

**SACRAMENTO MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT'S
UPPER AMERICAN RIVER PROJECT
(FERC PROJECT NO. 2101)**

**STREAM ANGLER FOCUS GROUP
TECHNICAL REPORT**

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JUNE 2004

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LIST OF APPLICABLE STUDY PLANS

Description

- Stream Angler Focus Group Study Plan (This study plan is a supplement to the Visitor Use and Impact Study Plan as described in Section 2 of this technical report. The Visitor Use and Impact Study Plan can be found in the *Visitor Surveys (2002-03) Technical Report*.)

Plan for UARP Stream Angler Focus Group February 28, 2004

1.0 Background. SMUD is presently nearing the end of the data collection process needed for its Upper American River Project (UARP or Project) relicensing application, which will be filled with the FERC in July 2005. In 2002 and 2003, SMUD conducted several studies involving surveys of visitors to the UARP reservoirs and surrounding areas.

On January 28, 2004, the Recreation Technical Working Group (TWG) completed its initial review of the 2002 survey results relative to fishing and identified concerns. In general, the concerns focused on whether the data collected in the 2002 survey effort is adequate to address the following two issue questions:

- What are the opportunities for angling at Project waters and what is the level of angler satisfaction?
- Are the existing sport fishing opportunities adequate to meet existing and future recreation demand?

Relative to stream fishing below Project dams, the Recreation TWG determined that an additional focused effort is needed to adequately address the issue questions. The group agreed to (1) develop and convene a focus group of people who are knowledgeable on stream fishing at or near the streams below Project dams, and (2) SMUD will conduct additional analysis of the 2002 survey data. After reviewing the results of these efforts, the Recreation TWG will decide if a focused surveying effort of stream anglers is warranted later this year.

The following is the UARP Stream Angler Focus Group Plan (Plan). On or about March 10, 2003, SMUD will mail an invitation to the identified focus group participants. Interested Recreation TWG members are encouraged to attend and observe the focus group session.

2.0 Focus Group Plan Approval. On February 18, 2004, the Recreation TWG's fishing subgroup met and made revisions to the draft Plan; participants were: Stafford Lehr, California Department of Fish and Game; Sharon Stohrer, State Water Resources Control Board; Harry Williamson, National Park Service; Tami Zemel, El Dorado County Water Agency; Bill Center, American River Recreation Association; Chris Shutes, citizen; and Dave Hanson and Joe Davis, SMUD. On February 19, 2004, SMUD emailed the revised draft Plan to the members listed above, as well as to the following Forest Service fishing subgroup members: Jann Williams, Lester Lubetkin, Jeff Marsolais, Rich Platt and Beth Paulson, for final review and approval. As of February 28, 2004, no comments or suggested changes were received from the subgroup members, thus this Plan is deemed acceptable to the subgroup and will be implemented.

3.0 Focus Group Design. Targeting 8 to 15 experienced stream anglers who are knowledgeable about central Sierra Nevada streams (1,000 ft to 6,000 feet) with past experience in stream fishing in the Crystal Basin or streams below UARP dams (e.g., Gerle Creek, South Fork Silver Creek, Silver Creek, and the South Fork American River) to participate in a one-day (5 hours with a meal provided) focus group consisting of individual surveys and group discussion (the

group discussion will be audio taped). The focus group will be facilitated and the results will be documented in a report. Recreation TWG members will identify the stream anglers. Preliminary participants include:

<u>Angler Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>agree to participate /follow up person</u>
Tim Davis	Pollock Pines	yes (Chris Shutes)
Grant Nelson	Placerville	yes (Joe Davis)
Dr. Michael Matus?	EDC	? (Joe Davis)
Monte Hendricks	EDC	yes (Joe Davis)
Bob Pirtle?	?	? (Stafford Lehr)
John Murphy?	?	? (Mike Meinz)

On February 7, 2004, Chris Shutes posted a notice on Kiene's bulletin board requesting participants. Kiene's is a fly shop in Sacramento. On February 17, 2004, Bill Felts, Conservation Policy Director, California Fly Fisher's Unlimited (CFFU), emailed a request for participation to the CFFU local membership.

4.0 Where. **El Dorado Hills Fire Station No. 85**, 990 Lassen Lane, El Dorado Hills. Located on corner of El Dorado Hills Boulevard and Lassen Lane, near Raleys and across from the driving range.

5.0 When. Saturday, **April 10**, from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm (SMUD will provide lunch)

6.0 Survey questions and group discussion.

6.1 Survey questions

6.1.1 Survey questions on general stream fishing in central Sierra Nevada

1. About how many times per year do you fish in central Sierra Nevada streams?
2. What kind of fish do you typically fish for when fishing central Sierra Nevada streams?
3. What time of year do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
4. Which days of the week and what time of the day do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
5. About how many total people are typically in your group when you fish central Sierra Nevada streams?
6. What attributes do you consider in determining whether a central Sierra Nevada stream offers a quality stream fishing experience?

