

**MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RESOURCES AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
RESERVOIR OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

David Hart, Chair
Ken Ekelund
Richard Ortiz
Mark Nielsen
David Pozzi
Mark Gonzalez

John Baillie
Benny Jefferson
Paavo Ogren
Tom Shepherd/Richard Riddle (Parks)
Mark Sandoval (CalParks)

TIME: 1:30 pm
DATE: Thursday May 1, 2014
PLACE: Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Board Room
893 Blanco Circle
Salinas, CA 93901

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

(Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker on matters within the jurisdiction of the Agency not listed on this agenda. The public will have the opportunity to ask questions and make statements on agenda items as the Committee considers them.)

3. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE RESERVOIR OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON April 3, 2014

The Committee will consider approval of the minutes of the above-mentioned meeting (Attachment 1).

4. REVIEW THE STATUS OF BOTH RESERVOIRS; REVIEW RELEASES AND RELEASE SCHEDULE

Howard Franklin, Senior Water Resources Hydrologist, will present a summary of current conditions at both reservoirs, as well as provide a synopsis of release changes that have occurred since the last meeting (Attachments 2, 2a, 3, 3a, 4). Staff will discuss reservoir inflow and inflow forecasts.

- 5. RECEIVE REPORT ON BOARD OF DIRECTORS DIRECTION TO STAFF ON REDUCING NACIMIETNO RESERVOIR MINIMUM RELEASES**
Staff will discuss NMFS response (Attachment 5) to the Agency's request of March 18, 2014 (Attachment 6) to reduce minimum releases from Nacimiento Reservoir. Staff will report on Board of Directors direction to staff at their April 28, 2014 Board meeting.
- 6. RECEIVE REPORT ON CLOUD-SEEDING**
Staff will report on and discuss possible options for cloud-seeding opportunities.
- 7. RECEIVE REPORT REGARDING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES AT THE RESERVOIRS**
Brent Buche, Assistant General Manager / Chief of Operations and Maintenance will present a verbal report discussing the various Operations and Maintenance activities at both reservoirs that have occurred over the last month.
- 8. RECEIVE REPORTS ON STATUS OF:**

 - A. LAKE RECREATION BY CONCESSIONAIRE & PARKS DEPARTMENT**
 - B. EASEMENTS AND AGENCY LEASES**
 - C. QUAGGA / ZEBRA MUSSEL PLAN**
 - D. UPDATE ON SLO COUNTY ACTIVITIES**
- 9. DISCUSS AGENDA FOR RESERVOIR OPERATIONS COMMITTEE SOUTH COUNTY MEETING**
Provide Committee, for discussion, a draft Agenda for the Thursday June 5, 2014 Committee meeting at the reservoirs.
- 10. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND DISCUSS FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
The Committee will discuss and determine details for its next meeting.
- 11. ADJOURNMENT**

**MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RESOURCES AGENCY
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TIME: 1:30 p.m.
DATE: Thursday, April 3, 2014
PLACE: Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Board Room
893 Blanco Circle
Salinas, CA 93901
(831) 755-4860

**MINUTES
(DRAFT)**

1. CALL TO ORDER @ 1:30 p.m. by Chair David Hart.

Members present: David Hart, Ken Ekelund, Richard Ortiz, Mark Nielsen, David Pozzi,
Mark Gonzalez, John Baillie, Benny Jefferson, Tim Colvin for Mark
Sandoval

Members absent: Paavo Ogren, Tom Shepherd, Richard Riddle

A quorum was established.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE RESERVOIR OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 5, 2014

The minutes will be corrected to state the meeting day was a Wednesday. John Baillie stated there was an action taken regarding San Antonio that does not appear on the minutes. The Committee had discussed reducing Nacimiento from 60 to 25 cfs and possibly reducing San Antonio to about 3-5 cfs. Howard Franklin stated no action was taken on San Antonio reductions, but will review the audio and make corrections to the minutes on the action.

Committee Action: On motion and second of Committee members John Baillie and Richard Ortiz, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes.

4. **REVIEW THE STATUS OF BOTH RESERVOIRS; REVIEW RELEASES AND RELEASE SCHEDULE; AND, DISCUSS SALINAS RIVER DIVERSION FACILITY OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE 2014 SEASON**

Howard Franklin, Senior Water Resources Hydrologist provided a status report. End of flow in the Salinas River is approximately 0.3 miles upstream of Elm Street Bridge at Greenfield. San Antonio is currently in minimum pool. The required maintenance on the inlet structure at San Antonio can be done when the elevation drops another two feet, to elevation 653, estimated to occur, at current release rates, around May 2014. For the recommended maintenance to be performed, the elevation at San Antonio needs to be at deadpool level, estimated to be reached in late September or early October 2014. The maintenance would be on the intake structure, and leakage in the tunnel. If the work is performed above deadpool levels, divers would need to be hired to do the work. If we wait until deadpool, Agency staff is able to perform the work, which because of costs is preferable to the Agency. The Committee requested a draft work plan on the maintenance work, and staff stated this would be provided at the May meeting.

