



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, March 16, 2023

Notes

1. Action Items
 - a. Thuy Washburn – revise MRR shown in Base Flow Table (DONE)
 - b. Duane Linander - gather and submit a list of contacts to Thuy Washburn for emergency operations notifications
2. Introductions
 - a. USBR: Thuy Washburn, John Hannon, Melissa Vignau, Zarela Guerrero, Mechele Pacheco, Liz Kitek, Spencer Marshall, Drew Loney, Leeyan Mao, Brad Hubbard
 - b. NMFS: Barb Byrne
 - c. USFWS: Paul Cadrett, Craig Anderson
 - d. CDFW: Nick Bauer, Chris McKibbin, Emily Fisher, Jennifer O'Brien, Mike Healey, Chris Ronshausen, Duane Linander, Gary Novak
 - e. SWRCB: Reza Ghasemizadeh, Michael Macon
 - f. Water Districts: Michelle Banonis, Sean Bigley, Greg Zlotnick, Paul Hellicker, Deanna Sereno
 - g. City of Sacramento: Anne Sanger, Brian Sanders, Brett Ewart
 - h. City of Roseville: Sean Bigley
 - i. City of Folsom: Marcus Yasutake
 - j. DWR: Mike Ford, Kevin Reece
 - k. WAPA: Mike Prowatzke

- l. EBMUD: I-Pei Hsiu, Mike Fefer
 - m. SMUD: Tyler Belarde, Ansel Lundberg
 - n. PCWA: Ben Barker
 - o. FishBio:
 - p. Water Forum: Erica Bishop, Jessica Law, Chris Hammersmark, Ashlee Casey, Liana Huang
 - q. PSMFC: Logan Day, Hunter Morris
 - r. CFS: Jamie Sweeney
 - s. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians:
 - t. Other: Rod Hall, DeDe Birch, Jennifer Buckman, Tom Boardman, Todd Plain
3. Fisheries Update
- a. CDFW provided updates
 - i. Nimbus Fish Hatchery
 1. Steelhead spawning was completed on 2/28/23. 1.5 million eggs were collected, which is just above the set target.
 2. Chinook salmon began moving to outdoor raceways the week of 3/13/23.
 3. On 2/23/23, 1 million button-up fry were released into the lower American River as part of a study for early release fish.
 - ii. Juvenile monitoring will begin when flows decrease and it is safe for crews.
 - b. Question/Comments
 - i. NMFS asked if the experimental fry were too small to be marked before release?
 1. CDFW responded that while they were too small for a physical marker, thanks to parental genetic sampling they can be tracked genetically.
 - ii. USBR asked what the plans are for juvenile monitoring?
 1. CDFW responded that juvenile monitoring will consist of snorkel surveys and seining at eight different sites along the river. Each site will be sampled once a month.

- c. Cramer Fish Science provided updates on their steelhead spawning surveys.
 - i. The first survey didn't take place until 2/8/2023 due to high flows and low visibility. The last survey occurred from 3/6-3/8, just before flow increased.
 - ii. As of 3/16/2023, there were 31 Steelhead redds and an additional two redds that were unable to be associated with a fish or identified through discriminant function analysis¹
 - iii. If flows continue to decrease through the week of 3/20, CFS will work with USBR and USFWS to conduct a juvenile stranding survey.
 - iv. If flows and turbidity decrease, juvenile redd surveys will occur as well.
- d. Question/Comments
 - i. NMFS asked if it's possible at a glance to distinguish between lamprey and salmonid redds.
 - 1. CFS responded that it depends. When they conduct redd surveys they are occasionally able to measure redds that have lampreys on them. This is used to build their model. Last year was a good year for lamprey observation and they were able to increase their "fish on lamprey redds" from 45 – 65 since last year.
 - ii. CDFW noted that the lamprey redds observed further north are referred to as campfire redds and asked if the lamprey redds on the American River are shaped differently than steelhead?
 - 1. CFS responded that at first glance salmonid redds are more conical shaped with the gravel moving downstream, while lamprey redds tend to be smaller and more circular. Tail spills may be present on a lamprey redds but not in the same formation as the salmon depending on velocity.
 - iii. CDFW asked where the majority of the redds have been observed.
 - 1. CFS responded that they are seeing them in Nimbus Basin and the Upper Sunrise Side Channel.
 - iv. CDFW asked if they are observing any redds near Watt Avenue.

¹ For details, see <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenvs.2022.1085941/full>.