6.1.2 Survey questions listed in 6.1.3 will be asked for each stream segment listed below:

1. Rubicon River from Rubicon Reservoir Dam to Hell Hole Reservoir.
2. Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir.
3. South Fork Rubicon River from Robbs Forebay Dam to confluence with Rubicon River.
4. South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir.
5. Silver Creek from Junction Dam to Camino Reservoir.
6. Silver Creek from Camino Dam to confluence with South Fork American River.
7. South Fork American River from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir.
8. South Fork American River from Slab Creek Dam to Chili Bar Reservoir.

6.1.3 Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir

1. Have you ever fished this stream before? Yes or No. If no, please go to question x (next stream).
2. About how many times have you fished this stream in the past?
3. What kind of fish do you typically fish for in this stream?
4. What time of year do you typically fish this stream, and why?
5. Which days of the week and what time of the day do you typically fish this stream, and why?
6. Where do you typically park your vehicle when you fish this stream?
7. Are improvements needed to make access to this stream...

Easier? Yes, No, No Opinion. If yes, what improvements and where?

Safer? Yes, No, No Opinion. If yes, what improvements and where?

More enjoyable? Yes, No, No Opinion. If yes, what improvements and where?

8. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize this stream in terms of the quality of the stream fishing experience.
9. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize the amount of fishing use that this stream presently gets.
10. Please describe how the flows you have encountered when fishing this stream have affected your fishing experience.

11. Would flow data on the internet for this reach be beneficial to stream anglers? Yes, No, No Opinion.

6.2 Group discussion

The group discussion questions will focus on the following general survey questions and specific stream survey questions, lead by the facilitator.

6.2.1 General survey discussion questions

Topic: WHEN DO YOU FISH

1. What time of year do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
2. Which days of the week and what time of day do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?

Topic: QUALITY AND SATISFACTION

3. What attributes do you consider in determining whether a central Sierra Nevada stream offers a quality stream fishing experience?

6.2.2 Specific stream reach discussion questions (first prioritize stream reaches based on the number of participants who have fished the reach before):

Topic: WHEN DO YOU FISH

1. What time of year do you typically fish this stream, and why?
2. Which days of the week and what time of day do you typically fish this stream, and why?

Topic: ACCESS

3. Where do you typically park your vehicle when you fish this stream?
4. Are improvements needed to make access to this stream...

Easier? Yes, No, No Opinion. If yes, what improvements and where?

Safer? Yes, No, No Opinion. If yes, what improvements and where?

More enjoyable? Yes, No, No Opinion. If yes, what improvements and where?

Topic: QUALITY & SATISFACTION

5. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize this stream in terms of the quality of the stream fishing experience.
6. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize the amount of fishing use that this stream presently gets.
7. Please describe how the flows you have encountered when fishing this stream have affected your fishing experience.
8. Would flow data on the internet for this reach be beneficial to stream anglers? Yes, No, No Opinion.

STREAM ANGLER FOCUS GROUP TECHNICAL REPORT

SUMMARY

In 2002 and 2003, SMUD conducted several studies involving surveys of visitors to the UARP reservoirs and surrounding areas. On January 28, 2004, the Recreation Technical Working Group completed its initial review of the 2002-03 survey results relative to fishing and determined that more information was needed to address issue questions related to fishing. Relative to stream fishing, the Recreation TWG agreed to develop and convene a focus group of people with knowledge of stream fishing at or near the streams located downstream of Project dams.

On April 10, 2004, the Licensee investigated the stream angling opportunities on the reaches located below Project dams by conducting an informational meeting with stream anglers, referred to in this report as the Stream Angler Focus Group. Based on the findings in the report, it was determined that, in general, there are a wide range of angling opportunities on the reaches below Project dams. The angling quality of some of the reaches is below average, while others is quite good. Many of the reaches are very difficult to access but the group indicated that they had little interest in seeing the access to these reaches improved. The participants stated that they were looking for solitude and therefore more remote streams to fish. Healthy streams were considered more important to the anglers who participated in the focus group meeting than the numbers of fish that they caught. The participants also indicated that there are some very good stream angling opportunities in the region and that many of these streams have surprisingly little use.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This technical report is one in a series of reports prepared for the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD or Licensee) by Devine Tarbell and Associates, Inc., and the Louis Berger Group, Inc. as an appendix to the SMUD's application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a new license for the Upper American River Project (UARP or Project). This technical report focuses on stream angling on the UARP. This report includes the following sections:

- **INTRODUCTION** – Includes when the applicable study plan was approved by the UARP Relicensing Plenary Group; a brief description of the issue questions addressed, in part, by the study plan; the objectives of the study plan; and the study area.
- **METHODS** – A description of the methods used in the study, including a listing of study sites.
- **RESULTS** – A description of the salient data results.
- **ANALYSIS** – An analysis of the results, where appropriate.

