



— 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, November 17, 2021

1. Actions
 - a. Steve Tsao – look into redd superimposition concerns
 - b. Sarah Yarnell – distribute “Functional Flows” PowerPoint slides to the ARG
 - c. K&W – coordinate with Peggy on a Drought Planning Team presentation to the SWT in January or February
2. Introductions
 - a. USBR: Peggy Manza, Brad Hubbard, Sarah Perrin, Leeyan Mao, Elissa Buttermore, Zarela Guerrero
 - b. NMFS: Katrina Poremba
 - c. USFWS: JD Wikert
 - d. CDFW: Crystal Rigby, Gretchen Murphey, Steve Tsao
 - e. SWRCB: Yongxuan Gao, Michael George, Erin Foresman, Chris Carr
 - f. SSJID: Brandon Nakagawa
 - g. OID: Steve Knell
 - h. Stockton East: N/A
 - i. Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District: N/A
 - j. DWR: Vinh Giang; Matt Meyers
 - k. WAPA: N/A
 - l. FISHBIO: N/A
 - m. Other: Sarah Yarnell (UC Davis), Julie Zimmerman (The Nature Conservancy)

- n. Kearns & West: Rafael Silberblatt, Lindsay Tryba
- 3. Announcements
 - a. This is Sarah Perrin's last week with USBR; she is joining USFWS in Sacramento
 - b. This is Susan Ellsworth's last week with K&W
- 4. Operations Update and Forecasts/Hydrology
 - a. USBR provided an operations update. The October winter storm provided the largest 24-hour runoff event in Sacramento, which contributed to an increase in inflow to Folsom, but not to New Melones. Accumulated inflow at New Melones and accumulated precipitation are both above average for the WY (52 TAF and 251% of average, respectively).
 - b. New Melones:
 - i. New Melones storage is increasing from upstream inflows roughly 1 TAF/day (currently at 842,000 acre-feet).
 - c. Goodwin Reservoir
 - i. Releases are averaging 204-205 cfs per day; storage is low but on a steady uptick.

Questions/Comments:

- OID noted that the Climate Prediction Center is anticipating a La Nina weather event through February 2022, indicating that CA is likely headed towards another critical water year. According to a recent presentation from the Drought Planning Team, Shasta, Oroville, and Folsom would potentially be completely drained if the hydrology this coming year is similar to the last two years.
 - USBR agreed that the long-range forecast is very dry, and the chances of having another critical year are high. USBR encouraged agencies to plan accordingly.
 - **[Action]:** KW and USBR will coordinate to ask the Drought Planning Team to present to the SWT in January or February.
- 5. Temperature Updates
 - a. Temperature Updates – see Agenda Item 5.
 - b. NMFS provided an overview of Temperature Updates noting that temperatures dropped off in mid-November (see Figure 9).
- 6. Flow Planning
 - a. USFWS provided an overview of flow planning, noting that minimum flows of 200 cfs should be the norm for the foreseeable future. At the December SWT meeting, USFWS will share a proposal for winter instability pulses (these are expected to be short duration pulses that leverage storm flows). The proposal will explore whether it is feasible to move any of the spring pulse flows into February for a fry migration pulse.

- b. USFWS is hoping to study fish utilization of the restored habitat sites, but this will likely not occur during a critical water year.
 - c. There are no new updates regarding the modified ramping rate proposal
7. Stanislaus River Forum (SRF) Call Review
- a. USBR reported that it was a brief call with few attendees. There were no questions about operations and a few questions about fisheries. The group discussed installing a rotary screw trap in late December/early January which need flows of 200cfs or above for installation.
8. Fish Monitoring and Studies
- a. See handout for details.
 - b. Recent Carcass surveys on the Stanislaus River have shown an uptick of spawners and spawning activity
 - c. Figure 10 shows that the FISHBIO weir has experienced increased activity with over 1,000 passages; CDFW has identified 474 redds and many spawning and carcasses. PSMFC is preparing to install screw traps in late December/early January.

