



American River Group

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

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

Webinar: [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Thursday, January 19, 2023

Notes

1. Action Items
 - a. All – Reach out to Barb Byrne if you would like to help develop the draft 2022 Folsom Power Bypass Post-Action Memo.
2. Introductions
 - a. USBR: Thuy Washburn, John Hannon, Liz Kiteck, Spencer Marshall, Melissa Vignau, Zarela Guerrero
 - b. NMFS: Barb Byrne
 - c. USFWS: Paul Cadrett
 - d. CDFW: Crystal Rigby, Nick Bauer, Stephanie Ambrosia, Gary Novak, Chris McKibbin, Duane Linander, Danny O'Donnell, Emily Fisher, Vivian Paredes
 - e. SWRCB: Reza Ghasemizadeh
 - f. Water Districts: Michelle Banonis, Brian Sanders, Brett Ewart
 - g. City of Roseville: Sean Bigley
 - h. City of Folsom: Marcus Yasutake
 - i. DWR: Mike Ford, Kevin Reece
 - j. WAPA: Mike Prowatzke
 - k. EBMUD: I-Pei Hsiu
 - l. SMUD: Ansel Lundberg

- m. PCWA: Ben Barker, Darin Reintjes
 - n. FishBio:
 - o. Water Forum: Erica Bishop, Jessica Law, Chris Hammersmark, Ashlee Casey, Liana Huang
 - p. PSMFC: Logan Day, Hunter Morris, Isabel Kent
 - q. CFS: Kirsten Sellheim
 - r. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians:
 - s. Other: Rod Hall, DeDe Birch, Jennifer Buckman
2. Fisheries Update
- a. CDFW provided fish monitoring updates.
 - i. The escapement and carcass surveys ended prematurely on 12/29/22 due to increased flows and hazardous conditions.
 - ii. The season total for redd surveys is 867 measured redds. Cramer Fish Science (CFS) surveys observed an additional 1,119 redds. (CFS Chinook redd counts were non-overlapping with CDFW numbers and GPS was used to avoid double counting redds).
 - iii. The season total for carcass surveys is 9,708 fish with 15.6% pre-spawn mortality.
 - b. CDFW provided hatchery updates.
 - i. 12/15/2022 was the last day for fall-run Chinook salmon spawning at the hatchery.
 - ii. Steelhead spawning began on 12/20/22.
 - iii. BY 2022 steelhead were released from 1/17 - 1/18/23.
 - c. Cramer Fish Science provided updates on their redd surveys.
 - i. Initiation of steelhead spawning surveys have been delayed due to high flows and excessively turbid conditions. Surveys will continue on 1/24/23 -1/25/23.
 - ii. Stranding surveys were conducted on 1/19/23 and an update will be provided at the next ARG meeting.
 - d. PSMFC

- i. Installation of the Rotary Screw Traps (RSTs) on the American River has been delayed due to heavy flows. RSTs will be installed the week of 1/23/23 and will begin sampling 7 days a week thereafter.

e. Questions/Comments

- i. NMFS expressed interest in learning more about what the Nimbus Fish Hatchery is doing in terms of thiamine deficiency this year.
 - 1. CDFW noted that thiamine is being added to a saline solution to allow for absorption during spawning. This was done for all the salmon and will be done for all the steelhead this year.
- ii. NMFS asked if turbidity is likely to remain high when flows decrease.
 - 1. It usually takes about 4-5 days to flush out depending on lake conditions. It should clear soon, barring further precipitation.
- iii. NMFS asked if the reason PSMFC can install their RSTs at high flows is because they already have their anchors in the water.
 - 1. Yes, the anchors are already in the water and have been cleared out. With the higher flows there is more of an eddy which actually makes installation at 5,000 cfs more dangerous than installation at 7,500 cfs.

3. Operations Update

a. SMUD

- i. South Fork American River Watershed
 - 1. There have been approximately 27 inches of liquid water precipitation since January 1, 2023.
 - 2. SMUD is currently moving as much water as possible to avoid spill. Storage is at 75% full, which is 120% of average.
 - 3. Union Valley Reservoir will have outages for maintenance throughout January; however, releases are continuing.

b. PCWA

- i. Storage:
 - 1. French Meadows: 98 TAF at 72% capacity.
 - a. There are two large radial gates that will be lowered on April 1st to increase capacity.
 - 2. Hell Hole: 145 TAF at 70% capacity.