This technical report does not include a detailed description of the UARP Alternative Licensing Process (ALP) or the Project, which can be found in the following sections of SMUD's application for a new license: The UARP Relicensing Process, Exhibit A (Project Description), Exhibit B (Project Operations), and Exhibit C (Construction).

Also, this technical report does not include a discussion regarding the effects of the Project on stream angling or associated environmental resources, nor does the report include a discussion of appropriate protection, mitigation and enhancement measures. A discussion regarding resource

impacts associated with the UARP is included in the applicant-prepared preliminary draft environmental assessment (PDEA) document, which is part of SMUD's application for a new license. Development of resource measures will occur in settlement discussions, which will occur in early 2004, and will be reported on in the PDEA.

2.0 BACKGROUND

SMUD is presently nearing the end of the data collection process needed for its UARP relicensing application, which will be filed with FERC in July 2005. In 2002 and 2003, SMUD conducted several studies involving surveys of visitors to the UARP reservoirs and surrounding areas. On January 28, 2004, the Recreation Technical Working Group (TWG) completed its initial review of the 2002-03 survey results relative to fishing and identified concerns. In general, the concerns focused on whether the data collected in the 2002-03 survey effort is adequate to address the two issue questions related to angling on reaches downstream of Project dams.

2.1 Stream Angler Focus Group Study Plan

On January 28, 2004, the Recreation (TWG) determined that an additional focused effort was needed to adequately address the following two issue questions:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Issue Question 64 | What are the opportunities for angling at Project waters and what is the level of angler satisfaction? |
| Issue Question 73 | Are the existing sport fishing opportunities adequate to meet existing and future recreation demand? |

Relative to stream fishing below Project dams, the Recreation TWG agreed to develop and convene a focus group of people with knowledge of stream fishing at or near the streams below Project dams. This stream angler study effort is related to the Visitor Use and Impact Study Plan, which was approved by the Plenary Group on March 6, 2002, in that the results supplement information presented in the *Visitor Surveys (2002-03) Technical Report*. Information regarding existing and future demand for angling is presented in the *Recreation Demand Technical Report*.

SMUD drafted a plan to collect additional information from stream anglers and on February 18, 2004, the Recreation TWG's fishing subgroup met and made revisions to the draft plan. Participants were: Stafford Lehr, California Department of Fish and Game; Sharon Stohrer, State Water Resources Control Board; Harry Williamson, National Park Service; Tami Zemel, El Dorado County Water Agency; Bill Center, American River Recreation Association; Chris Shutes, citizen; and Dave Hanson and Joe Davis, SMUD. On February 19, 2004, SMUD emailed the revised draft plan to the members listed above, as well as to the following fishing sub-group members of the Eldorado National Forest (ENF) for final review and approval: Jann Williams, Lester Lubetkin, Jeff Marsolais, Rich Platt and Beth Paulson. No comments were received and the Stream Angler Focus Group Study Plan was deemed approved by the participants on February 28, 2004. A copy of the study plan is included in this technical report.

3.0 METHODS

The study methods conformed to those approved by the UARP Relicensing Plenary Group for the overall Visitor Use and Impact Study Plan, as refined in the February 28, 2004, Stream Angling Focus Group Study Plan, which was developed and approved by the Recreation TWG. This study required that a focus group of anglers convene to provide information about the stream reaches below Project dams. Each participant individually completed a survey that queried the participant about general angling information and about specific reaches below Project dams. After the participants completed their surveys, a group discussion was conducted and documented by notes and audio tape.

3.1 Focus Group Design

The focus group was designed to include 8 to 15 experienced stream anglers with knowledge about central Sierra Nevada streams and past experience in stream fishing in the Crystal Basin or streams below UARP dams (e.g., Gerle Creek, South Fork Silver Creek, Silver Creek, and the South Fork American River) to participate in a one-day (5 hours with a meal provided) focus group. The focus group meeting was designed to include individual surveys and a facilitated group discussion which was audiotaped. Recreation TWG members helped to identify the stream anglers who could participate in the focus group. A survey was developed from the list of questions created by the Recreation TWG and the fishing subcommittee members. The survey consisted of a General Information Questionnaire (Appendix A) and a Stream Reach Information Questionnaire (Appendix B). Each of these survey instruments was sent to the Recreation TWG for approval on March 25, 2004. A list of discussion questions for the group discussion was also developed (Appendix C).

3.2 Focus Group Participants

Participants in the Stream Angler Focus Group were selected based on recommendations from Recreation TWG members and contacts with local fishing organizations and outdoor retailers. The main criterion for selecting the participants was angling experience in the Crystal Basin or streams below UARP dams. SMUD contacted each potential participant by phone to solicit their participation and followed up with a letter to each participant to confirm their participation and provide logistical details of the meeting. In all, there were eight participants in the focus group. Ages ranged from 38 to 66 years old and all of the participants were male. Participants included: Bob Macy, Michael Matus, Monte Hendricks, John Murphy, Chris Schnaidt, Bill Felts, Bob Oswald, and Rich Trimble. Chris Shutes also attended to observe the focus group meeting and participated in some of the discussion, however, he had not fished any of the previously mentioned streams. Each of the focus group members had between 10 and 47 years of fishing experience.