Questions/Comments:

- SWRCB asked if CDFW saw any superimposition of redds during recent surveys.
 - CDFW will look into this further but noted that losses from superimposition are unlikely to have a significant impact due to juvenile rearing constraints.
 - **[Action]:** Steve Tsao with check with CDFW staff regarding superimposition of redds.
9. Restoration Project Updates
- a. USFWS noted that the CVPIA solicitation closes at the end of November. Currently, USFWS is working to submit a proposal in which the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District would partner with Cramer Fish Sciences. The proposal includes property downstream of 120 bridge and near the wastewater treatment plant and the USFWS Mohler Refuge property.
 - b. USBR shared that they are coordinating monthly with USFWS and NMFS to strategize projects. In addition, DWR is helping to monitor the Goodwin Canyon gravel injections.
 - c. CDFW noted that they recorded adult chinook stranding at Honolulu Bar Restoration during the low points of the fall pulse flows a few weeks ago. Twenty-one live fish were relocated from the side channel to the main channel. Additional carcasses and redds were seen in the side channel.
10. Progress Update on Proposed Action Elements
- a. USBR provided an update that they have added over 22,000 tons of gravel over the past two years to support rearing habitat. USBR intends to restart gravel augmentation in the summer once water levels permit.

- b. USBR's goal is to restore 50 acres of habitat by 2030; so far, .25 acres have been restored.

Questions/Comments:

- USFWS asked if any changes to the Proposed Action Element targets are expected due to the change in administrations.
 - USBR noted that they do not anticipate any revisions to the targets until 2024 at the earliest and will continue with the current goal until they hear otherwise.

11. Other Discussion Items

- a. Presentation on Functional Flows
 - i. Sarah Yarnell (Center for Watershed Sciences) and Julie Zimmerman (The Nature Conservancy) provided a presentation on the Functional Flows Approach. Sarah and Julie explained that making a flow “functional” requires restoring the geomorphic complexity (i.e., physical habitat restoration and floodplain connectivity). Functional flows consider both flows and habitat, not one or the other.
 - ii. The CA Environmental Flows Framework (CEFF) is a statewide process based on a functional flows approach that utilizes 12 steps to combine scientific assessments with sociopolitical considerations, which allows users to evaluate tradeoffs associated with potential actions. The Natural flows web tool can be found at rivers.codefornature.org.

Questions/Comments:

- SWRCB asked if it was necessary to go through every step of the CEFF or if it's possible to skip steps.
 - Sarah recommended starting at Section A (because it helps to understand the entire system) but added that typically only 2-3 functional flow requirements need to be considered.
- SWRCB asked if a user could use the tool retrospectively to analyze which management actions were most effective.
 - Sarah and Julie agreed that a user could use the tool retrospectively and added that the tool should be used to complement other evaluations, not replace other tools.
- USFWS shared that this effort may be time-consuming for some agencies and asked the presenters to share a success story where a change in operations prompted a difference in outcomes.
 - Sarah and Julie shared that the tool is very new, so they do not have five years of data to evaluate the application success rate. That said, there have been several successful collaborative efforts so far, such as the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project's water quality and

environmental flow assessment, Putah Creek's natural spawners, and TNC's collaborative water management discussions.

- Sarah and Julie suggested that interested agencies could further discuss the process with the technical team. They reassured attendees that it does not have to be time-consuming and recommended that agencies start by looking at the natural flows in their region and comparing those to the actual flows.

b. Suspension of Curtailments

- i. OID noted that all curtailments, including term 91, are currently suspended. There is ongoing work to update water boards' methodology for curtailments. OID is anticipating further curtailments resulting from the emergency order in August 2021, but these curtailments have not yet transpired. The waterboards are hosting a workshop on December 15 to discuss potential alternatives to the curtailments.
- ii. SWRCB added that the suspension is ongoing, and recent analysis shows that water availability has dropped a little. There is a meeting this afternoon to detail if additional curtailment is needed. At this time, SWRCB does not anticipate that the Stanislaus would require curtailment. The new summary report was posted on November 15 on the drought website ([link](#)).
- iii. OID commented that if there is a repeat of last year's hydrology, there may not be enough water in the Stanislaus for M&I and environmental flows. Currently, there is no clear plan to show how deficits will be made up if the winter is dry.

c. Annual reporting check-in

- i. USBR noted that the latest report was sent for review last week.

d. Review/revise Ops Outlook table section

- i. No changes were suggested.

e. Items to elevate to WOMT

- i. There were no items to elevate to WOMT

12. Next Meeting

- a. Wednesday, December 15, 2021 (10am-12pm)