



## Program Update

August 2009

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### *The San Joaquin River*

*Restoration Program (SJRRP) is a comprehensive long-term effort to restore flows to the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River and restore a self-sustaining Chinook salmon fishery in the river while reducing or avoiding adverse water supply impacts from restoration flows.*

### Mendota Pool Bypass / Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project

Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) held two public scoping meetings on July 28 and July 29, in Fresno and Firebaugh, respectively, to discuss the proposed Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project. The two agencies are preparing a joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Project, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The scoping meetings were designed to solicit comments from the public to assist in determining the scope of the EIS/EIR, including the alternatives to be addressed, and identifying any significant environmental issues. The SJRRP team received constructive input on major issues and alternatives to include in the EIS/EIR.



The Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Mendota Pool Bypass and improvements including the operation and maintenance of the San Joaquin River channel to allow Reach 2B to convey at least 4,500 cubic feet per second (cfs). More information about the Project is available on the SJRRP website, at [www.restoresjr.net](http://www.restoresjr.net).

### Fisheries Management Plan

Overarching population and habitat goals are necessary to provide a comprehensive vision to restore fish populations and appropriate habitat in the San Joaquin River. The Fisheries Management Work Group (FMWG) was tasked with the development of the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) as a first step in the Restoration Goal planning process. Starting in early 2007, the FMWG began researching fisheries management planning approaches in other systems. Conceptual models for spring- and fall-run Chinook salmon were then developed in 2008, forming the basis of the FMP. The FMP lays out a structured approach to adaptively manage the reintroduction of Chinook salmon and other fishes in the San Joaquin River between Friant Dam and the confluence with the Merced River and serves as a procedural and planning tool for managers and technical specialists. The FMP will continue to be revised as needed, reflecting changes in implementation strategy as a result of the FMP Adaptive Management Approach. The FMP includes population and habitat goals and objectives, modeling, the identification of potential restoration actions, and monitoring and evaluation approaches. The FMP is available on the Program website at: [www.restoresjr.net/program\\_library/O3-Tech\\_Memoranda/index.html](http://www.restoresjr.net/program_library/O3-Tech_Memoranda/index.html).

## Invasive Riparian Plant Species Data Available Soon

The SJRRP team will soon have available GIS data layers and metadata on the location of invasive riparian plant species for the SJRRP on the California Department of Fish and Game's BIOS web site (<http://bios.dfg.ca.gov>). Stay tuned to the SJRRP website to see when the data becomes available for viewing.

## Temporary Entry Permit Revised with Assistance from the Resources Management Coalition

An amended version of the SJRRP Temporary Entry Permit (TEP) is anticipated to arrive in the mailboxes of numerous landowners along the San Joaquin River beginning in August. The permit was developed through close collaboration with Reclamation, DWR, and the San Joaquin River Resources Management Coalition during the last several months. The TEP covers pre-construction geotechnical investigations on private property.

## Shallow Groundwater Monitoring Well Installation Begins

On July 13, the SJRRP, supported by US Geological Survey drill crews, initiated the installation of approximately 35 shallow groundwater monitoring wells at several river locations in the public-right-of-way and on private property. Drilled to depths between 20 and 80 feet, the wells are designed to monitor near-river groundwater conditions in response to the release of Interim Flows from Friant Dam for WY 2010. The Program has also conducted several meetings with local landowners to potentially site shallow groundwater monitoring wells on private property at locations known to seep or result in ponding during high river flows.

## Landowner Workshops Held in Reaches 2A through 4A

Landowners along the San Joaquin River downstream of the Chowchilla Bifurcation were provided a preliminary overview of the Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project during a landowner meeting hosted by Columbia Canal Company on June 25, 2009. The session was one of three landowner meetings Reclamation and DWR held in the Firebaugh and Dos Palos areas in June.



The meeting provided landowners an advanced overview of the Project prior to environmental scoping meetings held in late July (see article on page 1). Items discussed during the meeting included a description of the Project's purpose and need, a discussion of the potential locations of setback levees capable to pass a non-damaging flow of 4,500 cfs, and a display of the conceptual bypass alignments described in the Settlement and by local landowners.

Two additional landowner meetings were held back-to-back on June 17 to introduce the Restoration Program to area landowners not previously actively engaged in the Program. The Central California Irrigation District assisted in coordinating a morning meeting for Reach 3 and 4A landowners at The Scout Hut in Dos Palos. Columbia Canal Company hosted an afternoon meeting for Reach 2A landowners. The meeting provided an overview of the Settlement, a description of Water Year 2010 Interim Flows, and an overview of the Seepage Management and Monitoring Program.

## Interim Flows Assessment Available in September

Release of the Final Environmental Assessment/Initial Study necessary for Water Year (WY) 2010 Interim Flows is anticipated occur in mid September following the incorporation and response to more than 80 comments received during the document's 48-day public comment period.

Public comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment and Findings of No Significant Impact/Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (EA/IS) for Interim Flows ended on July 20, 2009. Reclamation will review and consider these comments prior to finalizing the EA/IS in preparation for flow releases scheduled to begin on October 1, 2009, and continue intermittently through Sept. 30, 2010.

Interim Flows are research-oriented releases of water to the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam. The flows will allow SJRRP staff to collect a range of information regarding river and channel characteristics, including in-river and groundwater temperatures, fish needs, seepage losses, and water recirculation, recapture and reuse.

Data collection activities currently underway to be able to measure and monitor these flows include the installation or retrofitting of stream gage stations at four locations; installation of scour chains and staff gages and a series of shallow seepage monitoring wells; and performing in-river bathymetric surveys.