3.3 Focus Group Meeting

The focus group meeting was conducted at the El Dorado Hills Fire Station No. 85 in El Dorado Hills on Saturday, April 10, 2004, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the focus group at the beginning of the session by the facilitator. Each of the

survey forms were handed out and the facilitator reviewed the various sections with the group to answer questions and provide clarity to the participants. Along with the Stream Reach Information Form the group was shown a map of the Project to review the location of each of the stream reaches that were listed on the form. This insured that the participants would clearly understand the locations of the reaches for which they were providing information. These reaches included:

1. Rubicon River from Rubicon Reservoir Dam to Hell Hole Reservoir.
2. Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir.
3. South Fork Rubicon River from Robbs Forebay Dam to confluence with Rubicon River.
4. South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir.
5. Silver Creek from Junction Dam to Camino Reservoir.
6. Silver Creek from Camino Dam to confluence with South Fork American River.
7. South Fork American River from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir.
8. South Fork American River from Slab Creek Dam to Chili Bar Reservoir.

The participants were instructed to fill out one Stream Reach Form for each of the reaches on which they had angling experience. After the group had completed the surveys they participated in a facilitated focus group discussion. In this discussion, participants answered questions regarding general angling preferences as well as angling on specific reaches below Project dams.

4.0 RESULTS

The results are presented in two sections: (1) general information, which covers the general angling preference of the anglers in the focus group; and (2) the stream reach information which targets specific stream reaches located below Project dams. Both survey responses and group discussion responses are referenced in the discussion below.

4.1 General Information

Results from the General Information Form show that the group was composed primarily of fly anglers, with one spin angler and one fly angler that occasionally also used bait. The number of fishing days per year, ranged from 6 days to more than 20. Specifically, two anglers reported an average of 6 to 10 days per year, one angler reported 11 to 15 days per year, two others reported an average of 16 to 20 days per year, and the remaining four anglers reported fishing more than 20 days per year. The participant responses to each of the two survey instruments are included in Appendix D.

The entire group stated that trout was their species of choice. Most of the participants fished during the entire trout-angling season, April through October. Anglers from the group stated that the time of year that they fish is determined by the fishing season and natural constraints. These constraints included lack of access due to snow and high flows. The days of the week that people fished was largely determined by the individuals work schedules. Those that did not have schedule constraints reported a preference to fish mid-week due to reduced fishing pressure during that time (i.e., more likely not to see other people during mid-week). Almost all of the participants fished in small groups, one to two people, with only two anglers stating that they had typical group sizes of 3-5 anglers.

Results of the survey revealed the most important attribute for a quality fishing experience was river aesthetics. During the focus group, the participants elaborated on this topic to explain that stream health was the most important attribute for quality fishing. This included clean water and good aesthetics. Fishing success was secondary to stream health. While the numbers of fish caught was not as important, the anglers expressed it was important to know that there were fish in the stream. This was a determining factor whether a reach would be revisited or not. One angler stated that “You have to know that you are casting over something,” and that the challenge was in trying to catch them. Several other attributes included solitude, availability of wild trout, and stable flows. Stable flows were generally viewed as better for fishing. Most of the group felt that flow information would be beneficial to anglers for the reaches located below Project dams.

Access was also listed as an important attribute, however, it was unclear from the survey results if anglers felt that easy access or difficult access was a positive attribute. During the group discussion most of the group clarified that they felt that poor access was actually considered to be a positive attribute. The general feeling was that the more difficult the access, the better the fishing could be due to a decrease in the number of anglers fishing that reach. Most also reported that they preferred a more remote fishing experience. Some members of the group stated that as they became older, better access became more important to them. This information was consistent with the stream reach surveys where most of these anglers did not recommend any improvements to access on any of the reaches. In fact, in some cases they recommended reducing access.

The participants that had experience with commercial guiding did not see good opportunities for future commercially guided fishing trips on the reaches below Project dams. The participants agreed that most of the reaches are too difficult to access due to very steep and rugged topography to provide quality, guided experiences.

4.2 Stream Reach Information

At least one participant had fished each of the reaches listed on the survey. The South Fork Silver Creek below Ice House Dam and Silver Creek below Junction Dam each had five anglers that had fished in these reaches. Three anglers had experience on the Rubicon below Rubicon Dam and Silver Creek below Camino Dam. Gerle Creek below Loon Lake Dam, South Fork Rubicon below Robbs Forebay Dam and the South Fork American below Slab Creek Dam each

had two anglers that had fished these reaches. The short reach below the Camino Powerhouse, only had one angler that had previously fished this section.