The Committee asked if releases are still required to be made from San Antonio after reaching minimum pool. Staff stated that the Agency's operations policy states no releases after minimum pool, but this does not necessarily comply with state legislation. There is no formal agreement with Fish & Game (CA State Fish & Wildlife Service) below minimum pool. Legislation states that we must make fisheries releases from a dam if the water is available and able to be released. The Committee discussed the differences in the various policies and the need for uniformity on all policies, as well as the need for an operational policy that addresses releases during drought conditions. Staff acknowledged the need to reevaluate and re-write the Agency's operations policy.

Staff stated we have the flexibility to reduce San Antonio releases to 3 cfs, which is the minimum release stated in the agreement with Fish & Game. A few years ago we increased it to 10 cfs for the purpose of improved channel conditions below the dam, and the 10 cfs is not required by CA Fish & Wildlife. Committee members expressed concern about saving the water and preferred the maintenance work be done sooner, rather than later at deadpool, to conserve the water. It was suggested Agency staff contact local legislators about what assistance is available.

The Agency is required to report the forecasted year-type to NOAA Fisheries on March 15th and April 1st of each year. Both forecasts were for "Dry" year-types. This forecast, along with flow triggers in the upper watershed, is used to determine whether a block flow will be required.

NACIMIENTO elevation is 726.80 feet and 84,320 acre-feet of storage, 22% of capacity, and current release is 60 cfs.

SAN ANTONIO elevation is 655.50 feet and 15,675 acre-feet of storage, 5% of capacity, and current release is 10 cfs.

5. RECEIVE REPORT ON BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENCY DIRECTION ON POSSIBLE RESERVOIR OPERATION DROUGHT CONTINGENCIES

Howard Franklin provided a report on this item. Agency staff informed the Board of Directors (BOD) about the conference call with NOAA Fisheries on April 1, 2014. The BOD directed Agency staff to invite Congressman Sam Farr to participate in the conference call but he was unable to do so. The Committee suggested inviting him to participate in the conference call scheduled for April 7. The Committee suggested providing updates to Mr. Farr to keep him informed of the situation.

There was discussion on items that were discussed with NOAA Fisheries on April 1. NOAA asked when we would resume Nacimiento releases to 60 cfs and we stated this would be at elevation 748 feet. Another question from NOAA Fisheries was about the 25 cfs. Staff replied that the 25 cfs is close to the releases that were evaluated earlier, and is also the optimal release for the operation of a public water system, that being the well gallery below the dam. NOAA expressed concern that it might be diverting from the 25 cfs and staff stated it would not because we gage the 25 cfs downstream from that site, as per the agreement in the Biological Opinion and Flow Prescription. NOAA also asked about monitoring temperature and staff stated that the Agency monitors the temperature in the river at two locations from March to November, as required under the Biological Opinion.

Howard Franklin explained about NOAA's comments about a "water bank". Their concept was that if we're releasing 25 cfs instead of 60 cfs there would be a savings that would belong to them that they could use another way, such as to extend passage flows during other periods. We stated that the water would not be theirs; we wouldn't be saving water – just using it at a different rate. The same amount of water would be used over a longer period of time.

If the releases at Nacimiento continue at 60 cfs, it will be at minimum pool in February 2015. If we release at 25 cfs, minimum pool will be reached in September 2015.

NOAA Fisheries stated they would be consulting with their attorney and environmental specialist about our request. The Agency is scheduled to meet with NOAA again on Monday April 7 and they are aware that we expect a decision at that time. The Committee requested notification of their reply regarding the Nacimiento releases.

6. RECEIVE REPORT ON CLOUD-SEEDING

There was no report on cloud-seeding. (Paavo Ogren absent)

7. RECEIVE REPORT REGARDING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES AT THE RESERVOIRS

Brent Buche, Assistant General Manager & Chief of Operations and Maintenance, provided an update on operations and maintenance activities at the reservoirs. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) conducted a 5-year safety inspection of Nacimiento Dam on March 6, 2014.

When the elevation at San Antonio drops to 653 only the top section of the trash rack would be exposed and would be able to be repaired. The bottom portion would still be underwater

and there are safety concerns about conducting maintenance underwater. If the reservoir level reaches deadpool the internal work can be performed on the tunnel.

The Agency has received a request from the California National Guard for permission to utilize either Nacimiento or San Antonio Reservoir to conduct a fire training session with Cal Fire on May 21, 2014. Helicopters will be used to retrieve reservoir water during the training session but will be put back into the reservoir after the session.

