

Yuba Habitat Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 13, 2003, 11 a.m., Room 2130 Salt Lake DWR Office.
(Next meeting Thursday April 17, 10 a.m., Room 2130.)

In attendance:

Will Jefferies, Rocky Mountain Anglers; Don Archer, Salt Lake DWR; Wes Schneider, Rocky Mountain Anglers; Charlie Thompson; DWR Retired; Mike Slater, DWR Central Region; Don Wiley, DWR Central Region; Tom Pettengill, DWR Salt Lake; John Tomich B.A.S.S.; Ray Schelble, Rocky Mountain Anglers; Terry Opheikens, Rocky Mountain Anglers; George Sommer, B.A.S.S.; Doug Miller and Jason Simms, KUTV.

Mike Slater presented a 2002 Update in Powerpoint.
In 22 days netting 241 walleyes caught
Walleye population declined 87 percent since 2000.

Electrofishing below dam showed no perch or walleye below dam.

Structures:

The **Aqua Cribs** held up a lot better than expected, perhaps because water dropped so fast that they didn't get a chance to get beat up.

Artificial berms to encourage growth of shoreline vegetation—One was covered with coconut fabric and one wasn't. Coconut fabric covered one lasted better, but water levels really didn't get much to the berms last year.

Christmas trees were still effective without needles after spending summer. Needles do not appear to be as important as originally thought and not so worried about keeping needles in the future. Some were underwater all summer. Being underwater accelerated the disappearance of needles. All should be useful as habitat in future.

Tom: California found that lines of trees provided cover when water levels fluctuate.

Rope structures: A float was slipped on each strand with a knot on the end to hold it on. Floats kept the ropes floating. Recommended shorter strands and marking their location with buoys to find ends.

Because of lack of water clarity, photography and video was not a good way to monitor; electrofishing and did not have success setting gill nets.

Shoreline vegetation (tamarisk) is growing well in drought. About 3 feet tall already and draining for dam repairs could add to growth.

Showed above water and underwater video of structures

Almost all structures were out of the water by September, but by late January all of cribs and rope structures were underwater again.

Don W.: With the drought it may have been a bad time to do all this, but we learned a lot.

Mike: All the sampling never found a perch. Dr. Luecke found some perch in mid-water trawls but levels are very low.

Don A: Decided to curtail Dr. Luecke's walleye project until numbers increase.

Don W.: Contacted Clyde Bunker, representative from water users who wants to be a part of the committee meetings. He has concerns about structure breaking away. Parks has been strong supporter and has not seen any negative impacts. Is 99 percent certain that Yuba will be drained this year to do dam repairs. Committee needs to discuss options for low water this year.

Suggested putting some artificial trees in Deer Creek to evaluate them as habitat.

Mike: Assembling artificial trees will be labor intensive.

Charlie: Suggested using an epoxy to assemble trees.

Group agreed to pursue putting some of the artificial Christmas trees in Deer Creek to see how they perform and evaluate their effectiveness.

Yuba dam repairs will take five working days. Lake will be drained, a coffer dam built and then it will be allowed to refill. Should happen about September if it does.

Charlie: there is a large loss of fish on the newly-designed spillway.

Restocking Yuba

Jordanelle has a phenomenal perch population; is a whirling disease a problem.

Perch from IPP pond may be a possibility.

Charlie: In 1979 Yuba almost dried up and came back well in two to three years. Perch like to lay eggs on top of stuff. They are not adhesive and don't stick well to vegetation.

Possibly will hold extra water in Paiute this year to let into Yuba this fall after it is drained.

Possibility of putting structures in at low water when the shoreline is easy to access.

Christmas trees, both artificial and real, could provide good option for future of reservoir.

Tom: Perhaps take advantage of natural cover that is growing along the shoreline in low water for several years before pursuing Christmas trees again.

IPP involvement will keep more water in the future.

Charlie: has been lower in other years.

Charlie: Publicity definitely helped reduce numbers of Yuba walleyes but not enough to help.

Without walleyes in Yuba, perch populations would probably still cycle up and down.

Raising limit on walleye may not have impact since anglers are probably not keeping a lot of fish. Discussion that perhaps anglers may be keeping more than we think.

Many anglers keep numbers of large perch.

Perch tough to manage because they forage on their young. According to studies, a year class of large perch will dominate population until they are on their way out, then they will produce a large number of offspring.

Don: Possibility of minimum size limit on perch to protect young. Also, promoting a fishery can have a dampening effect on cycles.

Planting supplemental forage in reservoir is limited by native species concerns.

Option still exists to put in another species, but it would be a difficult battle. Also, planting, for instance, gizzard shad would require wipers or something to control them.

Charlie: One alternative is to buy water and create another reservoir that doesn't fluctuate that could go online by, maybe, 2030.

Don: proposes to meet in mid-April after we find out about the plans for the year.