### Interim Flows Schedule From Friant Dam for October and November, 2009

October 1-31	350 cfs	21.5 TAF
November 1-10	700 cfs	13.9 TAF
November 11-20	350 cfs	6.9 TAF

TAF - thousand acre-feet  
cfs - cubic feet per second



## Technical Feedback Work Group Meetings

The Water Management Work Group (WMWG) held Technical Feedback Group (TFG) meetings in May, June and July; and the Fisheries Management Work Group (FMWG) held TFG meetings in May and June. A summary of the discussion topics from the recent meetings is outlined below. Both Work Groups are planning August TFG meetings. The complete meeting schedule, in addition to agendas, meeting summaries, and meeting presentations, are available on the Program website, at [www.restoresjr.net/group\\_activities/index.html](http://www.restoresjr.net/group_activities/index.html).

### Water Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ May 8: Discussed potential tools available to manage evolving water supply declarations and Paragraph 16(a) recapture and recirculation activities, and methods for calculation of the recovered water account.
- ▶ June 5: Discussed: the status of the Restoration Flow Guidelines components; a conceptual

recovered water account accrual model; the Madera and Friant-Kern Canals capacity correction assessment; and the Interim Flow water right petition to the State Water Resources Control Board.

- ▶ July 10: Received a status update on Water Management Activities; discussed water transfer provisions; further discussed the Madera and Friant-Kern Canals capacity correction assessment; and received an update on development of the recapture and recirculation plan.

The WMWG will continue to focus on implementation of Paragraph 16(a) activities, water transfer provisions, developing Restoration Flow Guidelines, and developing Title III guidelines.

### Fisheries Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ May 27: Discussed the FMP, Water Year 2010 Interim Flows, necessary studies and

monitoring, and the Program EIS/EIR alternatives and schedule; and was given a general Program update.

- ▶ June 24: Discussed: the FMP schedule and approach; Interim Flows monitoring, schedule and status; Program implementation approach, schedule and status; and was given a general Program update.

As the SJRRP enters the monitoring and implementation phase, the FMWG TFG meetings may shift to quarterly. Discussion topics will include coordinating additional aspects of the fisheries management and reintroduction effort, such as population and habitat monitoring, restoration techniques, and reintroduction strategies. General fisheries topics or fisheries topics relevant to the Phase 1 project analysis will be addressed as part of the new Restoration Goal TFG (see below).

## New Technical Feedback Group

In addition to the WMWG and FMWG TFGs, the SJRRP has established a new Restoration Goal TFG to address technical topics related to the implementation of the Settlement's Restoration Goal. The Restoration Goal TFG meets approximately every 6 weeks. Participation is open to the public, including the Settling Parties, Third Parties, and any stakeholders with an interest in SJRRP Phase 1 projects. Topics for discussion at the Restoration Goal TFG include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ All aspects of the planning and environmental documentation for the necessary channel improvements including alternatives development and analysis, modeling analyses and assumptions, and project impacts;
- ▶ Monitoring, modeling, and analysis activities to support flow management including ramping rates, channel capacity, physical habitat, vegetation, sediment, and seepage management;
- ▶ Fisheries and biological topics as they relate to the necessary channel

improvements and are not otherwise addressed in the FMWG TFG; and

- ▶ General Program information and updates, as needed.

The group held its first meeting on July 21. Agenda topics included an overview and purpose of the new TFG, an overview of existing channel capacity and the channel capacity analysis, and a discussion of potential future meeting topics. The next meeting is anticipated to be held in early September.

### Field Activities

Surveys of the Eastside Bypass downstream of Washington Boulevard Bridge at Sand Slough and of the Mariposa Bypass for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard are slated to resume August 1 after initially concluding on July 15. Performed by the Endangered

Species Recovery Program of the California State University, Stanislaus, the initial survey period did not result in the direct observation of any adult blunt-nosed leopard lizards or observation of habitat that indicated the species' presence. The August survey will seek to identify the presence of sub-adult and juvenile lizards.

Other pending biological resource surveys this year include a survey for the valley elderberry longhorned beetle in Reaches 1A, 1B and 2A. The survey is planned to include the possible inundation area of the San Joaquin River under a potential river release of 8,000 cfs for up to six hours. The Settlement describes the need for such pulse flows during full Restoration Flows to mobilize sediment needed to provide spawning habitat.



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## Upcoming Key Meetings, Events, and Document Releases

There are many upcoming opportunities for public involvement in SJRRP's activities in addition to public review of key Program documents. Please visit the Program website for detailed information for these milestones, at [www.restoresjr.net/group\\_activities/index.html](http://www.restoresjr.net/group_activities/index.html).

- Late August: Reach 4B and Eastside Bypass/Mariposa Bypass Improvements Project scoping meetings
- August 26: Fisheries Management Work Group Technical Feedback Group Meeting
- Early September: Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meeting
- September 28: Water Management Work Group Technical Feedback Group Meeting
- Late September: Arroyo Canal Fish Screen and Sack Dam Fish Passage Project scoping meetings
- October 1: Interim Flows begin

## Water Education Tour Reminder

On November 12 and 13, 2009, the Water Education Foundation will conduct the second tour specific to the San Joaquin River. The 2-day, 1-night tour begins and ends in Fresno. For information or to register, call 916-444-6240 or visit [www.watereducation.org](http://www.watereducation.org).



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Recorded SJRRP information available on Reclamation's Grapevine at 800-742-9474; select option 2 for a list of projects, and select option 4 for the SJRRP activities and updates.