8. RECEIVE REPORTS ON STATUS OF:

A. LAKE RECREATION BY CONCESSIONAIRE & PARKS DEPARTMENT

Tim Colvin, CalParks, provided a report. The recent rainstorms were a welcome event. Staff is discussing different scenarios and ideas for the upcoming season. Some ideas being discussed for San Antonio include promoting kayaking and lowering the speed limit on San Antonio Lake to 5 mph for the small boats, and no skiing. Launch ramps remain closed and only hand-launched water craft such as kayaks are allowed. The annual Wildflower Triathlon is scheduled for May 2014 and a special event is planned for North Shore, and lodging will still be available. Nacimiento will continue to have the usual activities for the season.

B. EASEMENTS AND AGENCY LEASES

Chris Keehn, Right-Of-Way Specialist, provided an update to the Committee. The U.S. Army will be installing fiber-optic cable along Tank Road, in June 2014. The installation will occur along the entire length of the tank road. The Agency has requested the military work with staff to address erosion concerns and increased siltation of the lake. One of the Lease holders is scheduled to go before the Personnel & Administrative Committee next week, with a request to remove 80 acres from his lease due to a growing trespassing issues and exposure risk. The trespass issues are the result of the low reservoir levels. The Agency was also contacted by Tri County, the location of the trespassing, who expressed interest in leasing the same area.

C. QUAGGA / ZEBRA MUSSEL PLAN

Elizabeth Krafft, Senior Hydrologist, provided a report. Staff conducted plankton tows at San Antonio and Nacimiento in March and results were negative. We plan to conduct plankton tows each month with State Fish & Wildlife Department, who will be funding the lab analyses. The State Boating & Waterways has been collecting fees that will be made available in June 2014 through grants. One of the items on the list of priorities includes funding programs for uninfected lakes. The Agency is coordinating with SLO County to ensure eligibility for the grant funding. The Committee requested a copy of the Boating & Waterways list of priorities, and staff stated this would be provided.

D. UPDATE ON SLO COUNTY ACTIVITIES

There was no report on SLO County activities. (Paavo Ogren absent)

9. DISCUSS OPTIONS FOR RESERVOIR OPERATIONS COMMITTEE SOUTH COUNTY MEETING

The Committee discussed plans for a Committee meeting in South County. It was decided for Thursday June 5, 2014 at Nacimiento. Mark Nielsen and Tim Kopack offered to provide a BBQ lunch. Details of the meeting will be discussed at the May meeting.

10. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND DISCUSS FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday May 1, 2014 at 1:30 p.m. at the Agency. Agenda items will include the results from the NOAA Fisheries conference call, and details for the June meeting at South County.

11. ADJOURNMENT BY CHAIR DAVID HART @ 2:47 P.M.

SUBMITTED BY: TERESA CAMPA

**MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RESOURCES AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS – RESERVOIR OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

MEETING DATE:	May 1, 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	
AGENDA TITLE:	RESERVOIR RELEASE UPDATE		
Consent ()		Action ()	
Information (X)			
SUBMITTED BY: PHONE:	Howard Franklin (831) 755-4860	PREPARED BY: PHONE:	Jason Demers (831) 755-4860
DEADLINE FOR BOARD ACTION:		May 1, 2014	

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION:

None – item presented for informational purposes

PRIOR RELEVANT BOARD ACTION:

None – the Board of Directors receives monthly updates on the Agency’s reservoir status

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

RESERVOIR ELEVATION / STORAGE: As of April 22, 2014 San Antonio Reservoir is at approximately 654.8 feet mean sea level (msl), 15,230 acre-feet of storage. Nacimiento Reservoir is at elevation 726.35 feet msl, 83,240 acre-feet of storage. San Antonio Reservoir is currently at 5% of storage capacity and Nacimiento Reservoir is at 22% of capacity.

RESERVOIR RELEASES: Releases from both reservoirs are being made to meet minimum fisheries flow requirements.

