



Program Update

January 2009

In this issue:

- ▶ Upcoming Site-specific Studies
- ▶ Interim Flows
- ▶ Legislation Update
- ▶ SJRRP Project Manager
- ▶ Successful WEF San Joaquin River Tour Conducted
- ▶ Stakeholder Coordination Update
- ▶ Landowner Coordination Update
- ▶ New Restoration Administrator
- ▶ Looking Ahead in 2009

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 Merced River, ensure irrigation supplies to Friant Water users, and restore a self-sustaining Chinook salmon fishery in the river.

SJRRP Website Improvements

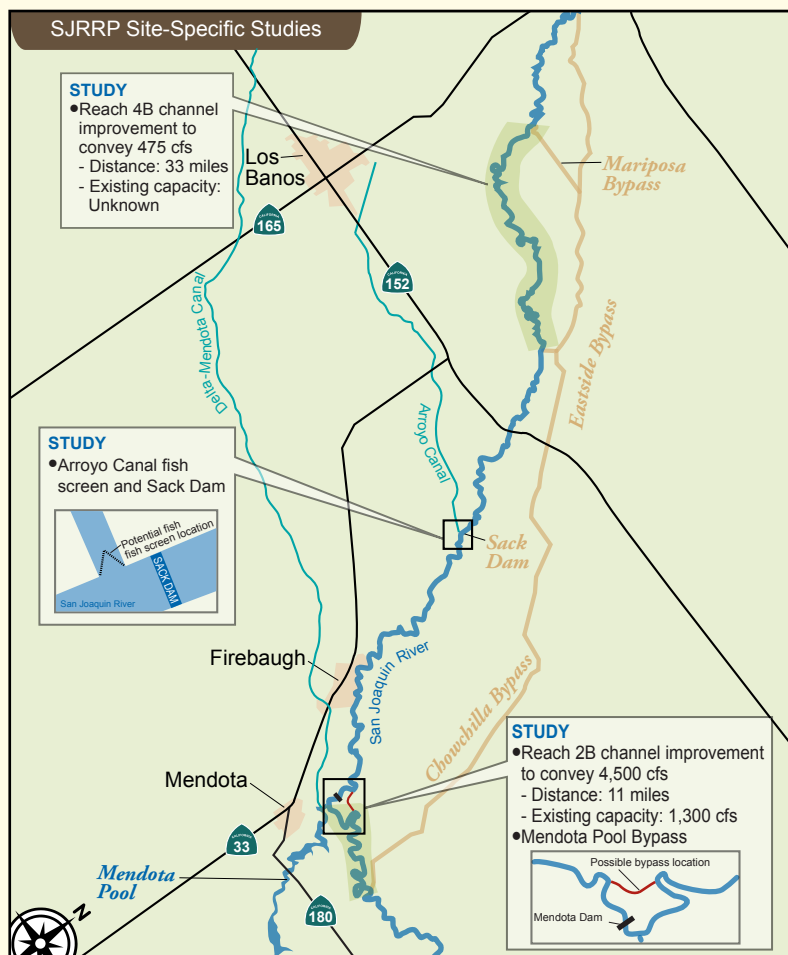
The San Joaquin River Restoration Program web pages have been redesigned to allow easier access to Program news and events, faster viewing and downloading of Program documents, and a link on the front page to reach Program staff, among many other improvements. Check us out at www.restoresjr.net.

Upcoming site-specific studies

Site-specific studies – including environmental analyses and engineering designs – will be initiated in early 2009 for the Phase I actions identified in the Settlement. These studies will support the release of Interim Flows and other river modifications necessary to implement the Settlement. The studies will be conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The following three studies are anticipated to be initiated in early 2009:

- ▶ Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B channel improvements
- ▶ Reach 4B channel improvements to convey 475 cubic feet per second
- ▶ Arroyo Canal fish screen and fish passage at Sack Dam

Three additional site-specific studies are anticipated to be initiated in late 2009. More information on Phase I site-specific studies and related environmental analyses is available in the Program Management Plan and in Paragraphs 9, 10, and 11 of the Settlement. Additional information will be posted on the Program website once it becomes available.



Interim Flows

A draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to cover the Settlement-required release of Interim Flows from Friant Dam into the San Joaquin River is slated for release to the public, including Program stakeholders, this March. Developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the EA will cover the release of flows from Friant Dam from October through September 2010. The draft EA will identify the potential environmental impacts of this first year of Interim Flow releases and include any mitigation measures for impacts.

SJRRP agencies have initiated meetings with the Lower San Joaquin Levee District, the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority to discuss the first year of Interim Flow releases. Additional planning activities, including on-going stakeholder and landowner outreach, are planned for 2009.



Legislation Update

Authorizing legislation to fully implement the San Joaquin River Restoration Program, known as the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act (Act), was reintroduced as part of Senate Bill 22, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 on January 7, 2009, by Senator Jeff Bingaman (NM). The bill has been passed in the Senate and is now awaiting action by the House of Representatives before being sent to the President for signature. The Act is supported by the parties to the Settlement (Settling Parties) and downstream water and land interests (referred to as Third Parties). Passage of the Act is required for the Secretary of the Interior to implement construction, water management actions, and other Program activities required by the Settlement.

For more information about the legislation, visit www.restoresjr.net/legislation/index.html.

