

CACHUMA OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE BOARD

BOARD MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 24, 2014
TO: Randy Ward, General Manager
FROM: Tim Robinson, Fisheries Division Manager
RE: MONTHLY FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT

In compliance with the 2000 Cachuma Project Biological Opinion (BO) and as described in the 2004 Lower Santa Ynez River Fish Management Plan (FMP) and the Monitoring Program in the 2000 Revised Biological Assessment (BA), the Cachuma Project Biology Staff (CPBS) conducts routine monitoring of steelhead/rainbow trout and their habitat on the Lower Santa Ynez River (LSYR) below Bradbury Dam. The following is a list of activities carried out by CPBS since the last COMB Board meeting that has been broken out by categories.

LSYR Steelhead Monitoring Elements

Thermograph Network:

The thermograph network is deployed at the beginning of April and picked up at the end of December to record water temperatures at all designated locations within the LSYR mainstem and several tributaries. Most thermographs have been removed from the LSYR mainstem and its tributaries for the wet season; a selected few remain due to a low threat of stormflow and an interest in gathering the data. Thermographs are downloaded monthly and the results are summarized in the Annual Monitoring Report.

Lake Profiles:

Lake Cachuma water quality measurements (temperature, dissolved oxygen concentration and total dissolved solids) at one meter intervals from the surface to the bottom of the lake (Lake Profile) are taken once a month normally from April through December at the Hilton Creek Watering System (HCWS) intake barge. This is considered to be at or near the deepest point in the lake and allows for monitoring of lake stratification, water quality conditions at the intake level for the HCWS and lake-turnover. Due to the drought and need to carefully monitor Lake Cachuma, lake profiles will be taken monthly throughout the year for the unforeseeable future.

Migrant Trapping:

This monitoring effort normally begins in January and continues through May depending on stream flow rates. Due to an excessively dry year and limitations in the number of juvenile and adult take as stipulated in the Cachuma Project BO, a reduced trapping program began on 2/20/14. The 2014 Trapping Plan was approved by Reclamation and submitted to NMFS prior to initiating trapping. CPBS will carefully monitor take numbers throughout the season to assure take limits will not be exceeded. Results of the trapping program are presented in the Annual Monitoring Report.

Redd Surveys:

Redd surveys are conducted every two weeks from February through May. Surveys were initiated in January within the LSYR mainstem in the Highway 154, Refugio, and Alisal reaches where access was permitted, and certain sections of Hilton, Quiota, and Salsipuedes/El Jaro creeks. The number of redds is reported in the Annual Monitoring Plan.

Cachuma Lake Oak Tree Restoration Program:

COMB staff, with guidance from the hired professional arborist, continues to implement the Program and have successfully conducted all management actions as required. An update of the project is provided in a separate Board memo.

Tributary Project Updates

Quiota Creek Crossing 1: This project was successfully completed on 1/3/14; Refugio Road was opened that day. A final financial report is included in this Board packet.

Quiota Creek Crossing 0: Unfortunately, COMB was not awarded a CDFW-FRGP Grant for this project due to a technical concern raised by CDFW. The CPBS reapplied for a CDFW-FRGP Grant on 3/17/14 with revised designs and a \$50,000 construction landowner cost match. Submitting the proposal was approved during the February COMB Board meeting. Grant awards will be announced in January, 2015.

Quiota Creek Crossing 3: Staff submitted a CDFW-FRGP Grant on 3/17/14 with a COMB construction match of \$50,000 that was approved during the February COMB Board meeting. Grant awards will be announced in January, 2015.

Quiota Creek Crossing 8: No further progress has been made.

Rancho Salsipuedes Cattle Exclusionary Fencing and Off-Channel Watering: COMB has received a \$16,703 grant for this project through the Fish America Foundation. The project was approved and the grant accepted by the COMB Board (Resolution 561) on 3/25/13 after review and recommendation for approval by the COMB Board Fisheries Committee. The project was also reviewed by the COMB Board Administrative Committee on 11/26/13. CPBS is finalizing the design and Landowner Access Agreement. We hope to implement the project by the beginning of April, 2014.

Salsipuedes Creek – Jalama Road Fish Ladder: No further progress has been made.

Surcharge Water Accounting

The following table summarizes the amount of Surcharge water used to date from each of the three accounts at the end of last month (Table 1). All numbers come from Reclamation's Daily Operations Report. The start time for the use of the Surcharge Water Accounts was 5/27/11, or the last day of full surcharge. As of May 2012, all of the Fish Rearing Account waters have been used and we are now using Project Yield to meet BO target flows. A WR 89-18 release began on 7/15/13 at 8:15 AM and ended on 12/2/13 at 2:00 PM; during these releases, no Fish Rearing releases are debited as WR 89-18 releases are used conjunctively with fish flows under the Cachuma Project Settlement Agreement. Subtracted from the Project Yield total was the Adaptive Management Account (AMA) release of 35 acre-feet in October 2012 that was called for by the Adaptive Management Committee (AMC). A second AMA release was called for by the AMC and began in June of 2013 that ran until the beginning of the WR 89-18 releases; the release amounts will be reflected in Table 1 once Reclamation determines the amount of AMA water used during the second event.

Table 1: Summary of the surcharge water accounting and use of Project Yield.

Accounts*	Allocation	Amount Used**	Amount Remaining
Units:	(acre-feet)	(acre-feet)	(acre-feet)
Fish Passage	3,200	0	3,200
Adaptive Management	500	35	465
Fish Rearing***	5,242	5,242	0
Project Yield		9,640	
Total:	8,942	14,917	3,665
* Originally was 9,200 and as of 2008 it is 8,942.			
** Values as of 2/28/14.			
*** This water is for meeting required target flows. This is not an official account and is what remains after subtracting the other two accounts.			

Reporting / Outreach / Training

Reporting: There were two interruption of flow incidents to Hilton Creek from failures of the HCWS operated by Reclamation, the first on 3/1/14 (4 rescues and 14 mortalities) and the second on 3/12/14 (56 rescues and 18 mortalities). CPBS delivered the mortalities to NMFS and submitted incident reports to Reclamation to be sent to NMFS as soon as possible. The 2011 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) was submitted to Reclamation in June of 2013 and CPBS continue to wait for comments from Reclamation. Staff is working on the 2012 AMR that will be sent to the Science Review Team upon receiving comments from Reclamation on the 2011 AMR.

Outreach and Training: The Fisheries Division manager has fielded numerous questions from the public regarding fish releases in relation to the current drought, specifically from the Santa Barbara News Press, Santa Barbara Independent, Santa Ynez News, Santa Maria Times, Santa Maria Sun, COLAB, and Telemundo. Staff continues to work with Quiota Creek and Salsipuedes Creek watershed landowners, interested parties within the Santa Ynez Valley and the County on a variety of fisheries related issues. CPBS gave 4 talks on the steelhead fishery of the Lower Santa Ynez River basin and led two field tours as part of the annual Salmonid Restoration Federation Annual Conference that was held this year in Santa Barbara; all were well received.

Consultant Activity Summary:

HDR Fisheries Design Center (Mike Garelo) – Wrap up of the Quiota Creek Crossing 1 Project and design work for the Quiota Creek Crossings 0 and 3 projects.

Stetson Engineers (Ali Shahroody) – Santa Ynez River hydrological analyses.

CardnoENTRIX (Jean Baldrige) – BO compliance tasks and support.