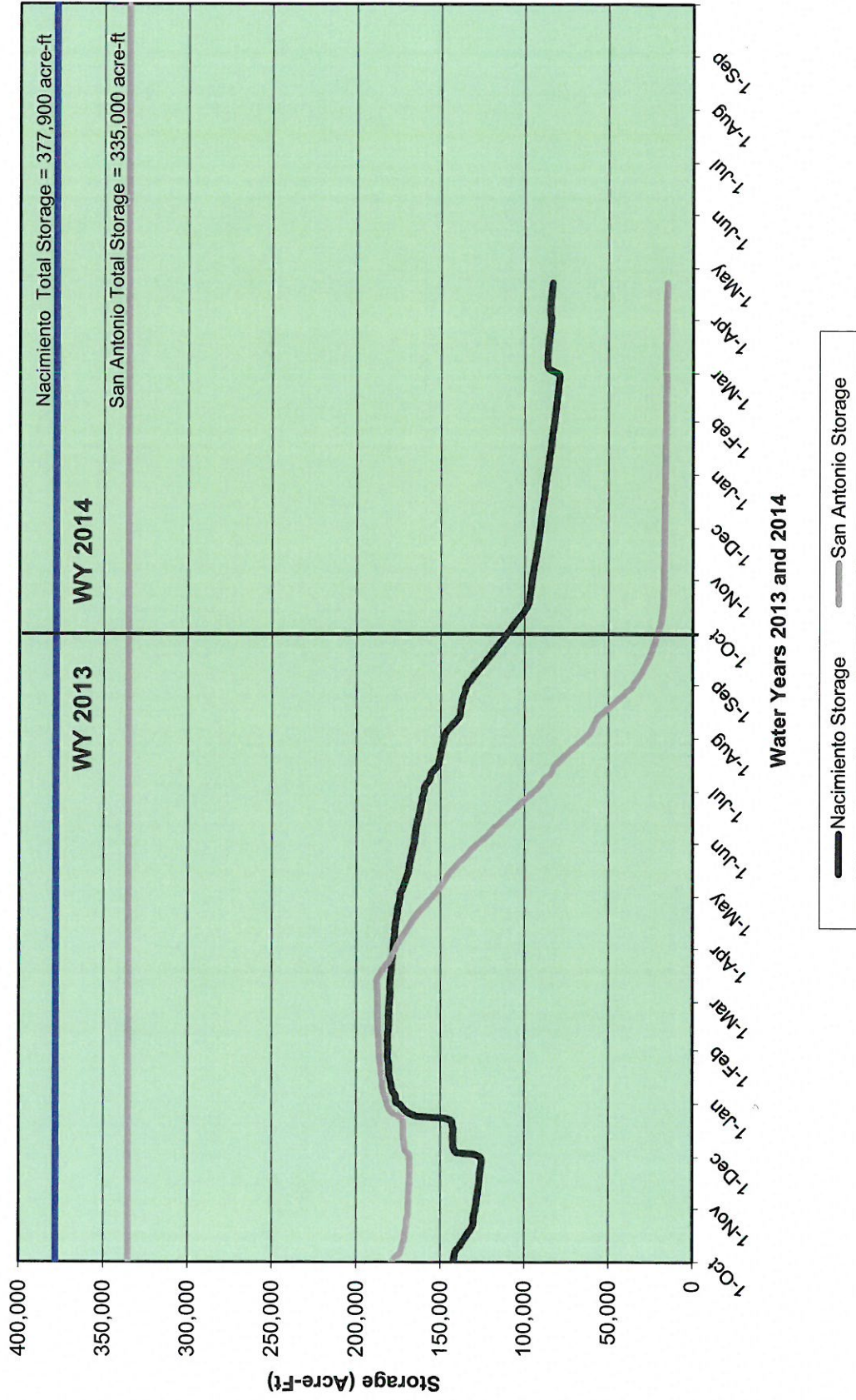
Releases as of April 22, 2014:

- Nacimiento Reservoir: 60 cfs
- San Antonio Reservoir: 10 cfs

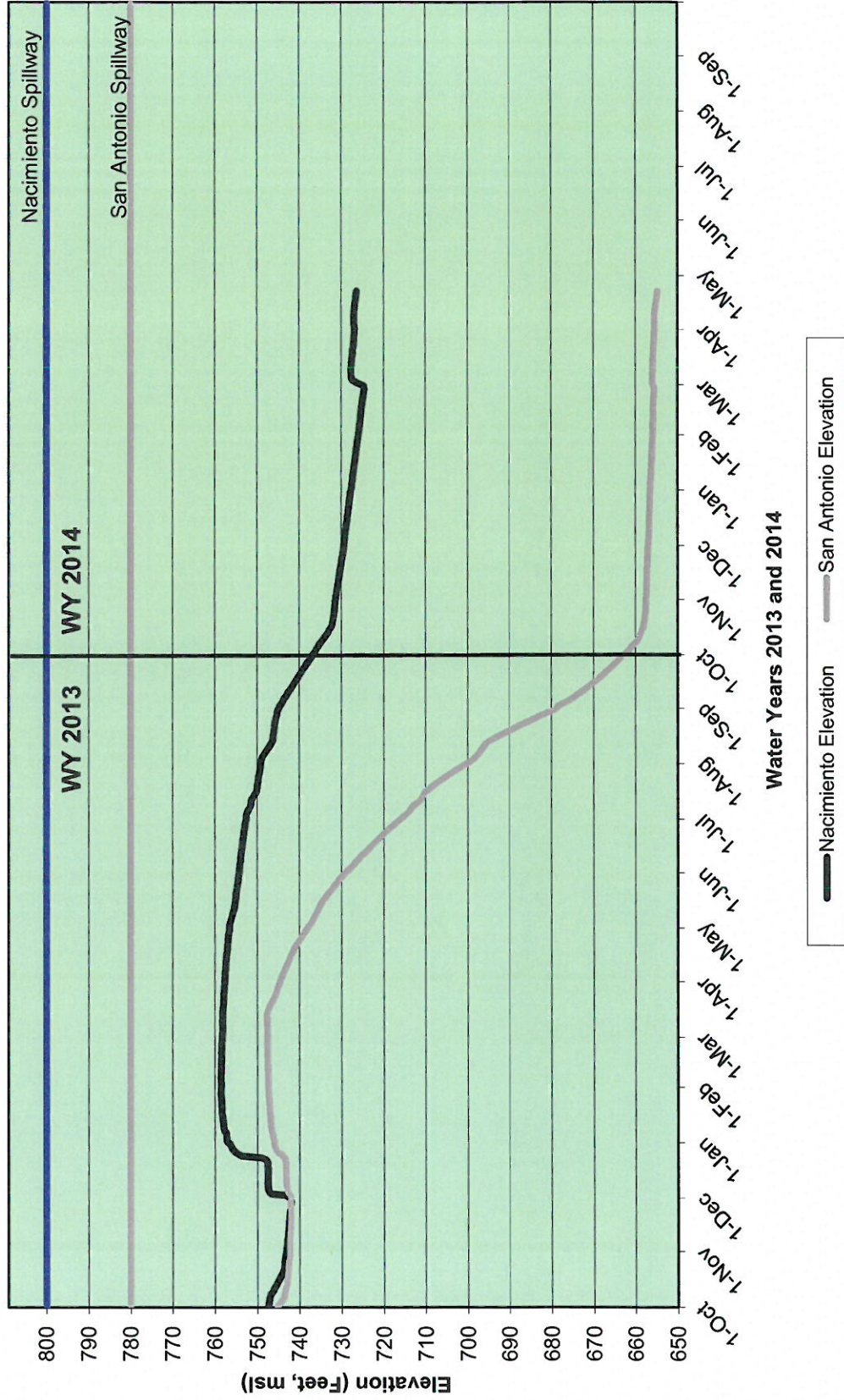
Total releases from both reservoirs to the Salinas River are approximately 70 cfs. The following “provisional” flows have been recorded by the USGS:

