

Upper Sacramento Scheduling Team

Fall Flow Reduction Coordination

Tuesday, October 27, 2020 | 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants

Reclamation	Tom Patton, Elissa Buttermore, Liz Kiteck, Natalie Wolder, Randi Field, Allison Febbo
USFWS	Jim Earley
NMFS	Evan Sawyer, Stephen Maurano, Cyril Michel
CDFW	Doug Killam, Duane Linander, Mike Harris, Ken Kundargi
DWR	Kevin Reece, Mike Ford, Brett Harvey
SWRCB	Diane Riddle, Matt Holland, Michael Macon
SRSC	Thad Bettner, Anne Williams, Roger Cornwell
Kearns & West	Terra Alpaugh, Julie Leimbach, Alyson Scurlock

Action Items

- Doug Killam, CDFW, to provide final estimates for dewatered redds week of 11/2 and final estimates for female spawners week of 11/9 for distribution to the USST.
- Reclamation to provide an updated spreadsheet with best and worst case scenarios for fall-run dewatering estimates.

Key Discussion Topics with Summary of Perspectives, Outcomes, and Agreements

Meeting Objectives

1. Collaboratively develop flow reduction alternatives that enjoy broad support from USST members
2. Test of support for any immediate changes to flows
3. Test support for any proposed long-term changes to flow releases
4. Shared understanding of interests and external conditions for fall flow scheduling

Fisheries Update

CDFW provided the following fisheries monitoring update:

- All 65 redds have been accounted for except for one, which is still active until 10/30.
- If flows remain the same, there should be a total of 26 redds that were dewatered this year.
- Fall-run redds are very active in the river right now.

Kearns & West asked when the final estimates for female spawners and total dewatered redds would be available. CDFW said that they would have the final estimate for dewatered redds after 10/30 and that the final estimate for female spawners should be available soon after 11/10.

Operations Update

Reclamation provided the following operations update:

- Flows have been held at 5,000 cfs since the last flow cut on 10/20.
- Reclamation has been monitoring downstream conditions to determine if an additional flow cut can be made but flows at Wilkins Slough are very low.
 - Wilkins Slough flows have been bouncing between 3,600-3,700 cfs.
 - Depletions in the system could decrease approaching 11/1, which could allow Reclamation to ramp down flows.
 - From a fisheries perspective, significant cutbacks should be made starting 11/1.
- The ACID diversion dam is in place and will start to be removed the week of 11/2.
 - There are not any plans to drop flows significantly for the removal of the ACID diversion dam but decreasing flows by any amount would help with the removal process.
- The cross channel gates have been cycling open and closed and will continue into November to help with Rio Vista flows.
 - There has been a slight impact on water quality in the Delta, but it is improving now.
- In November, Rio Vista has a 4,500 cfs outflow requirement.
- Reclamation proposed cutting flows to 4,800 cfs starting 11/1.

Perspectives and questions shared by USST members included:

- DWR said that it seems reasonable to make whatever cuts you can as soon as you can, once the last winter-run redd emerges.
- CDFW said that dropping flows and getting them stabilized is more protective of fall-run redd spawning. Flows should be decreased as low as they can be, as quickly as they can be for fall-run benefits.
 - CDFW also highlighted the concern of decreasing flows and then needing to increase them again for water quality or another issue, which should be avoided. CDFW does not see anything that would cause that to happen, but it should be closely considered when considering a flow drop to 3,250 cfs later in season.
- NMFS clarified that flows reductions are not being prevented due to winter-run redds (which are estimated to be dewatered at several hundred cfs below current flows). This is later than they had hoped for fall-run flow stabilization. Reclamation should consider pre-scheduling change orders in order to avoid any delays; then if Wilkins Slough conditions preclude the change, they can just cancel the change order.
 - Reclamation confirmed that flows are being held due to concerns about low flows from the Wilkins Slough to Verona stretch of the river.
- SRSC expressed concern about Wilkins Slough flows during the early November time period. By 11/1, GCID and others in the northern part of the valley will start to decrease their diversions which accounts for the lower depletion numbers. At the same time, diverters closer to Wilkins Slough will start increasing their diversions a little bit. This will result in an overall decrease in contractor diversions but geographic shift in where the maximum diversions are occurring. SRSC asked Reclamation if they could discuss the forecast for the natural accretions into the system.

