



Upper Sacramento Scheduling Team, Fall Flow Planning Subgroup Meeting Summary

Tuesday, October 1, 2024, 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Participants

- CDFW: Colby Hause, Crystal Rigby, Doug Killam, Eric Meyers, Gary Zhao, Matt Johnson, Travis Apgar
- NMFS: Stephen Maurano, Sam Pyros
- USBR: Tom Patton, Elizabeth Kiteck, Karissa Bridges, Peggy Manza, Lisa Elliot
- SWRCB: Craig Williams
- SRSC: Anne Williams, Yuen Lenh
- USFWS: Craig Fleming, Matt Brown
- Kearns & West: Brittani Bohlke, Terra Alpaugh

Action Items

- KW to draft email with elevation request to SPG [DONE]; KW to schedule the SPG to convene on Wed or Thursday [DONE]. Ask of SPG: Pending the results of the fall run dewatering analysis showing a benefit, the fisheries agencies are asking the SPG to consider recommending dropping flows as quickly as possible (given ramping rates) to 6,000 or 6,500 cfs, with the understanding that this drop can be delayed if there is a heat wave causing CCR > 53.5 degrees. Flows would be maintained into November at this level for as long as needed to meet the total decomp demands.
- Tom Patton to develop two scenarios, one dropping flows to 6,000 as quickly as possible and the other to 6,500 cfs [DONE].
- Lisa Elliot to run the fall run dewatering analysis on both new scenarios [DONE].
- KW to share new analysis with SPG (no later than start of day on Wed) [DONE].
- Tom Patton will reassess the forecast without assuming fall X2 demand to determine what the Delta needs will be. [DONE] Based on this analysis and the SPG's direction, Tom will coordinate with Anne Williams to determine diverters' willingness to spread flows into November.

- KW to share [2023 Reclamation analysis](#) of dewatering estimates vs. observed dewatering [DONE].

Key Discussion Topics with Summary of Perspectives and Outcomes

Recap of Meeting Outcomes from September 17th

Kearns & West reviewed the outcomes and action items from last week's discussions and confirmed that the following action items were still in progress:

- KW to add reviewing the new SacPAS webpage to the next agenda.
- Reclamation (Tom Patton) to add two new scenarios to the alternatives:
 - [Fisheries preference] Drop flows as quickly as possible (given ramping rates) to 5,000 cfs. (With the understanding that this is for comparative purposes only since it would not meet X2 or decomp needs)
 - Drop flows as low as possible in early October (approximately 6000 cfs?) and then spread the diversion demand out across late October and November.
- Reclamation will add two vertical lines to its graph of scenarios to demark the peak fall run spawning period from October 12 to November 8.

Reclamation will provide an update on the 9/20 inspection of the Spring Creek Debris Dam as discussed at the last meeting.

Reclamation shared that the only new piece of information was the September 25th shallow redds document, and that the other Reclamation action items would be completed by the next meeting.

Operations Update

Reclamation provided a brief update on the current conditions and operations with a focus on the parameters for fall flow planning:

Reclamation shared that flows at Keswick dropped to 7,000 cfs this morning; Reclamation plans to hold release there through October to provide decomp water during that period, meet temperature targets upstream, and meet delta needs; then to ramp down to about 5,000 cfs until the last winter run redds have emerged in early November, and at that point, drop to winter base flows of 4,000 cfs.

Reclamation shared that Term 91 curtailment is no longer in effect. This basically means that there is excess water in the system and the Projects (SWP and CVP) are no longer making supplemental releases for in-basin or Delta needs, so there is extra water available for more junior diverters. However, they do not anticipate much change in demand.

USFWS asked if lifting Term 91 would allow folks to take water in November that they would have planned to take in October.

Reclamation responded that Term 91 basically says there's available water if needed, but there probably won't be much more demand than previously discussed.

Reclamation shared that the fall X2 requirements are no longer in effect, which could lower the overall system downstream water demands from what was reflected in previous forecasts.

USFWS asked if not operating to fall X2 would decrease demand out of Shasta?

