



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lake Oroville Releases Slowed to Avoid Erosion

No Threat to Dam or Public

SACRAMENTO – Reservoir operators at Lake Oroville plan to make a slight reduction of releases from a damaged spillway in order to prevent erosion along the north side of the spillway from compromising nearby power line towers. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will slow the releases down the gated spillway from 65,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 55,000 cfs.

The slight shift in operations is intended to balance risks caused by erosion in the dam's main spillway, but the dam itself is sound and there is no imminent threat to the public or the dam.

Based on analysis of the waning inflows to the lake, weather forecasts, and other factors, DWR officials say that a sustained discharge of 55,000 cfs may keep the lake level below 901 feet elevation, the point at which water flows over the emergency spillway's concrete weir, down an unpaved hillside, and into the Feather River. There are many variables involved, and the public should not be surprised if some water flows into the emergency spillway. Such a spill would be the first in the dam's 48-year history, but it would be within DWR's contingency plans and pose no flood threat downstream.

Regardless of whether water flows from the reservoir through the gated spillway, Hyatt Power Plant outlets, or the emergency spillway, DWR does not expect releases to the Feather River to exceed the carrying capacity of any channels downstream. The releases would be on the order of half the downstream flood system capacity and consistent with flood releases made this time of year in wet years such as this.

Typical winter operations at Oroville were complicated Tuesday when the lower portion of the reservoir's gated spillway began to erode. To manage the lake level, DWR continues to use the damaged spillway while closely monitoring the spillway erosion. Two side-by-side towers carrying power lines to Hyatt Power Plant may be at risk if the erosion spreads. Without power lines to carry electricity into or away from the power plant and its outlets, the plant outlets would be unable to discharge at a capacity of 14,000 cfs.

Flows out of the power plant were halted Thursday evening because debris downstream of the damaged spillway had caused water to back up in the Diversion Pool portion of the Feather River immediately downstream of Oroville Dam, and the elevated levels affect the ability of DWR to operate the power plant.

DWR and federal, state, local, and utility partners are working on various contingency plans to both restore operation of the power plant and to protect the electrical lines to the plant. DWR also is clearing debris and making reinforcements to minimize erosion in the hillside corridor where water would flow should the emergency spillway be used.

DWR is coordinating closely with state and federal wildlife and dam safety officials at Oroville Dam. Those involved in contingency planning and response include the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Butte County Sheriff's Office, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the state's Division of Safety of Dams, CAL FIRE and state and federal wildlife agencies.

Lake conditions, including lake levels, inflows, and outflows can be obtained via a recorded message at 530-534-2307. Lake conditions, including lake levels, inflows, and outflows can be obtained via a recorded message at 530-534-2307. More information is available on the [California Data Exchange Center](#).

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