SJRRP Welcomes Project Manager

In January 2009, Alicia (Ali) Gasdick joined the SJRRP Team as a Project Manager for Reclamation assisting Program Manager Jason Phillips with managing and completing key Program activities. Ali comes to Reclamation with a wealth of water resources planning and project management experience including Reclamation's Water Supply and Yield Study, the State of California's Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program EIR, projects related to the Imperial Irrigation District's water conservation and transfer program, and the Tejon Ranch's water right applications to the State Board. Ali also comes to Reclamation with significant experience on the San Joaquin River. She served as the Restoration Oversight Team coordinator during the early Settlement discussions, led the data collection and permitting efforts for the 2001 and 2002 Pilot Projects, and more recently, has been a liaison to the public as the SJRRP's Stakeholder Coordinator. Efforts to replace the Stakeholder Coordinator are under way.

Successful WEF San Joaquin River Tour Conducted

Beginning in Fresno and spanning the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River, 46 participants attended the first Water Education Foundation tour exclusively highlighting the projects and challenges related to restoring the San Joaquin River.

Held November 12 and 13, 2008, the tour provided diverse perspectives from several resource speakers and stopped at numerous key locations on the San Joaquin River. Some of the sites visited included Friant Dam, a fish hatchery, gravel mining pits, the Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure, Mendota Pool, the Sand Slough Control Structure, the Hills Ferry Barrier, and the Robinson Ranch on the Merced River.



For a photo slide show of the tour, visit <http://www.restoresjr.net/news/index.html>.

Check the Program calendar regularly for upcoming public meetings and involvement opportunities at www.restoresjr.net.



Stakeholder Coordination Update

Monthly Technical Feedback Group meetings continued during 2008 in support of the Water Management and Fisheries Management Work Groups. These meetings assist Program staff in soliciting input from technical experts, interested stakeholders, and the public in the development of key Program documents and implementation activities. These meetings provide an open and transparent process for the various steps of Program development and implementation.

A summary of the discussion topics from the Technical Feedback Group meetings held in the last quarter of 2008 is outlined below. Meeting materials are available on the Program website at http://www.restoresjr.net/group_activities/index.html:

Fisheries Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ October 7: The purpose, scope, and progress to date on the Fisheries Management Plan. Review of the fisheries restoration strategy and the approach to defining limiting factors.
- ▶ November 4: Restoration alternatives formulation process and update on the Fisheries Management Plan development.
- ▶ December 9: Overview of the fisheries study needs for the Interim Flow period and overview of genetics management and proposed genetic study concepts.

Water Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ October 3: Restoration Flow Guidelines, the Recovered Water Account, and water management alternatives.
- ▶ November 7 and December 8: Review of progress made towards implementing the Water Management Goal.

For information about these meetings or any aspect of the Program, please contact Margaret Gidding, the SJRRP Outreach Coordinator, at 916-978-5104, or mgidding@mp.usbr.gov.

Landowner Coordination Update

To prepare for fall 2009 Interim Flow releases required by the Settlement and other identified river restoration activities, Program staff will resume regular meetings with landowners in early 2009.

Slated to begin in late January, the sessions will be tailored for Reach 2B and 4B landowners. Planned meeting topics include geologic surveys and seepage monitoring. As with sessions held last year, the meetings seek to coordinate with landowners on the potential location and monitoring activities for monitoring wells. These wells will be used to evaluate the condition of existing river levees and determine the need for levee improvements to convey flows in the river as identified in the Settlement. Where appropriate, some wells may also be used to detect and monitor seepage.

Meetings with landowners in other areas of the river are also anticipated. Dates and locations for all meetings will be posted on the Program website and distributed by direct mailers to potentially interested landowners.

For information about upcoming meetings and other landowner information needs, please contact Craig Moyle, the SJRRP Landowner Coordinator, at 916-418-8248, or Craig.Moyle@us.mwhglobal.com.

New Restoration Administrator

Replacing Ane Deister in January 2009, Rod Meade returned to the role of the Restoration Administrator (RA). As specified in the Settlement, the RA is jointly selected by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Friant Water Users Authority to provide recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior regarding specific elements of the Restoration Goal. Meade previously served as the RA in 2007.



Looking Ahead in 2009

In addition to Phase I site-specific studies, planned Program actions for 2009 include:

- ▶ Release of Interim Flows:
 - ▷ Preparation of an Environmental Assessment
 - ▷ Development of monitoring actions to be conducted during the Interim Flows period
- ▶ Document and Technical Memoranda Releases:
 - ▷ Groundwater Model Selection Process (early 2009)
 - ▷ Draft Fisheries Management Plan (early 2009)
 - ▷ Seepage Management Plan (mid 2009)
 - ▷ Program Alternatives Report (early 2009)
 - ▷ Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report (PEIS/R) (mid 2009)
 - ▷ Final PEIS/R (late 2009)
- ▶ Meetings:
 - ▷ Reach-specific landowner meetings
 - ▷ Technical Feedback Group meetings
 - ▷ Public meetings on the Draft and Final Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report
 - ▷ Scoping meetings for the project-level studies initiated in 2009

To stay informed, please check the Program website at www.restoresjr.net.

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SAN JOAQUIN RIVER
RESTORATION PROGRAM



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The 2008 Annual Report
is now available online at
www.restoresjr.net.

**Recorded SJRRP Information
Available at 800-742-9474;
select option 4.**