4.2.1 Rubicon River from Rubicon Reservoir Dam to Hell Hole Reservoir

This 11.7-mile reach is one of the more remote reaches evaluated. Due to its remoteness most anglers hike into this reach for long day excursions or backpack in and stay overnight. There are a number of ways to access this reach from the Loon Lake area and from the bottom of the reach up from Hell Hole Reservoir. The season of use on this reach was reported to be June through October. The primary constraint on earlier access is high flows and or snow. The anglers considered the fishing on this river reach to be excellent, where anglers reported that they primarily caught rainbows with a few brown trout. The poor access to this reach was considered to be one of the reasons for the minimal fishing use that this reach receives. None of the anglers had any interest in seeing access to this reach improved. Two of the three anglers felt that flow information would be helpful on this reach, although none had encountered flows in the past that were a problem. One angler suggested increased flows in the summer.

4.2.2 Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir.

Roaded access on this 8.5-mile stream reach is better than on most of the other reaches that were evaluated. The reach can be accessed from Wentworth Springs Road and Forest Service Road 14N34. It can also be accessed from the Loon Lake area at the end of Ice House Road. One of the anglers noted that it was difficult to access the stream in some areas due to vegetation. Neither angler who had fished this reach recommended any access improvements.

One of the two anglers found the flows to be too high for fishing in the early spring and also too low in the late summer for good fishing, however, both felt flow information would be a benefit. The anglers agreed that they felt that this reach receives a moderate amount of pressure from anglers. Both of the anglers who fished this reach reported their fishing success to be fair, however, in the group discussion there seemed to be consensus that this was one of the better reaches at the Project. Gerle Creek is the one reach that was evaluated that is populated with high numbers of resident brown trout.

One angler from the group discussion stated that he had seen people keeping brown trout near the Airport Flat Campground during the fall spawning season. The group expressed some interest in having some special regulations, possibly catch and release or a two fish limit, to protect the native brown trout fishery in Gerle Creek and Gerle Creek Reservoir. One of the members of the group expressed concern that special regulations could actually attract more anglers to this reach. In general, the focus group agreed that protecting this reach was a high priority.

4.2.3 South Fork Rubicon River from Robbs Forebay Dam to confluence with Rubicon River

Two anglers in the focus group had fished this reach in the past. They had accessed it from Ice House Road, near Robbs Peak Reservoir, below the South Fork Campground and on the Deer

Creek Trail. Both anglers had found this reach to receive moderate to high amount of fishing pressure. Although, in the group discussion they stated that the amount of fishing pressure decreases substantially once you get away from the primary points of access. Each angler reported very different fishing experiences on the reach. While one had poor fishing on the reach the other had excellent fishing. They had each fished the South Fork Rubicon River between three to six times. Neither recommended improving access but there was a suggestion to keep this reach as a walk-in only area. They were split on whether flow information for this reach would be helpful.

4.2.4 South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir

Five members of the focus group had previously fished this reach. This 11.5-mile reach has a number of access points all along its course. Most of the access points allow drive up access to the river. It is also the reach with the closest access to Highway 50 in the Crystal Basin. The group was split on their estimations of the amount of fishing pressure on this reach. Two rated it low, two rated it high and one said that it had a moderate amount of fishing pressure. All of the anglers rated the fishing from fair to poor. Most of the anglers stated that they did not feel the need for any access improvements but one did feel that a pathway along the river would be helpful. Most felt that they would like to see flow information on this reach.

4.2.5 Silver Creek from Junction Dam to Camino Reservoir

This 8.3-mile reach is very difficult to access. There are two options for access, either hiking up from Camino Reservoir or hiking down from Junction Reservoir. Hiking along the river channel was described as challenging due to the very steep canyon. Surprisingly, this reach had the second highest number of anglers to have fished this reach of any in the survey. All of the anglers found the fishing on this reach to be only fair. They all described the fishing pressure on this reach as moderate to low. Most did not recommend any access improvements, however, one did feel that a trail would be helpful.

4.2.6 Silver Creek from Camino Dam to confluence with South Fork American River

This 9.0-mile reach also offers challenging access. The two routes taken by anglers were hiking up from the bottom, near the Camino Powerhouse, or hiking down from Camino Reservoir. In the spring, flows are more of an issue for anglers accessing the reach from the Camino Powerhouse area. This is due to the high natural flows that occur on the South Fork American River which constitutes the bottom portion of this reach. The quality of the fishing rating ranged from poor to good by the three anglers that had fished the reach. The one angler who had the most extensive experience on this reach, twelve trips, stated that his fishing success on this reach had decreased since the 1997 flood, but had been improving in recent years. Both brown and rainbow trout were caught in this reach. None of the anglers recommended any access improvements on this river segment stating they preferred keeping the access difficult. Two of the three anglers who had fished the reach recommended having flow information available.