3. Combined Storage Totals:

- a. 243 TAF
 - b. Reservoir Capacity at 70%
 - c. WY23 Precipitation is 94% of average.
 - d. Snowpack is a 245% of average.
 - e. Precipitation is at 154% of average.
- ii. The Middle Fork Project is still offline. There is a transmission induced generator outage that is ongoing until at least 1/27/23. This could further be impacted by the potential loss of a main access road that crews are currently working to repair.

4. Central Valley Operations

- a. American River releases are at 10,000 cfs.
- b. Folsom Reservoir storage is at 541 TAF.
 - i. Releases out of Folsom Reservoir peaked at 35,000 cfs during the storms.
 - ii. Water elevation is hovering at the top of conservation level and Reclamation is required to keep releases consistent and in coordination with downstream.
 - iii. There is a high chance that the reservoir will fill this year.
- c. All temperature shutters are currently raised. The bottom and middle shutters will be lowered at the end of the month.
- d. The seasonal drought-outlook forecasts continued drought conditions even with the recent precipitation events.
- e. The January 90% Exceedance Outlook predicts Folsom Reservoir being full by May.
- f. The Minimum Release Requirement (MRR) for January is 1,750 cfs. Flows are anticipated to be above the MRR throughout January.
- g. Questions/Comments
 - i. Water Forum noted that the AFO gauge is not reading properly (due to gravel movement) and shows flows below 10,000 cfs. ARG members should consider using the Nimbus outflow (NAT station on CDEC) instead.

1. USBR responded that USGS is going to recalibrate the gauge the week of 1/23/23.
- ii. NMFS asked if there ends up being a 50% exceedance in the spring rather than 90% how much higher does USBR predict flows will be over 4,500 cfs?
 1. USBR responded that it is dependent on the timing of the snow melt. Beginning in March the flood curve climbs up and they can begin storing water. If snowmelt occurs quickly in March, they will review options but they will likely be matching inflows with outflows.
- iii. As a condition of the Redd Dewatering adjustments for January, the MRR is not to exceed the December MRR. CDFW, NMFS, and USBR will check the MRR calculation and adjust if needed. Releases are anticipated to remain well above the MRR through January for storage management.

5. Minimum Release Requirement

- a. USBR noted that due to operational constraints they are likely to be +/- 50 cfs from any specific release target.
- b. NMFS made note of the distinction between the 2017 Flow Management Standard and the 2019 BA (and BiOp) and explained that the discussion between NMFS and USBR was regarding an operational question related to the narrow ESA scope. Going forward, it may be helpful for USBR and NMFS to draft an implementation policy that describes operational flexibility needs.
- c. Water Forum commented that the FMS envisioned the MRR as the floor. It is important to maintain this perspective both operationally and with regulatory interpretation. They would be happy to engage in future conversations with NMFS and USBR when appropriate.
- d. NMFS commented that in general they envision the MRR as a daily metric. There have been many challenges in the last two years, and Folsom has been a source of water for various systemwide demands. There have not been many situations where Nimbus releases have been controlled by the MRR. NMFS is open to having a conversation with USBR about operational flexibility and will share the outcome with ARG. The long-term fix is to be more specific about operational flexibility in the next BA.

6. Bypass Report

- a. NMFS presented a draft outline for the “Review of the Fall 2022 Folsom Power Bypass” and solicited input from ARG members.

- b. The drafting team requested feedback on whether to use estimated spring water temperatures for analysis sooner, or postpone the analysis until the team has actual spring water temperatures. USBR stated a preference for waiting until actual water temperatures are available in April because this will provide a more accurate assessment of the benefit from the bypass.

7. Other

- a. USBR noted that they recently met with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regarding the Folsom TCD. They invited the Corps to come to a future ARG meeting to provide a presentation on the preliminary designs regarding the Folsom TCD and the project's status.

The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on **Thursday, February 16 from 1:30pm-3:30pm.**