BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

American River Group Notes

Conference Line: +1 (321) 209-6143; Access Code: 985 598 947#
Webinar: Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Thursday, May 16, 2024

Action Items

Kearns & West

1. Provide details regarding June hybrid meeting

Introductions

1. USBR: Carolyn Bragg, Mechele Pacheco, Melissa Vignau, Spencer Marshall, Thuy Washburn, Todd Plain, Zarela Guerrero
2. NMFS: Ally Bosworth, Robert Sheffer, Sam Pyros
3. USFWS: Paul Cadrett
4. CDFW: Crystal Rigby, Emily Fisher, Gary Novak, Jennifer O'Brien, Nick Bauer
5. DWR: N/A
6. SWRCB: Nathalie Niepagen
7. EBMUD: I-Pei Hsiu, Max Fefer
8. City of Sacramento: N/A
9. Environmental Council of Sacramento: N/A
10. City of Folsom: Marcus Yasutake
11. City of Roseville: N/A
12. Cramer Fish Sciences: Jamie Sweeney, Kirsten Sellheim, Scott Blankenship
13. PCWA: Ben Barker
14. PSMFC: Hunter Morris
15. SMUD: Tyler Belarde
16. USACE: Robert Chase
17. CBEC Engineering: Chris Hammersmark

18. Water Forum: Ashlee Casey, Erica Bishop
19. Water Districts: Deanna Sereno, Greg Zlotnick, Paul Helliker
20. Regional Water Authority (RWA): Michelle Banonis
21. Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians: N/A
22. CSUS: DeDe Birch
23. BKS Law Firm: Jennifer Buckman
24. Kleinschmidt Group: Craig Addley, Vanessa Martinez
25. Other: Rod Hall

Announcements

- NA

Housekeeping

- NA

Presentations

Close-Kin Mark-Recapture Study

1. The ARG received a presentation from Scott Blankenship (Cramer Fish Sciences) titled: "Observed effects of habitat restoration on juvenile Chinook salmon recruitment rates using parentage methods."
2. Key takeaways from the study were:
    a. Habitat restoration sites show increased utilization by adult Chinook salmon spawners;
    b. Quantification of effects towards the goal of increased abundance is rare;
    c. Reproductive success and viability measures are needed for evaluating progress towards recovery goals;
    d. The study demonstrated use of parentage methods to estimate reproductive success and viability;
    e. Habitat construction and maintenance along the American River was justifiable, as genetic data documented successful juvenile production in reaches of the river that had low or no spawning utilization prior to augmentation.

Questions and Comments

1. BKS Law Firm asked for clarification regarding restored sites versus naturally occurring habitat.
    a. CFS confirmed that the study showed that restored sites can be just as functional and provide the same value as naturally occurring fish habitat. CFS sees a comparable number of juvenile recruits produced from spawning in both augmented and non-augmented habitat.

Temperature Modeling

1. The ARG received a presentation from Vanessa Martinez (Kleinschmidt Group) titled: "Water Temperature Modeling – Folsom Reservoir and the Lower American River (LAR)".
    a. Modeling Scenario Summary – various scenarios were run, including the 90% and 50% exceedance forecasts for May, as well as for a previous warm year and a previous cool year.
    b. Current average temperatures at Watt Ave. are 58°F which is slightly cooler as compared to historical data.
    c. Shutters will likely not be pulled until July, but a target water temperature (e.g., 66-67°F) is necessary in case action needs to be taken.

Questions / Comments

1. The Water Forum asked whether USBR expects the draft temperature plan to reflect 66°F at Watt Ave.?
    a. USBR confirmed this and offered to start the target at 67°F if that makes the group more comfortable.
    b. Kleinschmidt Group noted that 66°F seems like a reasonable target based on the metadata.
2. USBR asked about setting the temperature target at Hazel Ave. They may have to take an action during heat waves to meet the temperature target at Watt Ave. so if a Hazel target is also set, it could preserve cold water for the fall season.
    a. Kleinschmidt Group asked if the target would be approximately 64°F at Hazel Ave.?
        i. USBR responded that it would be similar to that and will check what last year's target was for comparison.
        ii. Water Forum added that the Watt Ave. target seems like the higher priority.

Fisheries Update

CDFW Updates

1. Carcass Surveys
    a. N/A
2. Chinook spawning
    a. N/A
3. Redd surveys
    a. N/A
4. Nimbus Hatchery Operations Update
    a. CDFW has finished coded-wire tagging of Chinook salmon and are halfway through releases. The remaining 3 releases are scheduled to occur before 6/20/2024.

Questions and Comments

1. N/A

Cramer Fish Sciences Updates

1. Steelhead spawning surveys have been completed.
2. CFS conducted a steelhead stranding survey in late April/early May after a flow reduction of 1,000 cfs. 570 Chinook salmon and 6 steelhead were rescued at William B. Pond. An additional 30 Chinook salmon were seen at Rossdale Bar but were not rescued due to dense brush in the area. This will likely be the last survey of the season.
3. Next month, CFS will provide a comprehensive summary of the water year's activities.