- Salinas River near Spreckels: 0 cfs
- Salinas River near Chualar: 0 cfs
- Salinas River near Soledad: 0 cfs
- Salinas River near Bradley: 65 cfs

Reservoir Storage



Reservoir Elevation



Water Years 2013 and 2014

MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RESOURCES AGENCY

PRELIMINARY - Estimated Elevation/Storage/NWP Diversions; after Apr. 1st

4/22/2014

RESERVOIR RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR 2014

	NACIMIENTO							SAN ANTONIO						
	Combined Releases (cfs)*	Combined Releases (ac-ft)	Evap. Losses (ac-ft)**	Reservoir Releases (cfs)*	Reservoir Releases (ac-ft)	NWP Orders (ac-ft)	NWP Diversions (ac-ft)	Storage (ac-ft)	Elev. (ft)	Evap. Losses (ac-ft)**	Reservoir Releases (cfs)*	Reservoir Releases (ac-ft)	Storage (ac-ft)	Elev. (ft)
1/1/2014	70	4,304	237	60	3,689	755	123	86,393	727.7	68	10	615	16,390	656.6
2/1/2014	70	3,888	300	60	3,332	1,037	86	82,165	725.9	87	10	555	15,935	655.9
3/1/2014	71	4,346	563	61	3,731	1,033	91	81,695	725.7	151	10	615	15,935	655.9
4/1/2014	70	4,165	561	60	3,570	1,033		84,200	726.8	154	10	595	15,675	655.5
5/1/2014						1,165		81,542	725.6					
6/1/2014						1,707								
7/1/2014						1,907								
8/1/2014						1,966								
9/1/2014						1,758								
10/1/2014						1,243								
11/1/2014						953								
12/1/2014						744								
1/1/2015														
TOTALS:		16,703	1,661		14,323	15,303	300			460		2,380		

* Mean daily flow for the month in cubic feet per second.

** Evap. Losses estimated from long term pan evaporation data at Nacimiento and San Antonio Reservoirs.

1. Nacimiento Reservoir storage capacity 377,900 acre feet.

2. San Antonio Reservoir storage capacity 335,000 acre feet.

3. Reservoir Operations Committee may make release considerations for fish spawn and holiday periods to benefit recreation.

4. Shaded areas represent periods when elevations are influenced by inflow/runoff; releases may include flood control releases.

5. Preliminary Schedule assumes no inflow to reservoirs after May 1st.

6. "NWP Diversions" are San Luis Obispo County - Nacimiento Water Project conveyance facilities diversions. Max. allowable diversions for water year (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30) are 15,750 ac-ft. To Be Reported (TBR)

7. NACIMIENTO "NWP Diversions" do not include lakeside water use which is estimated at approximately 1,750 acre feet per year.

