



## American River Group

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Conference Line: +1 (321) 209-6143; Access Code: 985 598 947#

Webinar: [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Thursday, December 21, 2023

### Notes

#### 1. Introductions

- a. USBR: Amanda Snow, Carolyn Bragg, Drew Loney, John Hannon, Mechele Pacheco, Spencer Marshall, Thuy Washburn, Todd Plain
- b. NMFS: Ally Bosworth, Barb Byrne, Robert Sheffer
- c. USFWS: Felix Smith, Paul Cadrett
- d. CDFW: Crystal Rigby, Duane Linander, Elaine Jeu, Emily Fisher, Erica Meyers, Gary Novak, Jason Julienne, Mike Healey, Tracy Grimes, Travis Apgar
- e. DWR: John Ford
- f. California State University, Sacramento: n/a
- g. CBEC Engineering: Chris Hammersmark
- h. SWRCB: Claudia Bucheli, Reza Ghasemizadeh
- i. EBMUD: I-Pei Hsiu, Max Fefer
- j. City of Sacramento: Ryan Palmer
- k. City of Folsom: n/a
- l. City of Roseville: n/a
- m. Cramer Fish Sciences: Kirsten Sellheim
- n. Kleinschmidt Group: n/a
- o. PCWA: Benjamin Barker, Darin Reintjes
- p. PSMFC: Logan Day, Hunter Morris

- q. Regional Water Authority: n/a
  - r. SMUD: Larry Chen
  - s. USACE: n/a
  - t. Water Forum: n/a
  - u. Water Districts: Greg Zlotnick, Tom Boardman
  - v. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: n/a
  - w. BKS Law: Jennifer Buckman
  - x. Other: Rod Hall
2. Announcements
- a. The CVPIA Year 3 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was released on 12/15/23.
3. Housekeeping
- a. N/A
4. Fisheries Update
- a. CDFW Updates
    - i. Carcass surveys
      - 1. For the week of 12/11/23, carcasses totaled 4,026, which is slightly lower than the previous week (week of 12/4/23). This likely indicates that the peak of carcass season has passed.
      - 2. A total of 1,290 females were assessed for spawn condition.
    - ii. Redd surveys
      - 1. For the week of 12/11/23, 2,352 redds were observed.
      - 2. Most of the spawning has occurred in Section 1A: from Nimbus Dam to the Fair Oaks walking bridge.
      - 3. Noted some staffing shortages for providing some of the data.
    - iii. Hatchery Spawning

1. Fall-run Chinook salmon spawning is complete at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery.
2. Approximately 12 million eggs were collected, which are in various stages of incubation.
3. Fall-run Chinook salmon eggs will spend several months in indoor rearing facilities before being moved outdoors in the spring.
4. Spawning for Steelhead started the week of 12/18/23. More data on egg collections are forthcoming.
5. Steelhead are currently in the raceways and will be released near the end of January.

b. Cramer Fish Sciences Updates

- i. Have been conducting otolith and generic collections; the last week for collections will be the week of 12/25/23.
- ii. Steelhead spawning surveys will kick off on 1/9/24 on behalf of USBR.
- iii. Stranding surveys will start later in the year if there are reductions in releases.
- iv. Cramer Fish Sciences will provide an update on the survey first conducted in January.

c. PSMFC Updates

- i. PSMFC expects to install screw traps at Watt Ave. the first week of January and begin sampling during the second week of January.

d. Questions/Comments

- i. How do the carcass surveys for this year compare to other years?  
[CDFW]
  1. CDFW was unsure and will reach out to Jenny for more information.
- ii. How many, if any, aerial flights have been conducted to date?  
[CDFW]
  1. According to Cramer Fish Sciences and USBR, there have been two so far. The last one came in on 12/21/23.

2. According to USBR, a large number of redds have been observed during the flights. They're spawning down to the west end of Paradise Beach and at Watt Ave.
- iii. Has anyone observed egg emergence at this point in the season?  
[CDFW]
  1. Cramer Fish Sciences has not yet observed any, but noted they plan to start snorkel surveys in early February.
  2. According to CDFW, three lots have hatched at the fishery. The last of the three to hatch were spawned on 11/13/23. However, they don't anticipate seeing any hatched eggs in the wild for another few weeks.

