

1 STUDY PURPOSE/PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under an agreement with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) maintains a year round trout fishery in Piru Creek between Pyramid Dam and Frenchman's Flat, located in the Angeles National Forest. To implement this agreement the California Department of Fish and Game releases a total of 3,000 pounds of hatchery raised fish into Piru Creek at Frenchman's Flat between November and May. Trout reproduce naturally upstream of Frenchman's Flat and portions of the stream in this location are considered a catch and release area.

The purpose of this study is to conduct four mid-week and four weekend creel census surveys on randomly selected dates at middle Piru Creek and Frenchman's Flat from October 2003 through August 2004. Creel census surveys were undertaken to determine angler usage of the area and quantify the number and species of fish caught at each location. Surveys were conducted in the middle section of Piru Creek and Frenchman's Flat, which are located approximately two miles downstream of Pyramid Dam.

2 SURVEY DATES AND CENSUS PERSONNEL

Creel census surveys were scheduled on the following dates during July 2004. Four mid-week surveys were scheduled on July 8th, 14th, 19th, and 26th, and four weekend and or holiday dates were scheduled on July 3rd, 5th, 17th, and 25th. Aspen biologists conducted creel census training with the CDFG prior to deploying to the field. Field data were recorded for each angler present during the survey dates and included information including the type and number of fish caught, length and mass of the fish if not released, angler satisfaction, and age demographics. Creel census surveys in Piru Creek were conducted during the month of July 2004 by Lynn Stafford, Chris Huntley, Kathleen Robertson, and Christopher Meyer of Aspen Environmental Group, a DWR contractor.

3 SUMMARY

Angler use of both Frenchman's Flat and Piru Creek continued to decline during the month of July with only forty-nine (49) anglers identified during the survey period. To date, the July survey period recorded the lowest number of total anglers at both Frenchman's Flat and Piru Creek, down approximately 25% from the previous month. As expected, with the cessation of trout stocking in Frenchman's Flat, angler usage was highest in the catch and release area with over 65% of all anglers working that section of the creek. Weekday angling remained the prime time for fishing with only six (6) anglers identified at Frenchman's Flat during the weekend. Primary activities observed during the survey period include overnight camping, swimming, hiking, recreational shooting, and miscellaneous day use. During weekends, large numbers of campers utilize the area and competition between anglers and swimmers is high.

Male anglers continue make up the majority of fisherman observed, however females comprised approximately 25% of all anglers recorded during the July survey period. No single female anglers were identified during the June survey period.

Angler satisfaction declined during the July survey period with only 78% of angler's providing positive responses to their fishing experience. With the exception of October 2003, this is the lowest overall satisfaction value recorded to date. This reduction in angler satisfaction appears to be based on the large amounts of trash and debris identified by anglers during the July survey period. One interesting note, of the six anglers identified fishing in Frenchman's Flat during the weekend period, all were generally satisfied with there experience and most were pleased with the number and size of the fish landed. Overall most anglers were not satisfied with the size or number of fish captured. Of all anglers, only

49% indicated they were satisfied with the size of the fish captured and only 51% were satisfied with the number of fish caught. During July, only 160 fish were captured down 25% from the previous month. Of these fish, 155 were released after capture. This trend appears to indicate that most anglers are utilizing the catch and release area, however in one case several anglers captured and released a large number of fish from Frenchman's Flat. See Figure 1 and 2 at the end of this report to compare angler satisfaction responses for creel census surveys conducted from October 2003 to July 2004.

Both anglers and other day visitors to Piru Creek have noted the increased efforts and presence of USFS personnel in the Frenchman's Flat area. In addition, the creel monitor noted that several groups including a local Native American Chumash family, responsible anglers, campers, and picnickers were conducting clean up activities in the area. However, despite the clear efforts of USFS staff and private citizens to remove debris and maintain the Frenchman's Flat Campground, large numbers of campers continue to overwhelm the area. During the 4th of July weekend, hundreds of people were present and many left their trash at the campsite at the conclusion of the weekend. A similar event was noted during the weekend of July 24th and 25th where huge volumes of garbage were left at the conclusion of the weekend. Bottles, beer cans, human waste (plastic diapers, field toilets, toilet paper), camping debris, and miscellaneous litter are prevalent throughout the camping area and along Piru Creek. In addition, shopping carts are becoming common waste items to the area as families use the carts to ferry material to their campsites. Once used the carts are pushed down hillsides, into the creek, or left in the parking area. In fact, the creel monitor watched one family use a cart to return tents to their vehicle, once this task was completed the cart and a large volume of trash was pushed down the slope of the parking area.