NOTES:



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

West Coast Region
777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325
Santa Rosa, California 95404-4731

April 25, 2014

Refer to NMFS No: 2003-2080

David Chardavoyne, General Manager
Monterey County Water Resources Agency
893 Blanco Circle
Salinas, California 93901-4455

Re: Monterey County Water Resources Agency's Recommendations to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service for a Reduction of Nacimiento Reservoir Minimum Flow Criterion

Dear Mr. Chardavoyne:

On March 21, 2014, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) received Monterey County Water Resources Agency's (MCWRA) March 18, 2014, recommendation to reduce Nacimiento Reservoir releases from the existing 60 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 25 cfs. The recommendation is in response to Monterey County experiencing an extreme or exceptional drought. On January 17, 2014, California Governor Edmund G. Brown issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency regarding drought conditions throughout California. MCWRA has determined that, at the current release rate of 60 cfs, Nacimiento Reservoir will reach its minimum pool elevation of 687.7 feet mean sea level (msl) by early February 2015, assuming there is no additional rain or inflow to the reservoir. Once minimum pool elevation is reached, releases from Nacimiento Reservoir will cease. Nacimiento River is a tributary to the Salinas River, and both rivers support threatened South-Central California Coast (S-CCC) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and are designated critical habitat for this species.

NMFS has reviewed your recommendation, and on April 1 and 7, 2014, staff from NMFS and MCWRA held a conference call to discuss your recommendation. As you know, on June 21, 2007, in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), NMFS issued its biological opinion to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their proposal to permit the construction of the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF). In that biological opinion, we analyzed the effects of both the proposed construction/operation of the SRDF and Nacimiento Reservoir Spillway modification and those changes in flow releases from Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs that would not otherwise occur without the operation of the SRDF. This included any change in flows along the Salinas River mainstem as well as changes in flows to the Salinas River Lagoon. As part of the project,



MCWRA proposed a set of flow prescriptions that included a minimum flow release of 60 cfs from Nacimiento Reservoir to protect and maintain suitable spawning and rearing habitat in the Nacimiento River downstream of Nacimiento Reservoir. Therefore, the biological opinion only analyzed the effects of the proposed flow prescription, including a minimum release of 60 cfs. Operation of the SRDF and concomitant changes in flow releases began in 2010.

NMFS understands MCWRA proposes to reduce Nacimiento Reservoir releases from 60 cfs to 25 cfs as soon as possible. According to MCWRA provisional dam and reservoir daily data (<http://www.mcwra.co.monterey.ca.us/>), on April 2, 2014, the elevation of Nacimiento Reservoir was 726.8 msl. As noted above, at the current release rate, Nacimiento Reservoir will reach its minimum pool elevation by early February 2015 (assuming there is no appreciable rain/inflow). According to MCWRA, with the reduction of releases to 25 cfs, they estimate that reaching minimum pool elevation could be delayed as much as an additional 180 days (also assuming no appreciable rain/inflow), or until approximately early August 2015. MCWRA states their proposed reduction to 25 cfs will extend the duration of surface flows in the Nacimiento River, which would maintain steelhead habitat and provide sufficient water for the operation of wells along the Nacimiento River for as long as possible.

NMFS has determined reducing the minimum flow releases from 60 cfs to 25 cfs is likely to result in adverse impacts to the quality and quantity of S-CCC steelhead habitat, which could result in take of S-CCC steelhead. The reduced flow volume will likely cause water temperatures to increase during spring through fall and with distance downstream from Nacimiento Reservoir. The reduction in flow volume also will likely reduce overall flow velocities and the extent of higher velocity habitats (*e.g.*, riffles, runs, and the heads of pools). Juvenile steelhead generally utilize fast water habitats to feed on drifting invertebrates and obtain sufficient food necessary to meet elevated metabolic demands while rearing in warm water environments. In our 2007 biological opinion, NMFS did not analyze minimum flows from Nacimiento River downstream of the dam less than 60 cfs, and therefore, the potential for the effects described above were not analyzed. Thus, any take¹ associated with the proposed reduction in reservoir releases would be unexempted take, and MCWRA could be in violation of section 9 of the ESA.²

If MCWRA wishes to implement their proposed reduction in reservoir releases, NMFS offers the following measures to help address our concerns. These measures do not obviate your need to contact other regulatory agencies, nor does implementation of these measures supersede any permits or authorization already in place from other agencies. Implementation of these measures does not exempt MCWRA from any take of listed species that may occur.

¹ Under section 3 of the ESA, the term "take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. Harm is further defined by NMFS as an act which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife. Such an act may include significant habitat modification or degradation which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, spawning, rearing, migrating, feeding, or sheltering (50 CFR 222.102).

² Section 9 of the ESA and Federal regulation pursuant to section 4(d) of the ESA prohibit the take of endangered and threatened species, respectively, without special exemption.

Ramping rate

In order to minimize impacts to steelhead, their habitat, and macroinvertebrate prey, MCWRA should ramp down flows such that changes in stage will be approximately two inches per hour (Hunter 1992).