1. CFS responded they are not seeing as many as they did under low flow conditions. The steelhead they are able to observe are more in side-channel areas.
 2. USBR commented that aerial redd surveys observed more Chinook redds at Watt Avenue and Paradise Beach than in the past. These observations occurred during November 2022.
- e. PSMFC provided updates on their Rotary Screw Traps.
- i. As of 3/14/2023 they have observed:
 1. Fall-run Chinook Salmon – 60,758
 2. Late-fall run Chinook Salmon – 0
 3. Spring-run Chinook Salmon – 13
 4. Winter-run Chinook Salmon – 15
 5. Unmarked O. mykiss – 0
 6. Lamprey – 1,246
 - ii. PSMFC’s Rotary Screw Traps were removed to prepare for flow increases and will remain out of the water until flows decrease.
- f. Questions/Comments
- i. NMFS asked if any of the fish observed in the RSTs could be the experimental release fish from Nimbus Hatchery or were those fish released downstream from the traps?
 1. PSMFC responded that they were released upstream from Nimbus at Sailor Bar. They have been doing genetic fin clips specifically for CDFW so they are able to identify the parentage-based tags.
 - ii. NMFS asked if the large spike on the PSMFC bar chart represents the experimental release.
 1. PSMFC responded that the release occurred on 2/23/2023 and could potentially be the cause for the spike seen in early March. They had their traps raised right after the release because of high flows, debris, and wind. Since then, they have been doing 10 clips a week.

2. Operations Updates

a. SMUD

i. South Fork American River Watershed

1. March total precipitation -15 inches at 163.6% of average.

2. Snowpack is at 183.5 % of average.
3. Reservoirs are 2/3 full as they are trying to keep Union Valley at a manageable level.
4. Inflow is holding steady throughout the week.
5. Releases from Chili Bar for February are at 150,000 AF.
6. SMUD will have their monthly release forecast for USBR and the Water Forum by early the week of 3/20/2023.

b. PCWA

i. Storage:

1. French Meadows: 90 AF at 66% capacity with a daily release average of 350 cfs.
2. Hell Hole: 150 AF at 72% capacity.
3. 16 TAF of inflow during the end of February and early March.
4. 270 % of average precipitation.
5. The likelihood for spill at all project reservoirs is high.

ii. PCWA is in a wet year type and will be running 7-days a week for recreation.

iii. Mosquito Ridge Road is still closed.

3. Central Valley Operations²

- a. American River releases are at 20,000 cfs with a peak earlier in the week of 30,000 cfs. Releases will be cut further to 10,000 cfs when inflows decrease further.
- b. Folsom Reservoir storage is at 619 TAF.
- c. March inflows and releases to date: As of 3/14/23, inflows are at approximately 353 TAF. Releases through the powerplant are 146 TAF and spill is at 177 TAF creating a total of 323 TAF of water being released.
- d. Large releases were required to stay below the top of the conservation line. Elevation is currently 35 TAF below the top of conservation but will likely get close to the top during the next storm.
- e. The river temperatures remain cold.

² There was an error regarding the San Luis Reservoir storage in the meeting packet. Updated information on reservoir storage can be found at [Daily CVP Water Supply](#).

- f. The bottom and middle shutters have been lowered. The top shutters remain raised.
- g. Compared to last year, the ambient air temperature this year is much colder.
- h. The temperature profile of Folsom reservoir shows that the lake is colder this year.
- i. Based on the drought forecast, it is likely that we are moving out of the drought.
- j. The MRR is currently at 1,326 cfs, although it is unlikely releases will get down that low through at least June.
- k. Question/Comments:
 - i. NMFS asked whether the flood curve is the same every year
 - 1. USBR responded that the flood curve is stationary every year for the American River, unlike Shasta Reservoir which is more dynamic.
 - ii. CDFW asked why USBR is running the 90% Exceedance rather than the 50% Exceedance considering it is a wet year type?
 - 1. USBR noted that by April the 50% and 90% forecasts will look pretty similar.
 - iii. CDFW asked if there are any projections for July and August?
 - 1. USBR responded that the March forecast shows that releases will likely be at 5,000 cfs, which is higher than usual, for the summer months. It will begin to ramp down in September.
 - 2. USBR commented that they are not done with their forecast yet because of the significant amount of inflow.
 - iv. Rod Hall asked why USBR was not filling San Luis Reservoir
 - 1. USBR answered that the State project will fill the State share of San Luis Reservoir first, and the Federal project will fill their share afterwards (likely in early April), based on projected flows at Vernalis. There are many reservoirs in the southern and central Sierra that are making flood control releases and releases in preparation for snow melt.
 - v. CDFW requested that USBR establish a notification process to inform parties regarding emergency operations.

1. USBR asked for a list of parties that would like to be on a distribution list that can be used to inform about emergency changes in operations.
- vi. NMFS asked when it might be a good time to begin discussing the summer temperature plan.
 1. USBR suggested waiting until the April ARG meeting, when reservoir conditions will be less subject to change.

The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on **Thursday, April 20 from 1:30pm-3:30pm.**