Questions and Comments

1. N/A

PSMFC Updates

1. As of 5/12/24, the following unmarked juvenile LAD Chinook salmon have been caught:
    a. 82,374 fall-run
    b. 83 late-fall-run
    c. 41 spring-run

    d. 12 winter-run

2. In the last week of sampling, most of the steelhead that were caught were parr-sized (with an average fork length of 57 mm).
3. Sampling was suspended on 5/8/24 due to storm-related debris.
4. Rotary screw traps (RSTs) were taken offline on 5/10/24 for the following weekend due to expected river recreation.
5. RSTs were replaced on 5/12/24 and have since been continuously sampling. Going forward, RSTs will be operating Monday – Friday for the remainder of the sampling season, expected to last through mid-to-late June.
6. PSMFC has conducted three efficiency trials since 4/18/2024 resulting in the following:
    a. 4/25/2024 fish release at 5,000 cfs; 1.6% efficiency
    b. 5/2/2024 fish release at 4,000 cfs; 2.9% efficiency
    c. 5/13/2024 fish release at 4,000 cfs; 2.4% efficiency

Questions and Comments

1. CDFW asked how the recent three efficiency trials will affect the season's overall efficiency rating of the RSTs.
    a. PSMFC responded that various factors will affect the overall rating such as fish size, water flow/discharge at the time of the trial, and which model is used. PSMFC is also working with USFWS to get a better passage estimate.
        i. CDFW followed up with a question about comparisons of previous years' catch numbers.
        ii. PSMFC responded that catch numbers are higher at this point in time for Water Year 2024 than they were for Water Year 2023. PSMFC offered to share a graph that charts catch numbers over previous years.

Operations Forecast

SMUD

1. Precipitation totals are approximately 92% of average (49 inches) as of 5/16/2024.
2. SMUD was unable to move much water after recent precipitation while energy prices were down but were able to do so once temperatures started increasing.
3. Snowpack levels are at 60% of average as of 5/16/2024, which is also the peak runoff date for the watershed. Snowpack levels will continue depleting from this point forward.

4. Storage reservoirs levels are expected to be full sometime in June. Total reservoir storage is 87% full at nearly 330 TAF.
5. Chili Bar daily average releases are forecasted at the following flow rates:
    a. May: approximately 3,400 cfs
    b. June: 1,600 cfs
    c. July: 730 cfs

Questions and Comments

1. N/A

PCWA

1. Storage at French Meadows is currently 122 TAF, or 90% capacity.
2. Storage at Hell Hole is currently 140 TAF, or 67% capacity.
3. Combined storage totals 162 TAF, or 77% capacity. This represents 96% of the 15-year average.
4. Middle Fork American River (MFAR) daily average releases are approximately 1,900 cfs.
5. North Fork American River at the pump station below the confluence is releasing a daily average of 3,650 cfs.
6. Total precipitation for Lake Spaulding during WY 2024 is 58.4 inches, or 87% of average, as of 5/14/2024.
7. French Meadows and Hell Hole are at peak snow melt as of mid-May.
8. Mosquito Ridge Road is scheduled to reopen on 5/23/2024 for the recreation season.
9. PCWA's water year index is based on the B120. The May B120 was released on 5/8/2024 and determines the minimum thresholds. The Middle Fork American River Project is in a Below Normal year.
    a. The minimum flow at R11/MFAR below Ralston Afterbay is 245 cfs from 7/1 – 8/31/2024.
    b. Recreational Releases will start on 5/25/2024 for 6 days per week (Tue – Sun) through 9/2/2024.
    c. Recreational Releases drop to 5 days per week (T/W/F/Sa/Su) from 9/3 – 9/30/2024.
10. MFAR early release days are scheduled for two Saturdays per month for June, July, and August, plus one in September.

Questions and Comments

1. N/A

Central Valley Operations

USBR

1. As of 5/16/2024, Folsom storage is at 910 TAF, or 117% of the 15-year average.
    a. At this time last year, Folsom storage levels measured 861 TAF.
    b. Storage levels for WY 2024 are expected to exceed 930 TAF.
2. Current releases from Folsom Dam are 4,000 cfs as of 5/16/2024 and will increase to 5,000 cfs on 5/17/24. Minimum Release Requirements (MRR) are set at 1,500 cfs for May.
3. Accumulated inflow at Folsom Dam is 1.7 MAF, or 89% of the 15-year average.
4. Precipitation outlook shows equal chance of being Above Normal or Below Normal.
5. California remains out of drought risk for this year.
6. Air temperatures are forecasted to be 30-40% Above Normal.
7. Folsom Dam water temperatures are higher this year (53.2°F) compared with last year (51.5°F).
8. All sets of gate shutters at Folsom Dam are lowered.
9. In the 90% exceedance operations forecast, the average release levels are anticipated to be 3,300 cfs for June; 5,500 cfs for July; and 5,100 cfs for August.
10. We are closer to the 50% exceedance than the 90%. At the 50% exceedance level, average release levels are anticipated to be 3,800 cfs for June; 4,500 cfs for July; and 4,000 cfs for August.

Questions and Comments

1. N/A

Next Meetings

The next regularly scheduled ARG meeting is on Thursday, June 20.

The June meeting will be a hybrid meeting (directions to follow).