



Cachuma Conservation Release Board

CCRB is a joint powers agency whose members are the City of Santa Barbara, Goleta Water District, and the Montecito Water District. Formed in 1973, CCRB represents its Member Agencies and their rate-paying customers in interactions with State and Federal agencies to protect vital water supplies and protect Southern California Steelhead and important habitat at the Cachuma Reservoir and Santa Ynez River.



Cachuma Reservoir and Bradbury Dam

In Recognition of the need for an additional reliable supply of water for the Santa Barbara South Coast and Santa Ynez Valley, The Secretary of the Interior approved the Cachuma Project in 1948. The Cachuma Project was constructed by the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and completed in 1953. The Reservoir spilled for the first time in April 1958. Since that time the Project has provided more reliable water supplies to Santa Barbara County's South Coast and the Santa Ynez Valley. Combined, CCRB's Member Agencies rely on the Cachuma Project to provide up to 85% of the water supplies for more than 200,000 residents and 12,000 acres of agriculture.

Federal Endangered Species Consultation



Southern California Steelhead

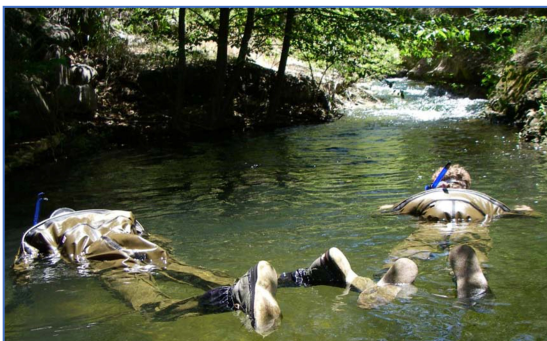
In 1997, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) listed Southern California Steelhead as an Endangered Species, resulting in a Consultation on the Cachuma Project between NMFS and USBR to determine whether steelhead or their habitat were threatened by the Project. This process resulted in a Biological Opinion released by NMFS in 2000 that concluded the operation of the Cachuma Project would not jeopardize

the continued existence of steelhead with the implementation of measures to minimize harm to the fish and its habitat.

Since the listing of steelhead as an Endangered Species, USBR has worked with federal, state, and local Santa Ynez River stakeholders and the CCRB Member Agencies to develop effective fish management programs in the watershed. Collaborative fish management programs developed by Santa Ynez River stakeholders, including USBR, the CCRB Member Agencies, NMFS, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Cal Trout, the State Water Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are still underway today as part of work to ensure that Reclamation complies with its obligations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Substantial work has been completed.

Cachuma Project Member Units (City of Santa Barbara, Goleta Water District, Montecito Water District, Carpinteria Valley Water District, and Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1) have invested more than \$2 million per year for habitat restoration and other fish management projects, totaling nearly \$40 million, including:

- Removal and modification of numerous fish passage barriers and impediments in the Lower Santa Ynez River and its tributaries.
- Habitat expansion and development of programs to increase habitat quality and quantity.
- Extensive fishery monitoring, evaluation, and documenting of fish trends in the watershed.
- Ongoing federally-required and state-required water releases from Bradbury Dam.



**Santa Ynez River Snorkel Surveys to
Collect Fish Counts**



**Quiota Creek Crossing Passage and Habitat
Project**

Despite accomplishing a significant suite of projects listed in the Biological Opinion, not all have been completed, due in part to geographical impediments and private landowner access issues. In 2009, USBR was compelled to formally reinstitute the Consultation process with NMFS to review the effects of operations on steelhead and its habitat. After an assessment by USBR of operations of the Cachuma Project including actions taken to protect and restore steelhead

populations, NMFS produced a draft Biological Opinion (2016 draft BiOp) proposing modifications to Cachuma project operations to further protect the steelhead. Leading fisheries and hydromorphology experts, along with USBR and others, reviewed the 2016 draft BiOp and identified numerous concerns, among them that the proposed flow regime would release more water than Cachuma Reservoir actually stores while not benefiting (and possibly hindering) the steelhead population.

In 2018, seeking a more effective solution to assist Reclamation in complying with its ongoing Endangered Species Act obligations, CCRB partnered with local water agencies downstream of Bradbury Dam to develop a new flow proposal for USBR's consideration. The new proposal is based on steelhead biology and life cycle as well as the Santa Ynez River's flashy hydrology (that is, alternately very wet and very dry). Further, it addresses non-native predatory bass and similar species surviving in the lower river because of the year-round releases from Cachuma. Jointly, the agencies applied the best available science—incorporated by a highly regarded team of hydrologists, limnologists, and fish biologists—to both meet Reclamation's obligations under the Endangered Species Act and ensure a reliable water supply for human needs.

USBR agreed with this new proposed approach and began consultation with NMFS on the new proposal in August 2018. During the fourth quarter of 2019, USBR is scheduled to provide NMFS an updated, detailed biological assessment which NMFS will use to produce a new Biological Opinion. The terms and requirements of the new Biological Opinion, when finalized, may result in modified management requirements for Cachuma Project operation.

State Water Rights

The State of California manages surface water rights throughout California. USBR operates the Cachuma Project in accordance with a series of water rights orders issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. The water rights orders have been updated multiple times since 1958, and are currently being revised by the Water Board.

In September 2016, the Water Board released a draft water rights order for public review. The proposed draft order raised several issues, which were the subject of focused comments provided to the State Board in December 2016 by CCRB and other stakeholders.

In March 2019, the State Board issued a revised draft order for public review that continued to pose concerns for local communities. CCRB provided detailed

comments on the revised draft order. On September 17, 2019, the State Board issued its final Order, requiring Reclamation to:

- release more water from Cachuma Reservoir during wetter-than-normal years; and,
- conduct studies regarding:
 - possible steelhead passage around Bradbury Dam;
 - any benefits to steelhead from the increased flows; and,
 - reduction of predatory invasive species in the watershed.

CCRB's Member Agencies will continue to assist Reclamation in complying with state requirements to protect and enhance important habitat for steelhead while also working to protect vital water supplies for local communities.

About CCRB

CCRB operates under the direction of a three-member Board of Directors, with a representative from each Member Agency. The Board employs an Executive Director, who oversees implementation of Board direction. Regular CCRB Board meetings are generally held the first Thursday of each month at 10:00am. Meeting agendas and related documents are available from CCRB's website (www.ccrb-board.org). CCRB Board meetings are open to the public, and the Board welcomes active public participation to help protect both steelhead and vital water supplies.