4.2.7 South Fork American River from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir

This very short river segment was only fished by one of the anglers in the focus group. It is essentially the tail waters below the Camino Powerhouse, above Slab Creek Reservoir. As such, this reach has relatively high flows that can vary throughout the day. Even so, the angler that had fished this area stated that these flows had not impacted his fishing experience. He also reported the fishing to be good to very good. This area has drive up access that is approximately a 20-minute drive from Pollock Pines. No access improvements were recommended.

4.2.8 South Fork American River from Slab Creek Dam to Chili Bar Reservoir

This is the lowest elevation river reach evaluated by the group. Both anglers that had fished this section accessed the reach from Slab Creek Dam. They reported the quality of the fishing to be low. One angler felt that this was due to low flows. Rattlesnakes were said to be a problem on this reach. It was difficult for anglers to move up and down this reach due to large boulders and steep canyon walls. Both felt that flow information would be helpful. Neither recommended any access improvements.

5.0 ANALYSIS

The Stream Angling Focus Group consisted of a relatively small group of experienced anglers and was primarily made up of fly anglers. Fishing success on the surveyed reaches ranged from excellent to poor. The participants' experiences often varied on the same reaches, but this is not uncommon. Given these qualifiers there seem to be some consistent responses in some of the information provided by this group. First, stream anglers seek to fish areas where they are not likely to see other anglers or other recreationists. This is also consistent with the preferred group sizes identified by the participants, generally one to two people. One of the general conditions that exists with stream angling is that after a pool has been fished, the fish will become generally "spooked" and become uncatchable for some time. Even with a party size of two anglers, fisherman would have to alternate fishing pools in small streams such as the ones investigated during this study effort. Fishing success could be easily impacted by the presence of other anglers or visitors. This also helps to explain the participants' lack of interest, in most cases, in any access improvements. In fact, the group often expressed access "improvements" as a means to limit access, particularly vehicular access. It is also interesting to note that the reach from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir, which has drive-up access and potentially good fishing, had very little interest from the anglers in this group. This is consistent with this group of anglers desire to have a more remote angling experience.

Most anglers had found flows on the surveyed reaches to be stable in the past. This would be consistent with the release patterns that exist below the Project dams. The group generally felt that stable flows improve fishing. However, fishing was reported to be good to very good below the Camino Powerhouse where flows fluctuate regularly. Most anglers also felt that flow information would be helpful. This was not specific to particular reaches but rather the anglers who expressed a desire to have flow information available to them wanted it available for all of the reaches. Those who stated that they did not need flow information consistently responded it was not necessary on all of the reaches.

One of the only recommendations to come from the group was a desire to protect the native brown trout fishery on Gerle Creek and in Gerle Creek Reservoir, particularly during the fall spawning season. Suggestions from the participants included closing this area to fishing during spawning and imposing a lower limited catch during the rest of the year. Having flows and reservoir elevations that are adequate for spawning should also be considered. One other concern expressed by one of the anglers was regarding the possibility of flow changes for recreational whitewater boating and potential impacts to the fishing opportunities on the reaches below Project dams.

In general the group indicated that good angling opportunities exist on some of the reaches below Project dams. The quality of angling opportunities on some of the reaches are below average, particularly when combined with their difficult access. Many of the anglers also indicated that some of their favorite streams were not below Project dams but regionally they did have numerous high quality angling opportunities on central Sierra Nevada streams. They also stated that this was contrary to the common perception that California stream fisheries are highly impacted because of the State's large population.

APPENDIX A

ANGLER GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

**Upper American River Project
Stream Angler Focus Group, April 10, 2004**

ANGLER GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

(All information is confidential and for survey use only)

Name _____ Gender _____ Age _____
Address _____
Email _____ Phone Number _____
No. of Years of Fishing experience. _____

Survey questions on general stream fishing in central Sierra Nevada

1. About how many days per year do you fish in central Sierra Nevada streams? (Circle one)
1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 more than 20.

2. What species of fish do you typically fish for when fishing central Sierra Nevada streams?

3. What type of tackle do you typically use? (Circle all that apply)
Fly Spin Bait Other

4. What time of year do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
Jan Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec
Reason(s): _____

5. Which days of the week and what time of the day do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
Days of the week: _____
Reason(s): _____

6. About how many total people are typically in your group when you fish central Sierra Nevada streams? (Circle one)
1-2 3-5 6-7 More than 7

7. What attributes do you consider in determining whether a central Sierra Nevada stream offers a quality stream fishing experience? (Circle all that apply)

Fishing success River Aesthetics Access Other _____

APPENDIX B

STREAM REACH INFORMATION FORM

**Upper American River Project
Stream Angler Focus Group, April 10, 2004**

STREAM REACH INFORMATION FORM

Please fill out one of these forms for each reach you have fished

Your Name: _____.

