish Sciences Updates

1. Cramer Fish Sciences provided an update on dissolved oxygen (DO) monitoring in Lake Natoma and the Lower American River. Recent monitoring shows DO beginning to fall below the stress threshold for adult Chinook salmon later in Nimbus Basin, with no spill from Lake Natoma. The next logger download is scheduled for September 29.

2. Field staff have begun observing adult salmon in the Nimbus Basin.

Questions/Comments

1. CDFW reported that crews first observed fish in the area approximately one to two weeks ago and are now seeing increasing numbers, estimated informally at potentially the low hundreds. CDFW emphasized the importance of monitoring DO and temperature as fish continue to enter the river.

2. Reclamation reported that it expects to take a similar approach to last year by initiating spill from Lake Natoma beginning October 1, based on historical spawning timing and last year's data. Reclamation noted that the initial spill would include a small amount through Gate 18, with additional power spill, and encouraged field staff to report observations of spawning because the timing could be adjusted if conditions indicate that spawning is occurring earlier or later than expected.

PSFMC/FISHBIO Updates

1. PSFMC and FISHBIO are awaiting final confirmation of the official start date for the 2026/2027 Rotary Screw Trap (RST) season. The tentative plan is to install the traps in late October, begin sampling five days per week on November 2, and increase to seven days per week beginning in December, continuing through June 2027 as conditions allow.

2. Lower American River RST data collected from April through June 2026 are now available through EDI. The 2026 annual report is in preparation and is expected to be available within the next one to two months.

Structured Decision Making (SDM)

SDM Alternatives Discussion

1. Reclamation presented an updated temperature modeling analysis using the September 90% operations outlook, the September 15 Folsom temperature profile, and an estimate transfer water. The modeling used 20 meteorological forcings from 2001-2020 and compared conditions under Automated Temperature Selection Procedure (ATSP) 41 and ATSP 38.

2. Under ATSP 41, the temperature target is 68ºF through October and decreases to 59ºF beginning November 1. The modeling indicates that maintaining 68ºF through October is generally achievable, but reaching 59ºF at the beginning of November is difficult across the meteorological scenarios, with some scenarios reaching the

target during the first week of November and others not reaching it until later in the month.

3. Reclamation noted that the current modeling may underestimate release temperatures under the lower-shutter configuration because the model assumes approximately 35% leakage. Current real-time Unit 1 release temperatures are approximately 67.4ºF, compared with somewhat cooler temperatures in the model output. Reclamation may adjust this assumption in future modeling runs.

4. Reclamation explained that power bypass would generally occur only after all shutters have been pulled, since bypass is intended to provide access to colder water when shutter operations alone are insufficient.

5. The group discussed the tradeoff between achieving cooler temperatures earlier in October and retaining cold water for November. Modeling comparing ATSP 41 and ATSP 38 indicated that lowering October temperatures could result in somewhat warmer November temperatures because of the limited cold-water pool.

6. CDFW and others emphasized concerns regarding October and November temperatures and their potential effects on fall-run Chinook salmon, including spawning and egg incubation. CDFW also noted potential impacts to the Nimbus and American River fish hatcheries, including reduced availability of mature fish and continued disease concerns associated with elevated temperatures.

7. The group discussed the challenge of defining bypass scenarios before seeing the associated temperature outcomes. Participants noted that each year has different reservoir conditions, storage, temperature profiles, and available cold water, meaning the same bypass schedule may produce different temperature outcomes from year to year.

8. Reclamation indicated that they are open to exploring alternatives to the current ATSP 41 October target, including different shutter configurations, temperature targets, and power bypass schedules. Reclamation emphasized that any alternatives would need to account for tradeoffs among temperature management, cold-water availability, hydropower generation, and conditions for species.

9. Participants discussed using a limited set of preliminary “bookend” scenarios to better understand the range of possible temperature outcomes before developing additional alternatives. The group agreed to begin with four scenarios:

    a. Scenario 2 from the 2025 alternatives;

    b. Scenario 4 from the 2025 alternatives;

    c. A scenario beginning October 15 at 500 cfs and continuing without throttling; and

    d. A scenario beginning October 28 at 500 cfs and continuing without throttling.

10. These scenarios are intended to provide a starting point for discussion at the September 24 ad hoc meeting rather than represent selected alternatives.
11. Vanessa Martinez will run the preliminary scenarios and expects to need approximately two to three days to run additional scenarios after the September 24 discussion, if needed. Kevin will support Vanessa with baseline information and will inquire about the potential availability of an updated Folsom temperature profile earlier than scheduled.
12. The group discussed participation in the September 24 ad hoc meeting. CDFW expressed interest in participating in the temperature-management scenario discussion but noted that they have limited capacity to participate in the broader SDM process. Participants discussed options for representation at the September 24 meeting, which overlaps with an SRG meeting for some staff. If participation is not possible, materials will be circulated afterward to allow for input.

Next Meeting

- The next SDM Ad Hoc meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 24, 2026, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- Additional Ad Hoc meeting to be scheduled with enough time to allow Vanessa to model additional scenarios.
- The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on Thursday, October 15, 2025, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.