Illegal campfires are common and campers have begun harvesting firewood from living cottonwood and willow trees in the riparian area along Piru Creek. Large limbs have also been cut down and left in place to dry. Likewise, campers have dug out the roots of these trees to use as firewood. In some cases, the monitor has noted small campfires and fish waste up stream of Frenchman's Flat. These fires appear to have been used as cooking fires and are located near the Old Highway 99 weir. Poaching and unlicensed fishing continues to occur but too a lesser extent than previous months. It may be that the large numbers of campers limits this activity. Additional comments received by anglers during the survey period include:

- Numerous long term camp sites deter from fishing experience
- No enforcement of regulations observed
- Rough crowd identified camping in the area detracts from angler experience
- Too few USFS, CDFG, and Highway Patrol officers during weekends
- Too many people trashing the area during weekends
- Trash and refuse remains horrible despite USFS actions
- Water is littered with debris from camping and picnicking
- USFS presence during 4th of July weekend greatly appreciated
- Plastic diapers litter the area
- Illegal fires prevalent, trees being destroyed for campfires
- Large bear seen in gorge
- Some large fish observed in catch and release area
- Piru ponds largely dried up and full of bull frogs
- USGS gage shack at waterfall looks complete

Rainbow trout remained the primary species sought by anglers and were the only fish reported captured during the survey period. Of the 160 fish captured only five (5) were measured and only one (1) weighed. Because of the low number of fish measured and the fact that four of them had been gutted prior to inspection from the monitor no statistical data was recorded for the fish. All fish appeared to be in good health and no hatchery marks were noted. A brief summary of the creel census survey results for each site is located below. Table 1 summarizes the creel census data for the month of July 2004.

Table 1 Creel Census Data at Piru Creek and Frenchman's Flat July 2004.

Creel Census Location	Number of Anglers Per Site	Sex/Age Distribution of Anglers		Hours Fished Per Location	Number of Fish Caught	Number of Fish Released	Percent of Anglers Satisfied with Experience		
							Fishing Experience	Size of Fish	Number of Fish
Frenchman's Flat Mid-week	11*	<16	4 (m)	37.5	65	64	61%	38%	46%
		16-30	1 (m)						
		31-45	4 (m)						
		46-55	2 (m)						
		56-65	2 (m)						
		>65	0						
Frenchman's Flat Weekend	6*	<16	0	20	13	9	100%	67%	67%
		16-30	2(m)						
		31-45	2 (f) 2 (m)						
		46-55	0						
		56-65	0						
		>65	0						
Piru Creek Mid-week	17*	<16	1 (m)	42.5	22	22	70%	24%	24%
		16-30	3 (m)						
		31-45	1 (f) 6 (m)						
		46-55	5 (m)						
		56-65	1 (m)						
		>65	0						
Piru Creek Weekend	15*	<16	2 (f)	51.5	60	60	80%	67%	67%
		16-30	5 (m)						
		31-45	11(m)						
		46-55	1 (f) 4 (m)						
		56-65	1 (f) 1 (m)						
		>65	0						
Totals	49	<16	2 (f) 5 (m)	151.5	160	155	78%**	49%**	51%**
		16-30	11 (m)						
		31-45	3 (f) 24(m)						
		46-55	1 (f) 11 (m)						
		56-65	1 (f) 4 (m)						
		>65	0						

*Some anglers fished at two locations.

**Total number of anglers combined for both areas.

4. SURVEY RESULTS FRENCHMAN'S FLAT

Frenchman's Flat Mid-Week

- A total of thirteen (13) anglers were identified fishing at Frenchman's Flat
- Sixty-five (65) fish were caught and sixty-four (64) were released by anglers during the midweek census period
- One (1) fish was measured, length 200 mm with a mass of 215 grams
- Eight (8) of thirteen (13) anglers (61%) were satisfied with their fishing experience

- Five (5) of thirteen (13) anglers (38%) were satisfied with the number of fish caught
- Six (6) of thirteen (13) anglers (46%) were satisfied with the size of the fish caught
- All anglers observed were male
- Four (4) anglers were less than sixteen years old, one (1) anglers was between 16-30, four (4) were between 31-45, two (2) were between 46-55, two (2) were between 56-65, and zero (0) were over 65 years of age.