- Reclamation said that there is no rain in sight and that they do not see any additions. The accretion numbers were previously 500 cfs but have been lowered to 300 cfs to be more representative of what they were seeing in Battle Creek and other creeks. The accretions should likely remain at 300 cfs at least for the first part of November.
- USFWS said that they concur with NMFS and CDFW.
- SWRCB said that they have no concerns for dropping flows to 4,800 cfs.

Fall Flows Scheduling

Kearns & West reminded the group that the USST is now meeting biweekly since the Spring Flows Subgroup is meeting weeks when the USST does not. Kearns & West asked if USST members preferred to continue to have meetings for fall flows through November and early December, or if additional correspondence could take place via email.

Perspectives and questions shared by USST members included:

- CDFW, DWR, and SWRCB said that they were fine shifting the focus to the Spring Flows Subgroup and corresponding via email for fall flows. CDFW suggested that the USST should have the option to call a meeting if something arises.
 - Kearns & West asked the USST for examples of instances that they could look out for that would motivate reconvening a meeting. CDFW said that they would likely want to call a meeting if there was a lot of rain or if Delta demands or something else caused flow fluctuations.
- NMFS said that they were concerned with the upper end of fall-flow stabilization as fall-run redds will be 90% spawned in two weeks. NMFS asked Reclamation if they had an estimate for when flow stabilization for fall-run would happen.
 - Reclamation said that they would not want to cut flows too fast and have to increase them again for any reason. They probably want to err on the higher side, which does not help for fall-run. There should be room for additional flow cuts, but Reclamation has to monitor Wilkins Slough and keep in contact with the diverters. Reclamation estimated that 4,500 cfs may be the limit for the near term. There are flow reductions in mid-November to 4,100 cfs or 4,000 cfs, but it may be slower ramp down than they initially thought.
 - NMFS asked if it was possible to update the FCS dewatering tab in the spreadsheet to include updated scenario for the fall-run dewatering estimates if the flow reductions are substantially delayed compared to the Alt 6a plan.
 - Reclamation will work to update the fall-run dewatering estimates if/once they have new scenarios and send to the USST.
- CDFW asked another CDFW member about timing for late fall-run spawning.
 - CDFW said that late fall-run spawning fluctuates between the second and third week of December and runs until the end of March, with the peak occurring in late December to late January.
- NMFS said that fall-run dewatering estimates could be higher than stated in the spreadsheet if flow drops do not follow the flow schedule exactly. NMFS asked Reclamation what the impacts to fall-run dewatering estimates are and if they thought fall-run dewatering estimates

would be dramatically different. NMFS suggested that Reclamation communicate via email if flows deviate from the flow schedule by a couple hundred cfs.

- Reclamation said that they think flow drops will be close to the weekly flow estimates in the spreadsheet.
- Kearns & West said that they are happy to reconvene meetings at any point and may schedule a meeting at some point to review the documents that will be developed in the Spring Flows subgroup.
- USFWS asked SRSC if there was any foreseeable scenario in which they would need an increased flow from Keswick in order to acquire the needed decomposition water.
 - SRSC said that it did not seem likely; they tried to work on a schedule that maintains Keswick flows. The only issue may be not having enough water to service all of the decomposition lands that want water, but they will not ask Reclamation to deliver more water. Starting in November, more than half the water will go to three refuges that SRSC delivers water to.

Next Meeting

Future meetings will be held on an ad hoc, as needed basis. Otherwise, updates and discussion will be provided via email.