



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Water Branch
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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
MEGHAN HERTEL, Director



May 27, 2026

Via Electronic Mail

Tom Patton
Operations Manager
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
3310 El Camino Ave #300
Sacramento, CA, 95821

SUBJECT: UNITED STATES BUREAU OF RECLAMATION DRAFT SACRAMENTO RIVER TEMPERATURE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Dear Tom Patton:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received and reviewed the draft Sacramento River Temperature Management Plan (Temperature Management Plan) submitted by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) pursuant to the State Water Resources Control Board Water Right Order 90-5 on April 29, 2026. The final Temperature Management Plan will be developed with input from the Sacramento River Group, of which CDFW is a member. CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the draft Temperature Management Plan that may affect California's fish and wildlife.

Reclamation's 2024 Final Biological Assessment on the Coordinated Long-term Operation of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project proposes to address Sacramento River cold water management for Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon (winter-run) utilizing a framework of "bins" based on end of April storage and expected demands on the reservoir (2024 Shasta Framework). The bin strategy allows for strategically setting the timing, duration, and compliance location to maintain the 53.5°F temperature objective to benefit winter-run spawning and egg incubation based on environmental conditions, including projected total reservoir storage, cold water pool volume, meteorology, Delta conditions, and habitat suitability for incoming fish population size and location.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As of May 11, 2026, a total of twenty-two winter-run carcasses have been detected on the winter-run carcass survey which started April 30, 2026. All but two winter-run carcasses sampled were found upstream of the Highway 44 bridge. The majority of those carcasses were determined to be pre-spawn mortalities, including four fresh female pre-spawn mortalities. Spawn timing of winter-run in the upper Sacramento River is influenced by water temperatures with observed later-spawn timing occurring

Tom Patton, Operations Manager
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
May 27, 2026
Page 2

when adult holding temperatures are warmer (Jennings and Hendrix 2020). We acknowledge and appreciate Reclamation's willingness to promptly begin temperature management to minimize the potential for negative impacts to the winter-run spawning population, similar to those experienced during the 2014-2015 drought.

However, the draft Temperature Management Plan includes elevated summer releases that will allow winter-run to spawn at higher flows in the Sacramento River and thus be vulnerable to dewatering in the fall when Keswick releases decrease. It is also likely that cold water pool will be depleted as a result of high summer releases, which will result in elevated water temperatures for fall-run Chinook salmon (fall-run) and high levels of mortality. We encourage Reclamation to consider reduced summer flow schedules to minimize these risks to winter-run and fall-run and preserve carry over storage.

The 2024 Shasta Framework was not envisioned to operate as outlined in the draft Temperature Management Plan. Given current Shasta storage (End of April Storage > 4.1 MAF) it was assumed that 2026 would result in a bin 1 year and Reclamation would balance the system to meet an End of September storage target of >2.4 MAF. Instead, the draft Temperature Management Plan projects an End of September storage of 2.2 MAF.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations on the draft Temperature Management Plan. If you have any questions or wish to further discuss these comments, please contact Kristal Davis-Fadtke (Kristal.Davis-Fadtke@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Brooke Jacobs, Chief
Water Branch

ec: **State Water Resources Control Board**

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Tom Patton, Operations Manager
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
May 27, 2026
Page 3

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