



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Stanislaus Watershed Team

10 a.m.–12 p.m., Stanislaus Watershed Team Notes
<https://www.usbr.gov/mp/bdo/stanislaus-watershed-team.html>

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

1. New Actions
 - a. Peggy – Distribute forecast once it has been updated
 - b. Peggy – Distribute the hourly flow schedule to CDFW
 - c. JD – Update the reshaped Stepped Release Plan schedule to include San Joaquin River flows
 - d. Brad Hubbard – Prepare the SRP operations plan for the spring pulse flow (if possible, with time for SWT review)
2. Introductions
 - a. USBR: Liz Kiteck, Suzanne Manugian, Peggy Manza, Lee Mao, Brad Hubbard, Melissa Vignau, Luke Davis
 - b. NMFS: Katrina Poremba, Barb Byrne
 - c. USFWS: JD Wikert
 - d. CDFW: Gretchen Murphey, Crystal Rigby, Ryan Kok
 - e. SWRCB: Yongxuan Gao, Erin Foresman, Michael George, Chris Carr
 - f. SSJID:
 - g. OID: Steve Knell
 - h. Stockton East: NA
 - i. Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District: NA

- j. DWR: Jamieson Scott
 - k. WAPA: NA
 - l. FISHBIO: NA
 - m. Other: NA
 - n. Kearns & West: Karis Johnston, Rafael Silberblatt, Mia Schiappi
3. Announcements
- a. Barry Thom is no longer the Regional Administrator for the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region. Scott Rumsey will be the acting Regional Administrator and Cathy Marcinkevage (the Assistant Regional Administrator based in Sacramento) will likely be covering water operations (including re-initiation of consultation).
4. Operations Update and Forecasts/Hydrology
- a. Daily Operation Report:
 - i. Stanislaus River releases out of Goodwin are currently at 300 cfs.
 - ii. Based on the March forecast, the 60-20-20-year type is Critical for both the 75% and 90% exceedance forecasts.
 - b. New Melones:
 - i. Storage is currently at approximately 952 thousand acre feet (TAF). Since the beginning of March, the reservoir has lost a total of approximately 28 TAF. The current average loss per day is approximately 2 TAF.
 - ii. Inflow to date is 304 TAF, most of which occurred in October, November, and December.
 - iii. Water precipitation to date is 1.44 inches which is 79% of average.
 - c. Tulloch:
 - i. Releases at Tulloch Reservoir are increasing from 1,100 cfs to 1,400 cfs with a peak of 1,800 cfs. The increase is a result of irrigation deliveries.
 - ii. There was a release early in the month for maintenance and testing.
 - d. Goodwin Reservoir:
 - i. Current releases are 300 cfs to meet the D-1641 Vernalis flow requirement.

Questions/Comments:

USBR commented that the forecast for March has been challenging and is currently incomplete. When the forecast is complete, USBR will send it to SWT members.

CDFW asked if the projected forecast will assume approval of USBR requests in the TUCP.

USBR responded that they are creating two projections, one in the event the TUCP is approved and one if it is not.

5. Temperature Updates

- a. NMFS provided an overview of Temperature Updates (see Figure 9).
- b. Temperature Updates
 - i. Temperatures are still cool; however, it will likely be a warm spring. Currently, nothing is particularly anomalous for the year.
 - ii. The Goodwin Canyon gauge has registered temperatures beginning to increase. The temperatures at downstream locations are being impacted by the reduced flow in the river as well as seasonal trends (longer days, warmer air temperatures).

6. Flow Planning

- a. USFWS shared a draft Stanislaus River flow schedule that reshapes the Stepped Release Plan volume in a Critical year. USFWS will continue working to coordinate flows with the other San Joaquin River tributaries and to project the extra water that will be required on the Stanislaus River to meet D-1641 Vernalis flow requirements.
- b. SWT supported the reshaping of the Step Release Plan (SRP) volume based on the schedule USFWS created.
- c. SWT recognizes that some additional flows (relative to the schedule prepared using only the SRP volume) may be required to meet the D-1641 Vernalis flow requirements. If possible given other operational constraints, SWT encourages USBR to keep flows at or below 500 cfs on Tuesdays during April in support of steelhead redd surveys in the canyon.

Questions/Comments

CDFW commented that as part of the Tuolumne pulse flow, on April 15, flows will be in excess of 2,000 cfs for a pressure release valve test.