Frenchman's Flat Weekend

- A total of six (6) anglers were identified fishing at Frenchman's Flat
- Thirteen (13) fish were caught and nine (9) were released during the weekend census period
- Average size of trout measured was 226 mm (no mass data was available as the four trout had been gutted by anglers prior to the interview)
- All six (6) anglers (100%) polled were satisfied with their fishing experience
- Four (4) of six (6) anglers (67%) were satisfied with the number of fish caught
- Four (4) of six (6) anglers (10%) were satisfied with the size of the fish caught
- Three (3) of the six (6) anglers (50% of anglers) were female
- Zero (0) anglers were less than sixteen years old, two (2) anglers were between 16-30, four (4) were between 31-45, zero (0) were between 46-55, zero (0) were between 56-65, and zero (0) were over 65 years of age.

5. SURVEY RESULTS PIRU CREEK

Piru Creek Mid-Week

- A total of seventeen (17) anglers were identified fishing in Piru Creek
- Twenty-two (22) fish were caught and all were released during the midweek census period
- No fish were measured during the census period
- Twelve (12) anglers of seventeen (17) anglers (70%) were satisfied with their fishing experience
- Four (5) of seventeen (17) anglers (24%) were satisfied with the number of fish caught
- Four (5) of seventeen (17) anglers (24%) were satisfied with the size of the fish caught
- One (1) female angler (6% of all anglers) were identified during the census period
- One (1) angler was less than sixteen years old, three (3) anglers were between 16-30, seven (7) were between 31-45, five (5) were between 46-55, one (1) was between 56-65, and zero (0) were over 65 years of age.

Piru Creek Weekend

- A total of fifteen (15) anglers were identified fishing in Piru Creek
- Sixty (60) fish were caught and all released during the weekend census period
- No fish were measured during the census period
- Twelve (12) of fifteen (15) anglers (80%) were satisfied with their fishing experience
- Ten (10) of fifteen (15) anglers (67%) were satisfied with the number of fish caught
- Ten (10) of fifteen (15) anglers (67%) were satisfied with the size of the fish caught
- With the exception of four (4) female anglers (27% of anglers), all other anglers were male

- Two (2) anglers were less than sixteen years old, five (5) anglers were between 16-30, eleven (11) were between 31-45, five (5) were between 46-55, two (2) were between 56-65, and zero (0) were over 65 years of age.

Figure 1 Angler Satisfaction for Piru Creek Oct 2003-July 2004

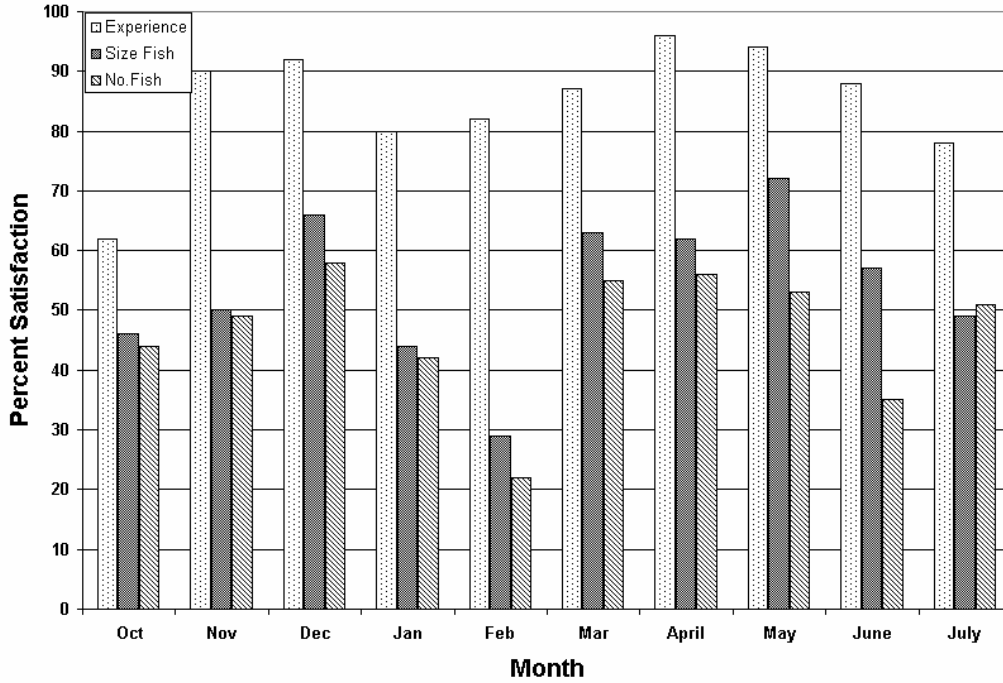


Figure 2 Total Number of Fish Captured and Released/Total Number of Anglers

