



April 2018 NEWSLETTER

NRWMAC'S PETITIONS

As many of you are aware, NRWMAC started two petitions last month, one to modify the Lake Nacimiento water release amounts and one to increase ranger staffing on the lake. These petitions have received outstanding support, with over 6000 signatures on the lake water release petition and approximately 1000 signatures on the lake ranger staffing petition. If you have not already done so, please sign the ranger petition at www.nrwmac.org/save-the-dragon/petitions in addition to the lake water release petition.

It is critical that we get Monterey County to fund the staffing positions so that we have emergency response, navigational buoy placement, mussel prevention, and law enforcement on the lake.

Both of these petitions are being sent to Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA), Monterey County Board of Supervisors, California Water Board and their Resource Agency, SLO County Board of Supervisors, local state and federal elected officials, and numerous state and federal agencies that have oversight or are concerned about water rights issues.

The goal of these petitions is to inform agencies that Monterey County answers to, or that have weight with Monterey, to start asking questions and putting pressure on Monterey county to comply with their dam operating permit.

NRWMAC believes that MCWRA is in violation of the current operating permit which enumerates the various uses for the water,

which are "... for irrigation, domestic, municipal, industrial, and recreational uses." with the "recreational" component just as prominent as the rest. We believe that MCWRA has not supported recreation on the lake as indicated by their past and current water releases.

NRWMAC FUNDING

NRWMAC is currently vetting attorneys specializing in water rights to help litigate our recreation rights, if MCWRA will not change its release schedule during the recreation season. Litigation will require funding and we are researching crowd funding sites to help provide this funding. These actions will take the support of all lake property owners and lake users in order to have the funds to get our lake back during the season.

NRWMAC at RES OPS MEETINGS

Every month at least one NRWMAC representative attends the MCWRA Reservoir Operations (Res Ops) Committee meetings, where MCWRA recommends water releases and other dam operations to their board. Many of you questioned the large water release during the heavy rains in March, and rightfully so, and the committee's response to this question was that they had already scheduled the release and could not rely on the forecast. The committee was also asked why the lake was at 98% in February in 2017 and had been dropped to 40% in just 12 months, which was unprecedented. While the committee cited numerous reasons, ranging from preparing for another wet season to dam maintenance and recharging the Salinas Valley aquifers, no data to back up their rationale was provided.



WATER RELEASE REQUIREMENTS

During the heavy rain of March 2018, federal regulation water release requirements were initiated. In 2007, in accordance with the Salinas Valley Water Project, which included raising the dam spillway and a water diversion dam near the ocean, a Biological Opinion by NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service had to be written for support of the migration of steel-head and salmon into and out of the Salinas and Nacimiento Rivers which flow into the ocean. With this Biological Opinion, if the release flow triggers are met, MCWRA must maintain a sufficient flow of water from Nacimiento and San Antonio lakes so that water will flow to the ocean and allow the fish to migrate. These triggers forced increased releases for a block period of 5 days resulting in 450 cfs being released from Nacimiento.

After April 1st, MCWRA is allowed to store water in their diversion dam and lagoon near the ocean to support Valley irrigation. At the last meeting, MCWRA stated they intended to keep releases sufficient to operate the diversion facility for as long as they can into August. This basically states a combined release from both lakes of at least 600 cfs. (400 cfs from Nacimiento and 200 cfs from San Antonio.)

During the heavy March rains, the lake rose approximately 14 ft in vertical elevation to 766 ft above mean sea level. The top of the spillway is 800 ft and most lake launch ramps and docks are dry at 730 ft. Currently, the lake level is at 763 ft elevation and 54% storage capacity. However, the current water release is 550 cfs, which means the lake will drop significantly each week. MCWRA stated at the last meeting they would be maintaining a release of 400 cfs from April to August. Given that schedule, the lake would stay above 730

ft elevation until approximately mid-July. Last week, MCWRA increased the release by almost 40% to 550 cfs with no explanation of why. This means that if the 550 cfs release is maintained the lake will drop 40% faster and it may reach the 730 ft elevation by July 4th, basically ending any recreational season.

This information given to the public is complicated and confusing, with many factors involved from MCWRA, State, and Federal Agencies about Lake water releases. However, MCWRA has routinely demonstrated at their meetings and public presentations that they cannot be trusted keeping even their own release schedules or support lake recreation.

NRWMAC IS TAKING ACTION

NRWMAC is your voice for the lake and is taking action to attempt to reverse the current release schedule, and support lake recreation as the MCWRA operating permit states. To do this, we need your help in getting as many signatures on NRWMAC's two petitions as possible. We are also seeking donations to fund possible litigation.

For more information and updates, please go to our website, www.NRWMAC.org.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We wish to thank everyone that supports NRWMAC, and over the next few weeks and months we will be sending out emails asking for more help. NRWMAC needs volunteers to help with sign-ups, handouts, t-shirt sales, and help at functions and events. You can help the effort by donating time, dollars, purchasing merchandise or signing up for events at www.nrwmac.org/get-involved.

Donations are always welcome and volunteer help is needed.