Reclamation responded that they did not expect much change at Shasta, but there could be a reduction at Folsom and Oroville. There was a change order on the Feather River to start ramping down.

Fall Flow Alternatives Review & Recommendation

Participants inquired as to why the action item from the last meeting to assess alternative flow scenarios were not completed.

Reclamation responded that it was their understanding that request was for informational purposes only, as it was very difficult operationally to reduce flows by those amounts. They said they would complete the analysis by the next meeting.

The fisheries agencies (NMFS, CDFW, USFWS) expressed that now that there are no longer fall X2 requirements and Term 91 is not in effect, it is worth assessing whether lower flow scenarios are feasible to try to minimize fall run dewatering.

The fisheries agencies asked if there was flexibility to drop flows lower during the historic period of peak fall run spawning (~10/5 through 11/9).

NMFS shared that 5,000 cfs is ideal from a fisheries perspective but understands that this may not be feasible operationally, due to many competing needs. They asked if 5,000-6,500 cfs could be considered while being mindful of keeping temperatures at CCR below 53.5 degrees.

Reclamation responded that the river is currently at 53.5 degrees and holding at 7,000 cfs will help with that. They can do some slight adjustments of the TCD; they just closed PRG #3 to help with temperatures and could also adjust the other two PRGs. Reclamation plans to continue diversions through Spring Creek power plant and stretch out the remainder of the cold water pool at Shasta.

SRSC explained that after the last meeting, the settlement contractors were asked to move more diversions into early October, so if they were asked to spread their diversions into November this would require speedy coordination and contract extensions, as well as communicating a compelling message about the benefits to species. SRSC shared that in 2020, through a letter of agreement, contractors shifted 30 TAF from Oct into Nov (~1100 cfs).

SRSC shared that with Term 91 no longer in effect there could be additional diversions (beyond the Settlement Contractors), which could make it somewhat more challenging to ensure the Settlement Contractors get their allotted amounts. They want to ensure the contractors still get demands met in October.

Reclamation reiterated the need to have enough water for a long enough period of time for rice decomp and also that Refuge needs should be considered.

CDFW shared that there is low projected fall run this year. They acknowledged that the fall run dewatering estimates do tend to overestimate dewatering: for example, while the dewatering estimates for scenarios being looked at this year range from 6.7 to 13.4%, the highest fall run dewatering seen since shallow redd monitoring was started in 2013 was 5%. It is usually around 1-2%.

An improvement in fall run dewatering would likely generate an estimate in the 6.7% to 9.7% range. The group was not certain whether that should be considered a "significant" improvement in real world terms.

Kearns and West agreed to look into files for a past Reclamation memo from Reclamation analyzing the relationship between dewatering estimates and observed dewatering (link provided in action items).

Participants discussed the pros and cons of various flow scenarios and approaches. CDFW, USFWS, and NMFS proposed the following recommendation:

Reclamation will analyze two scenarios-- dropping flows to 6,000 cfs and 6,500 cfs for as long as needed into November to fulfill decomp demands-- and assess both for impacts on fall run dewatering.

Pending the results of the fall run dewatering analysis showing a significant benefit, the fisheries agencies will ask the Shasta Planning Group (SPG) to consider recommending dropping flows as quickly as possible (given ramping rates) to 6,000 or 6,500 cfs, with the understanding that this drop can be delayed if there is a heat wave causing CCR > 53.5 degrees. Flows would be maintained into November at this level for as long as needed to meet the total decomp demands.

If the analysis of the new scenarios does not show a significant benefit to fall run, the USST recommends maintaining the "current approach" described above (i.e., keeping flows at 7,000 cfs through Oct).

The following rationale were discussed in support of the above recommendation:

- With fall X2 requirements and Term 91 no longer in effect, the existing fall flow scenario should be reconsidered and reassessed to determine if all demands and needs could still be met while reducing fall run redd dewatering.

Next Steps

- The new flow scenarios and associated fall run dewatering numbers will be circulated to the group as soon as possible and then sent to the SPG for consideration.
- Kearns and West will reschedule the SPG to this Wednesday or Thursday.
- The next USST meeting is scheduled for October 8th from 1-2 pm.