Temperature monitoring

In order to evaluate the impact of flow reduction on steelhead and their habitat, MCWRA should conduct continuous stream temperature monitoring for as long as flows are at a reduced level and provide stream temperature data to NMFS on a monthly basis. Water temperature data should reflect the longitudinal and seasonal range of conditions present in the Nacimiento River downstream of Nacimiento Dam.

Fish monitoring

To assess longitudinal presence/absence and relative abundance of steelhead and to evaluate the effect of the flow reduction, MCWRA should conduct summer fish monitoring (*e.g.*, snorkel/electrofishing) in addition to the required fish sampling typically done annually in October. NMFS staff is available to assist with the summer monitoring efforts.

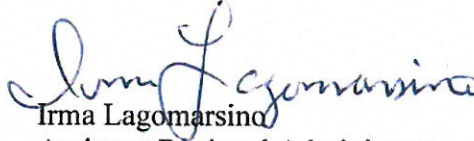
Supplemental Flow Release

To offset the potential negative impacts of the proposed flow reduction in 2014 to the Salinas River steelhead population, NMFS recommends MCWRA provide additional flow releases in the future to help facilitate successful steelhead passage. This recommendation comports with language in the 2007 biological opinion (“[w]hen hydrologic conditions permit, MCWRA may maintain adult upstream passage flow after triggers are no longer met, such as between storm events, when meteorological forecasting indicates the imminent possibility of Arroyo Seco trigger flows reoccurring.”). If sufficient water is stored, implementation of supplemental flow releases could be used to augment existing flows to improve or extend the window for successful downstream migration of smolts and kelts or for the upstream migration of adults. The supplemental flow release would be a collaborative effort between MCWRA and NMFS and decisions on the volumes necessary to achieve the enhanced passage would be contingent on reservoir elevation, existing flows in the river (and lower Arroyo Seco) and future weather forecast at that time.

Our 2007 biological opinion did not analyze ongoing Nacimiento and San Antonio dam operations and maintenance as a part of the proposed action, because they are neither indirect effects nor interrelated or interdependent actions to the proposed action. Most dam operations and maintenance were part of the environmental baseline to which the effects of the proposed action were added. As a result, the Incidental Take Statement for the 2007 biological opinion does not exempt any incidental take resulting from those baseline operations. You are aware of our determination that the bulk of the flow released from the Nacimiento and San Antonio dams do not have take exemption coverage. We recommend MCWRA apply to NMFS (and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) for a ESA section 10 (a)(1)(B) permit, *i.e.*, a habitat conservation plan, so that ongoing dam operations, maintenance, and drought contingency plans could be exempted from ESA section 9 prohibitions. NMFS is willing and able to work with you on such an effort.

Thank you again for providing us with your recommendations. We look forward to future collaboration. Please direct questions regarding this letter to Mr. William Stevens, North-Central Coast Office, at (707) 575-6066, or via e-mail at William.Stevens@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,



Irma Lagomarsino
Assistant Regional Administrator
California Coastal Area Office

cc: Elizabeth Krafft, MCWRA, Salinas
Howard Franklin, MCWRA, Salinas
Richard Ortiz, Chair, Board of Directors, MCWRA, Salinas
Deidre Sullivan, Board of Directors, MCWRA, Salinas
Patrick McGreal, Deputy County Counsel, MCWRA, Salinas
Holly Costa, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco
Ho Truong, NOAA Office for Law Enforcement, Long Beach
Julie Means, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Fresno
Jennifer Epp, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Luis Obispo

Literature Cited

Hunter, M.A. 1992. Hydropower flow fluctuations and salmonids: a review of the biological effects, mechanical causes, and options for mitigation. State of Washington, Department of Fisheries, Technical Report No. 119, Olympia, Washington.

ATTACHMENT 6

MONTEREY COUNTY

WATER RESOURCES AGENCY

PO BOX 930
SALINAS, CA 93902
(831)755-4860
FAX (831) 424-7935

DAVID E. CHARDAVOYNE
GENERAL MANAGER



STREET ADDRESS
893 BLANCO CIRCLE
SALINAS, CA 93901-4455

March 18, 2014

Ms. Joyce Ambrosius
National Marine Fisheries Service
North-Central Coast Office Central Coast Branch
777 Sonoma Ave. Rm 325
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Dear Ms. Ambrosius:

On February 24, 2014 the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's (Agency) Board of Director's authorized the Agency's Reservoir Operations Committee to determine whether or not the Agency would initiate operations of the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF) for the 2014 irrigation season based on rainfall, inflow to the reservoirs and reservoir water elevations.

On March 5, 2014 the Reservoir Operations Committee unanimously passed a motion for the Agency to not operate the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF) for the 2014 irrigation season (April-October) based on the lack of water in the Agency's two reservoirs, Nacimiento and San Antonio and insufficient rainfall. As you are aware, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued Biological Opinion (BO) SWR/2003/2080 in June 2007 for the Salinas Valley Water Project (SVWP) of which the SRDF is a component.

