

LOWER AMERICAN RIVER

Water released from the Folsom Dam complex through the lower American River thence the Sacramento River and eventually into the Delta has and should continue to benefit the public trust resources of those waters. Since the completion of Folsom Dam in 1956, flow releases have maintained a variety of economically and recreationally important fishery resources in the lower American River, including chinook salmon, steelhead trout, American shad, striped bass and a variety of resident game and nongame fishes. The high quality water flowing from the American River can only help improve water quality for fishery resources and other public trust uses in the Sacramento River and the Delta, especially during controlled flow periods.

Testimony provided by DFG fishery experts during the recent American River Court reference hearings before the State Water Resources Control Board clearly demonstrated the need to protect the uniquely important fishery resources of the lower American River. There is disagreement as to the flows required to protect these resources, however, all fishery experts testifying at the hearing concluded that the flow releases presently required for the Folsom Dam complex, pursuant to SWRCB Decision 893, would not protect lower American River fishery resources. The Board reached a similar conclusion in D1400. In the absence of conclusive information identifying flows required to protect lower American River fishery resources, the DFG has recommended maintenance of

flows that mimic the conditions occurring since 1956, presented here in Table 1, and discussed in detail in the Department of Fish and Game's Stream Evaluation Report 86-1, which is submitted by reference as DFG Exhibit 13. The various minimum flow recommendations submitted to the Board during the recent American River hearings are compared to recent recommendations by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and minimum flows provided in D893 and D1400 are compared in Table 2.

While the minimum flows typically being provided today by the Bureau of Reclamation exceed those in D893, it is important to keep in mind that the Bureau assumed in the year 2020 operations studies prepared for the Coordinated Operations Agreement Environmental Impact Statement that they would only be required to meet D893 flows.

Higher minimum flows in the American River would not only support fishery resources and other beneficial uses there but help support fishery resources in the Sacramento River and the Bay-Delta Estuary. Those benefits will be described in testimony on fish and wildlife subjects pertaining to the Estuary during these hearings.

In conclusion, the Department recommends that allocations of water made during these hearings be consistent with the maintenance of minimum flows in the lower American River considerably greater than those provided in D893.