Stream Reach (circle one)

1. Rubicon River from Rubicon Reservoir Dam to Hell Hole Reservoir.
2. Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir.
3. South Fork Rubicon River from Robbs Forebay Dam to confluence with Rubicon River.
4. South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir.
5. Silver Creek from Junction Dam to Camino Reservoir.
6. Silver Creek from Camino Dam to confluence with South Fork American River.
7. South Fork American River from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir.
8. South Fork American River from Slab Creek Dam to Chili Bar Reservoir.

Reach Information

1. About how many times have you fished this stream in the past ten years?
2. What species of fish do you typically fish for in this stream?
3. What time of year do you typically fish this stream, and why? (Circle all months that apply)
Jan Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec
4. Which days of the week and what time of the day do you typically fish this stream, and why?
5. Where do you typically park your vehicle when you fish this stream?

6. Are any improvements needed to improve access to this stream?

7. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize this stream in terms of the quality of the stream fishing experience.

8. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize the amount of fishing use that you feel this stream presently gets.

9. Please describe how the flows you have encountered when fishing this stream have affected your fishing experience.

10. Would flow data on the internet for this reach be beneficial to stream anglers? (Circle one)

Yes No No Opinion

APPENDIX C

GROUP DISCUSSION FORM

**Upper American River Project
Stream Angler Focus Group, April 10, 2004**

GROUP DISCUSSION FORM

Group discussion

The group discussion questions will focus on the following general survey questions and specific stream survey questions, lead by the facilitator.

General survey discussion questions

Topic: WHEN DO YOU FISH

1. What time of year do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
2. Which days of the week and what time of day do you typically fish central Sierra Nevada streams, and why?
3. What type of tackle do you typically use?

Topic: QUALITY AND SATISFACTION

4. What attributes do you consider in determining whether a central Sierra Nevada stream offers a quality stream fishing experience?

Specific stream reach discussion questions (first prioritize stream reaches by the number of participants who have fished each of the reaches.):

FISHED REACHES

Topic: WHEN DO YOU FISH

1. What time of year do you typically fish this stream, and why?
2. Which days of the week and what time of day do you typically fish this stream, and why?
3. Do you typically see other anglers or any people recreating while fishing this reach?

Topic: ACCESS

4. How did you access the river?

Are there any access improvements needed on this stream?

Topic: QUALITY & SATISFACTION

5. How does this stream compare in quality to other streams in the region?
6. Relative to other central Sierra Nevada streams, please characterize the amount of fishing use that this stream presently gets.
7. Please describe how the flows you have encountered when fishing this stream have affected your fishing experience.
8. Would flow data on the internet for this reach be beneficial to stream anglers? Yes, No, No Opinion.
9. If you have knowledge about commercial guiding, in your opinion, does this reach have commercial guiding potential?

:
UNFISHED REACHES

1. Have you considered fishing this reach?
2. Why have you not fished this reach?

APPENDIX D

SUMMARIZED RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY INSTRUMENTS USED FOR THE STREAM ANGLING FOCUS GROUP

- General Information
- Rubicon River from Rubicon Reservoir Dam to Hell Hole Reservoir
- Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir
- South Fork Rubicon River from Robbs Forebay Dam to confluence with Rubicon River.
- South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir
- Silver Creek from Junction Dam to Camino Reservoir
- Silver Creek from Camino Dam to confluence with South Fork American River
- South Fork American River from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir
- South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir

General Information

	Name	City/Zip	Gender	Experience yrs.	Fishing Days per year	Species Preference	Tackle Preference	Season Preference	Day Preference	Time Preference	Typical Group Size	Important stream Attributes
1	Bob Macy	Placerville, CA 955667	Male	30	6-10	Trout	Fly	May-July Sept Flow Dependent	None	10am-4pm	1-2	Fishing Success River Aesthetics Access
2	Dr. Michael Matus	Pollock Pine, 95726	Male	35	11-15	Trout	Fly	May-Oct	Weekends Mon,Thurs	Weekends All Day Mon,Thurs Evenings	1-2	Fishing Success River Aesthetics
3	Monte Hendricks	Pollock Pines, 95726	Male	30	20+	Trout	Fly	April-Nov	Weekends		1-2	River Aesthetics Wild Trout
4	John Murphy	Edorado Hills 95762	Male	40	20+	Trout	Fly, Bait	July- Oct	Mid-Week	None	1-2	Fishing Success River Aesthetics Solitude
5	Chris Schnaidt	Cameron Park, CA 95628	Male	38	20+	Trout	Spin	April-Nov	Mid-Week	Evenings Some	1-2	Fishing Success River Aesthetics Access
6	Bill Felts	Fair Oaks, CA 95628	Male	10	6-10	Trout	Fly	May- Sept	Weekends	None	1-2	River Aesthetics Access Stable Flows
7	Bob Oswald	Camino CA95709	Male	45	20+	Trout	Fly	April-Nov	Thurs-Fri	None	1-2	Fishing Success River Aesthetics Access
8	Rich Trimble	Sacramento, CA 95815	Male	40	16-20	Trout	Fly	May-Oct	Mid-Week	None	3-5	Fishing Success River Aesthetics Access
9	Chris Shutes	Berkley, CA 94703	Male	47	16-20	Trout	Fly	June- Oct	Mid-Week	None	1-2 or 3-5	Fishing Success River Aesthetics Access

