

Sacramento River Temperature Task Group Call
Thursday, May 14, 2015 | 1 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants

- Craig Anderson, FWS
- Eric Danner, NMFS
- Kenneth Emanuel, SWRCB
- Tim Hayden, Yurok Tribe
- Bob Hughes, CDFW
- Josh Israel, USBR
- Liz Kiteck, USBR
- Dan Kratville, CDFW
- Beth Lawson, CDFW
- Scott Ligare, SWRCB
- Tom Patton, WAPA
- Joe Pisciotto, CDFW
- Diane Riddle, SWRCB
- Rich Satkowski, SWRCB
- Stacey Smith, USBR
- Brycen Swart, NMFS
- Thuy Washburn, USBR

Note-taking:

- Michael Larsen, Kearns & West

Key Points and Agreements

- Based on group discussion, the temperature control point at Clear Creek will change from 58°F to 56°F on May 15th.
- More thorough modeling and more closely integrated observational data could facilitate informed decision making about temperature control that would better consider the risks and benefits of various actions.

Action Items

- Temperature control point will change to 56°F on May 15th (Reclamation).
- NMFS/Reclamation will notify this group when the meeting about the decision support website is scheduled.

Key Discussion Topics with Summary of Outcomes and Agreements:

Background

Participants had previously agreed that the temperature control point at Clear Creek would be set at 58°F until May 15 or when fish agencies notify Reclamation that spawning is occurring (whichever comes first). This measure is intended to conserve the cold water pool.

On May 11th, fish agencies reported to the SRTTG that there is evidence of spawning and requested the temperature control point at Clear Creek be changed to 56°F. This May 14th call was to discuss this request.

Clear Creek Temperature Control Point

Fish agencies reported that a pre-spawn mortality was recovered May 8th and a spawned out female mortality was recovered on Sunday May 10th. Aerial redd surveys began Monday May 11th and no redds have been seen, though this does not mean that redds are not present (redds are easy to miss, particularly with the river's current poor visibility). At Livingston Stone National Fish Hatchery there have been 28 pre-spawn mortalities, and on May 8th a second female spawned.

Participants noted that due to spawning at hatcheries, hatchery temperatures should also be considered when discussing temperature compliance, at least until there are chillers to control hatchery temperatures.

Participants asked if the cause of the pre-spawn mortality was due to temperature since Clear Creek has been running well under 56 degrees. A fish biologist stated the fish could have been caught by anglers and held by the tail to release the hook or human handling in the fish hatchery. The upper river has been closed to anglers as a precaution to avoid all angling contact with winter-run.

Participants asked what level of pre-spawn mortality is considered "normal," but those on the call did not know the answer. It was noted that some of the carcasses had marks that suggested they had been handled (perhaps by fishermen) in a way that caused injury or death.

Reclamation stated that though the current temperature control point at Clear Creek is 58°F, it is currently running approximate 54.5°F. If the temperature control point were lowered to 56°F, Reclamation would need to cut back on the warm water bypass to ensure continued compliance.

In response to a question, Reclamation clarified that the current releases at Keswick are for downstream needs including Delta water quality. These releases are not for temperature control.

Reclamation recommended maintaining the temperature control point of 58°F until more spawned out females are found (e.g. 5 to 8), as this would allow them to continue running the warm water bypass longer, and thus conserve more cold water for the late summer. Reclamation cited the benefits this conservation of cold water would have for the bulk of the fish population late in the season, rather than using the cold water now for fewer fish. Reclamation acknowledged that it cannot forecast the extent of the impact, but noted that every action to conserve cold water early in the season will benefit fish later in the season.

Other participants acknowledged that maintaining the 58°F temperature control point beyond this week would be expected to increase the amount of cold water available in the late summer, but they stated that without any way to forecast or model the amount of cold water that would be saved by this delay, and without any way to forecast or model the delay's near-term effect on temperatures (and thus unable to measure the costs or benefits of either action), they would not agree to delay the change in the temperature control point to 56°F. The group decided that the temperature control point would change to 56°F, as previously discussed.

Temperature Control Procedures and Decision Making

Participants discussed the potential value in a more thorough process for temperature compliance that would enable decisions to consider the risks and benefits of various actions. Such a process would include consideration of population distribution and an understanding of what carcass data are “normal.”

Eric Danner provided a brief update on the decision support website under development that is intended to compile information (both temperature/water supply modeling and observational data) to enable more informed decision making. A meeting is expected to be scheduled in Sacramento in July to receive input regarding what data will help these types of decisions.

Participants requested that in the future, fish agencies provide not just number of carcasses, but also the geographic distribution.

Meeting Notes

Participants requested that Reclamation circulate notes in Word format to allow for easy tracked changes.