



A Trip to Oroville Dam, Sierra Snow Pack

by Scott McGilvary



The last week in April, I met my good friend John, who lives near Bend Oregon. We met halfway, at Susanville, and visited the heart of the northern Sierra Nevada by driving down the Feather River Canyon. We wanted to see the damage to the Oroville Dam spillway. Access to the spillway is limited as the contractor is in the process of mobilizing to begin the reconstruction. The contract is \$275 million and it has a completion deadline of November, 2017.

<http://www.water.ca.gov/oroville-spillway/index.cfm>

Oroville dam is the second largest reservoir in California, and the highest dam in the United States. Flows down the Feather river into the reservoir can reach 190,000 cfs. By comparison, when the San Lorenzo river is at flood stage, it is near or slightly over 10,000 cfs. When the Oroville dam flows over the spillway occur, they can often exceed 100,000 cfs.



The next day, I took highway 395 down to Reno and returned to Santa Cruz via the Donner Pass. I stopped at the Donner summit. This is the trail head at the top of the pass.



I wanted to see the snowpack at el. 7,250. This is the entrance to Highway 80 West. At 1:30 p.m., when this photo was taken, the sun was bright, but the temperature was only 40 degrees because of the snowpack and ice.



Sugarbowl, on the west slope of the Sierra, gets a lot of snowfall. Here is the parking lot at 2 p.m. Notice the young lady at the end of the parking lot, dwarfed by 12–15 ft. snowbanks.



Here is a garage near Donner Summit. Hard to believe this is the snowpack just about May 1st.



Below 4,500 ft. elevation, there are many lush, green hills and valleys throughout the Central Valley. Here is a hillside outside of Oroville.



A view of the Napa hills, across Eastbound Highway 80 late in the afternoon. California in all its beauty.