Rubicon River from Rubicon Reservoir Dam to Hell Hole Reservoir

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Michael Matus	3	Rainbow	August	Weekend	Loon Lake	None	Execent	Low	none	No Opinion
Bob Macy	2 or 3	Trout	July- Aug	Mid-week Mid-day	Loon Lake VanVleck Trial	None		Low	Low flows mid summer	Yes
Monte Hendricks	10 to 12	Trout Browns Rainbows	June-Oct	Weekend	Hell Hole Dam McKinstry Lake Wentworth Springs Loon Lake	None	Execent	low	Flows Seem lower More algae	Yes

Gerle Creek from Loon Lake Dam to Gerle Creek Reservoir

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Chris Schnaidt	5	Rainbow, Brook	July- Aug	Mid-week	Below Loon Lake Dam	none	Fair	Low	Vegetation Incroachment	yes
John Murphy	2	Brown	April, Oct	Mid-week	Gerle creek CG Wentworth Springs Road Bridge	None	Aesthetics good Fishing Fair	Moderate	Early Season High Flows Dificult fishing	yes

South Fork Rubicon River from Robbs Forebay Dam to confluence with Rubicon River.

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Michael Matus	6	Rainbows, Browns	Aug- Sept	Weekend All Day	Loon Lake road	None	Excellent	Moderate	none	No Opinion
Bob Oswald	3 or 4	Trout	May- June	Mid-week	Robbs Peak Res. South Fork CG	None	Below average	High		yes

South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Chris Schnaidt	2	Rainbow	July- Aug	Mid-week	Below Icehouse Dam	Vegetation Incroachment	Fair	High	None	yes
Michael Matus	12	Rainbows, Browns	July- Sept	Weekends Mon,Thurs	Icehouse Road	None	poor	High	None	No Opinion
Bob Oswald	2 or 3	Trout	April-June	Mid-week Afternoons	Icehouse Road, Bridge at Junction	None	Aesthetics good Fishing Poor	Moderate	High in early season To low late seson	yes
Bill Felts	2	Rainbow	July - Aug	Sat 12-3pm	Can't remember	Better pathways More parking	Better than most. Good water quality and access	Low	Stable, easy to fish	yes
John Murphy	4 or 5	Rainbows, Browns	Aug-Oct	Mid-week	SPI Road Silver Creek CG	None	Fair	Low	None	yes

Silver Creek from Junction Dam to Camino Reservoir

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Michael Matus	3	Rainbow, Brown	Aug- Sept	Weekend	Camino Res	none	Fair	Moderate	None	No Opinion
Rich Trimble	3	Rainbow	July	Tues- Thurs	Union Valley	none		Low		No Opinion
John Murphy	1	None	April		Junction Res	none	Poor time of year	Low	Low flows	No Opinion
Bob Macy	3	Brook Trout	May-Sept	Mid-week	Junction Res	Path would be nice	Difficult to access	Low	None	yes
Monte Hendricks	1	Trout	July	Saturday	Jaybird Road	No Opinion	Fair	Low	No Opinion	yes

Silver Creek from Camino Dam to confluence with South Fork American River

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Michael Matus	12	Rainbows, Browns	July- Sept	Weekend All Day	Access road to Camino PH	None	Excellent in the past. Poor lately	Moderate	none	No Opinion
Bob Oswald	3 or 4	Trout	April- June	Mid-week All day	Jaybird PH	None	Good	Low	none	yes
Monte Hendricks	1	Rainbows, Browns	August	Saturday	Slab Creek Res	No opinion	Fair	Low	No Opinion	yes

South Fork American River from Camino Powerhouse to Slab Creek Reservoir

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Michael Matus	10	Rainbows, Browns	Aug-Oct	Weekend	Access road to Camino PH	None	Good to Very Good	Low	None	No Opinion

South Fork Silver Creek from Ice House Dam to Junction Reservoir

Name	No. of Times Fished this Reach	Target Fish Species	Typical Months to Fish the Reach	Typical Days of Week to Fish the Reach	Parking Location	Access Improvements Needed?	Quality of Fishing Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Fishing Pressure Relative to Other Cent. Sierran Streams	Identified Impacts of Flows Encountered in Past on Angling Exp.	Would Flow Information on Internet be Beneficial?
Bob Oswald	3 or 4	Trout	April-June	Mid-week Mid-day	Slab Creek Dam	None	Low	Low	Yes	Yes
Bob Macy	2	Trout	May- sept	Mid-week Mid-day	Slab Creek Dam	None	Low		Yes, Flows too low	Yes