A second motion unanimously passed by the Committee requested Agency staff to make a formal recommendation to NMFS to allow the reduction in the minimum flow criterion from Nacimiento Reservoir from 60 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 25 cfs. This letter forwards that recommendation and is presented in accordance with page 31 of the "Salinas Valley Water Project Flow Prescription for Steelhead Trout in the Salinas River" (Flow Prescription) which is included in the description of the proposed action in the BO (page 10) for the SVWP. The Flow Prescription states that "Under drought conditions the Monterey County Water Resources Agency will evaluate reservoir storage with regard to the continuation of minimum releases. When water surface of Nacimiento Reservoir is at or below 748 feet mean sea level (msl) recommendations may be presented to NMFS for a reduction of the minimum flow criterion".

On March 12, 2014 the water surface elevation at Nacimiento Reservoir was 727.6 feet, 30.4 feet below elevation 748. To date, total inflow to Nacimiento Reservoir this winter has amounted to approximately 7,500 acre-feet. Weather forecasts for the Central Coast of California, specifically the Nacimiento watershed, indicate very little to no additional rainfall for the remainder of the rainy season. At the current release rate of 60 cfs Nacimiento

Ms. Joyce Ambrosius
March 18, 2014
Page 2 of 2

Reservoir will reach its minimum pool elevation of 687.8 feet msl by early February 2015 (next winter), at which time releases from Nacimiento Reservoir will cease, as described on page 31 of the Flow Prescription and page 17 of the BO. With the reduction of releases to 25 cfs it is estimated that reaching minimum pool could be delayed by as much as 180 days, thereby providing prolonged flow into Nacimiento River, maintaining steelhead habitat as long as possible and offsetting the uncertainties of continuing drought conditions through winter 2015 - 2016.

In the summer of 2013 the Agency conducted a "Nacimiento River Low Flow Survey" (Appendix 1) to assess potential habitat and stranding impacts of reduced Nacimiento releases. This survey evaluated low flows between 26-28cfs. This survey concluded that while wetted width of the channel was reduced at these lower flows, there was connectivity along the entire length of the river and adequate areas for summer refugia for fish, including steelhead trout.

Monterey County is currently in an extreme or exceptional drought as depicted in Figure 1. On January 27, 2014 California Governor Jerry Brown declared a State of Emergency due to drought (Appendix 2) with "2014 projected to become the driest year on record."

There will be an agenda item for the March 31, 2014 Agency Board of Directors meeting to discuss progress in achieving the reduction of flows from Nacimiento Reservoir from 60 cfs to 25 cfs. A response is requested from NMFS prior to March 31, 2014 on this recommendation that "integrates an adaptive approach to implement the SVWP Flow Prescription for steelhead and provides flows fostering recovery of steelhead sub-populations in the Salinas Watershed" (page 98 BO).

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Elizabeth Krafft at 831.755.4860.

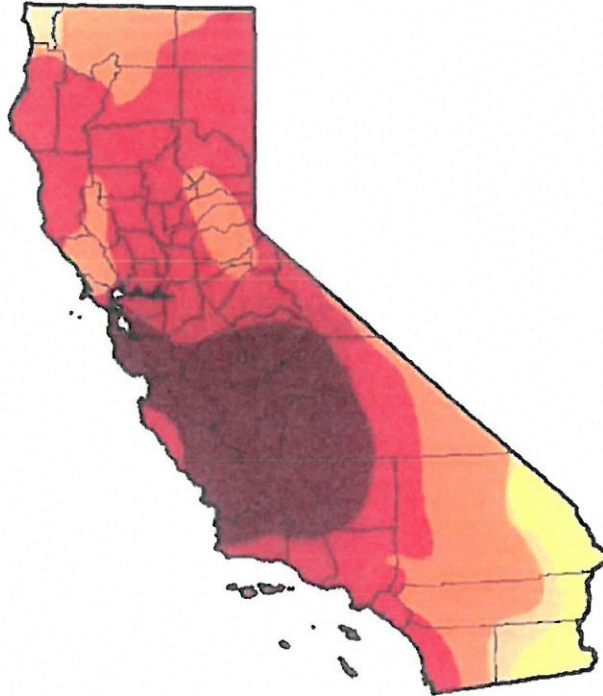
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David P. Chardavoyne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Attachment:
U.S. Drought Monitor - California

U.S. Drought Monitor California

March 4, 2014
(Released Thursday, Mar. 6, 2014)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	94.56	90.82	65.89	22.37
Last Week 2/25/2014	0.00	100.00	94.56	90.82	73.83	26.21
3 Months Ago 12/2/2013	2.61	97.39	94.15	82.53	27.59	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 12/1/2013	2.61	97.39	94.25	87.53	27.59	0.00
Start of Water Year 10/1/2013	2.63	97.37	95.95	84.12	11.36	0.00
One Year Ago 3/5/2013	0.03	99.97	47.37	26.96	0.00	0.00

Intensity

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
Brad Rippey
U.S. Department of Agriculture



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Figure 1.