## 5. Operations Forecast

### a. SMUD

- i. As of 12/18/23, the average precipitation at Fresh Pond for December is 9.14 inches. To date, 6.91 inches of precipitation have fallen.
- ii. Fresh Pond is currently at 12% of the entire average water year to date.
- iii. Runoff levels are currently at 80% of the median.
- iv. Current snowpack levels are at approximately 19% of the water year average.
- v. Current reservoir storage is 233 TAF (approximately 61% full).
- vi. Current water releases below Chili Bar are below average and projected to be around 50% of the average releases.

### b. PCWA

- i. Conditions are close to normal for this time of year at French Meadows and Hell Hole.
- ii. Each reservoir has slightly over 70 TAF of storage.
- iii. Storage levels are currently at 147 TAF, or 43% of capacity, and 90% of average.
- iv. 2023 storage levels are below the 20-year average.
- v. Precipitation through 12/20/23 is at 62% of the 50-year average.

- vi. Tahoe National Forest has extended the Mosquito Ridge Road closure through 6/30/24. The Federal Highway Administration is working to stabilize the major rockslides and road failures from Winter 2022/2023.
- vii. PCWA will run a model forecast the first week of January and will share it with those who are working on the modeling.

c. General Questions

- i. Is there an update on dissolved oxygen (DO)?
  - 1. There have been no issues since the bypass at Nimbus Dam.
  - 2. Samples were taken at Nimbus Dam after the bypass and resulted in an approximate measure of 9 mg/L and got the same readings after sampling along the American River.
  - 3. Cramer Fish Sciences shared that loggers also confirmed that dissolved oxygen no longer seems to be an issue. Conditions seem to have improved since the lake turned over.

6. Central Valley Operations

a. USBR

- i. American River is currently releasing 2,000 cfs and is expected to remain at this level through January.
- ii. Storage is at 459 TAF and has the capacity to store upcoming precipitation.
- iii. The power bypass at Folsom Dam started 11/1/23 and ended 12/10/23. USBR noted that the end of the power bypass occurred a little later in the year than typical, potentially due to the warmer November air temperatures. The power bypass ended once water temperatures remained stable at 56°F or lower.
- iv. Temperatures at Watt Ave. are cooler than at Fair Oaks and are expected to continue cooling through December.
- v. Folsom is expected to get above-normal levels of precipitation, but noting it is still early in the season to make any determinations on what the water year will be classified as.
- vi. Comparisons for Folsom Dam between 2017 and 2023 show the following:

- vii. Warmer air temperatures for 2023: 53.4°F in 2023 versus 49.6°F in 2017
- viii. Warmer water temperatures for 2023: 56.1°F in 2023 versus 54.7°F in 2017
- ix. Operations updates:
  - 1. Top shutters – Units 1, 2, and 3 are raised
  - 2. Middle shutters – Unit 1 is lowered; Units 2 and 3 are raised
  - 3. Bottom shutters – Unit 1 is lowered; Units 2 and 3 are raised
  - 4. The next anticipated change will be to lower and close all shutters in February/March in order to retain the cold water.
- x. With the December 90% Exceedance forecast, storage is projected to be approximately 596 TAF – close to the goal of 600 TAF.
- xi. Questions
  - 1. CDFW mentioned that an updated December American River Index (ARI) was released that slightly changed the Minimum Release Requirement (MRR). Do we keep using the ARI from the June-to-September time frame?
    - 1. Usually, we don't have a new b120 projection until January so they use the May ARI until the updated ARI is released.
    - 2. USBR is comfortable with keeping Nimbus releases at ~2,000 cfs for December and most of January, unless conditions prove to be completely dry.

## 7. Discussion

### a. Annual Report Update

- i. Currently waiting on a few sections from various people to input into the report, followed by an internal review.
- ii. The draft report will be distributed to ARG members for a second review as soon as possible.

## 8. Next Meetings

- a. The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on Thursday, January 18, and will feature:

- i. A presentation on dissolved oxygen from Joe Merz;
- ii. Potential updates to the LAR temperature plot on SacPAS.