



Upper Sacramento Scheduling Team Flow Smoothing Coordination Wrap Up Meeting

Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 10–11 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Members Attending

- CDFW: Doug Killam, Erica Meyers
- DWR: None
- Kearns & West: Terra Alpaugh, Eva Spiegel
- Reclamation: Elissa Buttermore, Lisa Elliott, Tom Patton
- NMFS: Stephen Maurano, Garwin Yip
- SRSC: Anne Williams, Yuen Lenh
- SWRCB: Claudia Bucheli, Jeff Laird, Craig Williams, Matt Holland
- USFWS: Craig Fleming, Bill Poytress

Suggested Adjustments for USST in 2024:

- Kearns & West will draft a document that can be used to onboard new participants to the group and serve as the basis of a pre-season briefing in 2024; they will share with participants for feedback. Content may include: clarified objectives, past years' approaches, and details on the flow scheduling constraints the group has identified over time to assist in a more structured decision-making process.
- Reclamation to consider drafting a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to describe how they generate their initial alternatives and the subsequent derivatives. Potentially include this as part of the document described above.
- Kearns & West will schedule an optional pre-season USST briefing to review objectives, key terms, and approach.
- Reclamation will work with the SacPAS group to further automate their analysis and make it easier to disseminate.

- Kearns & West, coordinating with the USST, will consider timeframe in which information is provided, when the group meets, and when recommendations are made to try to optimize that timeline so that participants have enough time to review materials and consult their colleagues.
- USST will consider adjusting their reporting of the expansion factor in next year's notes. One suggestion: report a minimum and maximum expansion factor as well as an average, but only provide an estimated number of redds based on the average. Once CDFW has generated what they consider to be the most likely expansion factor based on existing conditions (usually mid-August), use that number.

Operations Update

- Reclamation reported it will maintain Keswick reservoir outflows at 5,000 cfs through February.
- Reclamation reported that Shasta Dam is above 3-million-acre feet.
- Reclamation is slowly lowering Whiskeytown Reservoir. The Carr Tunnel outage has been postponed until late December and will be completed so that the tunnel can be back online by April.
- Reclamation acknowledged that managing this year's fall flow reduction was easier due to the overall water levels. It had been some time since they had to manage around rice decomposition needs, so it was helpful to work through those details.
- The spring pulse management process was also a learning experience: high storage triggers the ability to conduct a spring pulse, but it also makes it harder to manage because of the need to also make flood management releases during the same period.

Fishery Monitoring Update

- CDFW reported that the fall-run Chinook salmon count is low in the upper Sacramento River Watershed. CDFW noted that fall-run Chinook salmon counts were higher on the American, Feather and Mokelumne rivers. The low upper Sacramento River return totals result from juvenile fish not making it to the ocean three years ago.
- CDFW reported that Battle Creek had a total of 6,000 fall-run Chinook salmon counted to date as the season end approaches.
- CDFW reported that Clear Creek's total is under 1,000 fall-run Chinook salmon.

Flow Scheduling Adaptive Management Feedback

In advance of the wrap up meeting, Kearns & West sent participants a short survey to solicit feedback on the group's work this season and areas for improvement in 2024. Responses were categorized as either process/materials-related or content-related; both survey responses and responses given during the December 5, 2023, meeting are summarized below.

Process/Materials

- A survey respondent requested a review of the prior year at the start of each new season that covers processes, approaches, and outcomes. This would help participants have data for comparison when evaluating flows in the current season.
- A survey respondent requested that the group employ a more structured decision-making process for exploring the decision space for flows, temperatures, etc., rather than simply iterating weekly on alternatives.
- A survey respondent asked for more information on how or if SRTTG/USST coordinates with the Sacramento River Science Partnership.
- A survey respondent asked for clarity on when the Shasta Planning Group (SPG) is responsible for making decisions or recommendations and when that is delegated to the SRTTG/USST?
- Meeting participants expressed that it would be more productive in decision making to focus less on possible extremes in the expansion factor and instead use the number of redds calculated from an average expansion factor until mid-August or later when CDFW has more clarity on the actual expansion factor.
- Meeting participants asked what the objectives of USST are.
- Meeting participants echoed the survey respondents request for a document that outlines the group's objectives and the thresholds or constraints within which it is making recommendations to help onboard new members and provide a review for existing members.
- Meeting participants echoed the survey respondents request for a meeting at the start of the season to give an overview of the Fall Flows Group objectives, guidelines and structure as well as review the prior year's outcomes.

Content

- A survey respondent requested more specific objectives of the management of fall flows and redd maintenance and an assessment if progress has been made towards these goals.
- A survey respondent asked if rice decomp flow projections could be included in the scenarios to help show the big picture of flow management through the system over time.
- A survey respondent expressed that it would be productive to refine dewatering estimates for fall-run Chinook salmon.
- A survey respondent asked for information on whether Reclamation's new temperature modeling platform could be leveraged for real time assessments.