



— 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, December 15, 2021

#### 1. Actions

- a. Peggy – Look into a presentation from the Drought Planning Team for the February SWT meeting
- b. Barb – share the Ramping Rate Proposal with Peggy, Zarela, and Brad
- c. Peggy – check w/ the Operations team regarding the feasibility of sending flood control releases to irrigation districts
- d. JD – share draft Winter Instability Pulse Flow Plan
- e. K&W – add an item to the January SWT agenda related to which exceedance forecast to use for WY 2022
- f. Barb - share background information regarding exceedance forecasts w/ Brad (and any others who request it)

#### 2. Introductions

- a. USBR: Zarela Guerrero, Peggy Manza, Brad Hubbard, Elissa Buttermore
- b. NMFS: Katrina Poremba, Barb Byrne
- c. USFWS: JD Wikert
- d. CDFW: Gretchen Murphey, Steve Tsao, Crystal Rigby
- e. SWRCB: Chris Carr, Erin Foresman, Yongxuan Gao
- f. SSJID: Brandon Nakagawa
- g. OID: NA

- h. Stockton East: NA
  - i. Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District: NA
  - j. DWR: Jamieson Scott, Matt Meyers, John Ford
  - k. WAPA: NA
  - l. FISHBIO: NA
  - m. Other: NA
  - n. Kearns & West: Rafael Silberblatt
3. Announcements
- a. There were no objections to the meeting being recorded for note-taking purposes.
4. Operations Update and Forecasts/Hydrology
- a. USBR provided an operations update:
    - i. More precipitation is anticipated through 12/25/21. Storage is gradually gaining and there is increased runoff
    - ii. New Melones: gained 6000 acre feet of storage
    - iii. Tulloch – current storage is roughly 57,000 acre feet. After receiving local side-flow, Tulloch is currently above its winter operating band and will need to be brought down. USBR just put out an order to increase releases to 400 cfs starting at 2pm today (12/15/21). USBR will hold this flow until either Tulloch is out of encroachment or it's necessary to increase releases due to more side-flow. USBR is striving for longer, slower releases to avoid redd scouring and to accommodate carcass surveys.
    - iv. Goodwin Reservoir – currently releasing 200 cfs but the increase at Tulloch will result in 400 cfs at Goodwin. There are currently no releases to the joint main or south main tunnels as contractors aren't taking any water at this time.

Questions/Comments:

- NMFS asked to what extent the winter operation band is responding to flood requirements needs (as opposed to recreational needs) and whether the Army Corps might show some leniency in regards to flood control release requirements.
  - USBR indicated that the winter operation band is predicated on flood control and that USBR will have to demonstrate a good faith effort to get out of encroachment.
- NMFS asked if there's anything USBR might need in order to implement the steeper proposed ramping rates for the winter instability pulse flow.

- USBR noted that the ramping rates proposal will need to go through the LTO approval process. Hopefully this will occur prior to the January instability flows.
  - USFWS noted that they will be presenting the ramping rate proposal at the 12/16/21 LTO meeting.
- CDFW inquired as to whether it might be possible to route flows to irrigators for groundwater recharge
  - USBR noted that this is something they've done (rarely) in the past when they've had to make very large (>4000 cfs) releases. They haven't considered this strategy for small volumes but are open to discussing it (so long as Vernalis requirements can still be met).
    - NMFS noted this strategy could potentially help with groundwater banking objectives.
    - SSJID noted that this may not be feasible as tunnels are dewatered for winter maintenance
    - USBR that a good first step would be to speak with the Operations Team to gauge their perspective on the feasibility of this strategy before considering whether it makes sense to engage in further discussion with the SWT and/or the water districts.

## 5. Temperature Updates

- a. Temperature Updates – see Agenda Item 5.
- b. NMFS provided an overview of Temperature Updates noting that the Stanislaus is seeing typical winter weather patterns (see Figure 9).

## 6. Flow Planning

- a. The SWT may elect to wait until mid-January (pending LTO evaluation of the ramping rate proposal) to make a recommendation regarding winter instability flows. The SWT does not anticipate winter instability flows commencing on 1/3/2022 as proscribed by the default schedule in the step release plan.

## 7. Stanislaus River Forum (SRF) Call Review

- a. The Stanislaus River Forum call was held via MS Teams on December 14, 2021. Barbara Byrne (NMFS), Logan Day (PSMFC), Zarela Guerrero (USBR), Jason Guignard (FishBio), Peggy Manza (USBR), Gretchen Murphy (CDFW), Lilly Selke (public), Cory Starr (PSMFC) and J.D. Wikert (USFWS) were in attendance. Updates on operations, temperature and fish monitoring were provided.

## 8. Fish Monitoring and Studies

- a. See handout for details.

- b. CDFW Carcass Survey Update-The number of live fall-run Chinook salmon peaked in early November, and the number of redds peaked in late November
- c. The Stanislaus' fish counts are considerably higher than the Tuolumne or Merced, based on both weir count in the Tuolumne, or live counts from CDFW's Carcass Surveys (Tuolumne and Merced)– the disparity is even greater than it has usually been since 2012.
- d. CDFW fall-run Chinook Carcass surveys are winding down.
- e. Steelhead redd surveys by CDFW will begin soon.
- f. Fall-run Chinook redd superimposition was not obvious in earlier survey weeks but is expected to occur here and there.
- g. Cumulative net upstream passage of fall-run Chinook salmon was 5,960 – the vast majority of which were of hatchery origin. 2021 appears to be an intermediate run size relative to the past five years.
- h. Rotary Screw Traps at Oakdale and Caswell will start in January for monitoring of juveniles.
- i. Mossdale sampling should become less sporadic starting in January (boat passage has been very difficult at certain times due to low flow). CDFW will assist USFWS with this monitoring effort.

#### 9. Restoration Project Updates

- a. USFWS worked with the East Stanislaus RCD and Cramer Fish Sciences to submit a proposal for the current CPVIA funding opportunity.

#### 10. Progress Update on Proposed Action Elements

- a. NA

#### 11. Other Discussion Items

- a. Curtailments
  - i. Curtailments were temporarily suspended on 12/11/21
  - ii. A recording is available of the State Water Resource Control Board workshop on 12/15/21 which included discussion regarding the engagement process related to curtailments.
  - iii. Presentation slides are available from the 12/8/21 SWRCB Board meeting
- b. Annual reporting check-in
  - i. USBR will share an updated draft of the Annual Report for review (likely in early January)

- c. Review/revise Ops Outlook table section
  - i. The SWT reviewed and revised the language in the Ops Outlook table related to environmental and fish conditions.
- d. Additional Discussion
  - i. SWT members discussed which exceedance level of forecasted hydrology might be used for the Stanislaus River operations and allocations. The group noted that this may make a difference in March/April in regards to spring pulse flow for WY 2022 and that it would be helpful to have a clear understanding of the process for making this determination. As this topic falls outside of the charter for the SWT, no decisions were made at the time of the meeting.

## 12. Next Meeting

- a. Wednesday, January 19, 2021 (10am-12pm)