USFWS commented that the San Joaquin Fish Agency Technical Team (SJFATT) will weigh in on flow planning for the San Joaquin basin, including flow schedules for the Tuolumne River and Merced River. If there are no great concerns within SWT on the draft Stanislaus River flows, it is unlikely the SJ FATT will propose modifications.

SWRCB commented that they will be meeting later in the week with USBR to discuss the intersection of Vernalis flows and the SRP flows while SWRCB is transitioning from the D-1641 flow requirements to the new Water Quality Control Plan. When there is more clarity established on this topic, SWRCB will reach out to USFWS.

CDFW commented that the Merced River will likely not contribute flows to the San Joaquin River because of their low flow requirements and expected diversions between the Merced confluence and Tuolumne confluence.

NMFS suggested shifting the flow schedule a few days earlier for both regulatory requirements (hitting the Vernalis pulse window in D-1641) and providing better migratory conditions for fish before water temperatures get less suitable. After discussion, SWT (including NMFS) agreed to stick with the proposed schedule as a reasonable balance of various considerations, including water temperature and life-history diversity in outmigration timing.

SWRCB commented that they want to understand the biological strategy and believe they have the tools to fulfill D-1641 flow requirements and biological needs. SWRCB asked CDFW if there is a rationale for timing the Tuolumne pulses that occur during mid pulse on the Stanislaus River.

USFWS commented that the Tuolumne is not allowed to start their pulse flows until April 15 based on their FERC license. Pulsing water is not going to be useful if temperatures are not going to be suitable for out-migration. USFWS is trying to provide a varied flow schedule to provide the proper migratory cues for fish that are ready to migrate. Their inclination is not to move the schedule because fish will be parr sized, and at that size they are reluctant to migrate.

NFMS commented that the operations plan for the Stepped Release Plan volume doesn't need to fully capture all the adjustments necessary for the Vernalis requirement. The Stepped Release Plan in the proposed action is a minimum flow; Reclamation may release higher than minimum flows if needed for other regulatory requirements.

7. Stanislaus River Forum (SRF) Call Review

- a. Stanislaus River Forum was held via Teams on March 15, 2022. Barbara Byrne (NMFS), Logan Day (PSMFC), Spencer Marshall (USBR), Brad Hubbard (USBR), Lee Mao (USBR), Peggy Manza (USBR), Melissa Vignau (USBR), Austin Galinat (PSMFC), Jason Guinard (FISHBIO), Katrina Poremba (NMFS), Gretchen Murphey (CDFW), and J.D. Wikert (USFWS) were in attendance. Updates on operations, temperature and fish monitoring were provided. Currently in "Critical" year-type. USBR will be submitting a Temporary Urgent Change Petition to the State Water Resources Control Board on Friday March 18th, which requests that the Vernalis flow standard be modified to 710 cfs for April - June.
- b. There was some discussion about the elevation of New Melones Reservoir at the submerged Old Melones Dam which started to affect access to the cold water behind the submerged dam. CDFW recalled from the previous drought, that elevation was approximately 350 TAF.

8. Fish Monitoring and Studies

- a. The weir is still in place and targeting steelhead monitoring. 25 of the 29 *O. Mykiss* upstream passages have been >16 inches, suggesting anadromy.

- b. FISHBIO clarified at the SRF meeting that the weir will continue to operate up to 2,000 cfs which means it will monitor through the pulse flows, but trapping will not occur at flows >500cfs.
- c. CDFW is operating the Mossdale trawl three days per week and will increase to five days per week in April.

Questions/Comments:

9. Restoration Project Updates

- a. Spawning and rearing habitat restoration
 - i. USFWS applied for a CVPIA notice of funding opportunity in November 2021 with Cramer Fish Science and East Stanislaus RCD. The two projects involved are Tortuga and Mohler Tract.
 - ii. USFWS and CDFW are working on a proposal to put gravel in at Honolulu Bar that will reduce dewatering issues.
- b. Temperature management study
 - i. No update
- c. Yellow-Bellied cuckoo survey
 - i. No update

10. Progress Update on Proposed Action Elements

- a. No update

11. Other Discussion Items

- a. Curtailments
 - i. No impact to curtailments because flow releases for D-1641 compliance are more than natural inflow
- b. Annual reporting check-in
 - i. No update
- c. Items to elevate to WOMT
 - i. No items to elevate to WOMT

12. Next Meeting

- a. Wednesday, April 20, 2022 (10am-12pm)