



Program Update

May 2009

In This Issue:

- ▶ Stream Gage and Monitoring Well Installation to Precede Interim Flows
- ▶ Legislation Update
- ▶ Upcoming Public Meetings for the Release of the Draft Program EIS/R
- ▶ Landowner Coordination
- ▶ Reach 2B & 4B Landowner Meetings
- ▶ Seepage Meeting Held to Gather Local Expertise
- ▶ Requesting Access to Private Property Through Temporary Entry Permits
- ▶ Technical Feedback Workgroup Meetings
- ▶ Looking Ahead
- ▶ Second WEF San Joaquin River Tour Scheduled for 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 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.

Stream Gage and Monitoring Well Installation to Precede Interim Flows

The Restoration Program is preparing for the upcoming initial flow releases, called Interim Flows, from Friant Dam. These research-oriented flows will help SJRRP staff collect relevant data at critical points in the river related to flows, temperatures, fish needs, seepage losses, recirculation, recapture, and reuse of water. Interim Flows will occur at strategic times each year through 2013. The first year of Interim Flow releases (October 2009 thru September 2010) is referred to as Water Year 2010 Interim Flows. In WY 2010, the flows are scheduled from October 1 to November 20, 2009, and February 1 to September 30, 2010. As described in the Settlement

See *Stream Gage Installation*, Page 3



On March 30, 2009, President Obama signed Public Law 111-11, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 that contains the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act (Act). The Act provides the authorization to implement the San Joaquin River Restoration Program. The Act was supported by the parties to the Settlement and downstream water and land interests (Third Parties). For more information about the Act, visit www.restoresjr.net/legislation/index.html.

Upcoming Public Meetings for the Release of the Draft Program EIS/R

The Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report (Draft PEIS/R) for the SJRRP is scheduled for release in August 2009. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Program will hold public meetings this summer on the Draft PEIS/R in key locations in the San Joaquin Valley, in addition to a meeting in Sacramento. The purpose of these meetings is to provide an overview of the Draft PEIS/R and answer questions on the document. The public will also be provided an opportunity to submit verbal and written comments at these meetings.

Specific meeting dates have not yet been scheduled; however, stakeholders may stay up-to-date on all Program news, events, and meetings via the Program website: www.restoresjr.net.

Reach 2B and 4B Landowner Meetings

Meetings were held with landowners in Reaches 2B and 4B on March 26 to review Interim Flows, the Seepage Management and Monitoring Plan, and to receive updates on the distribution of Temporary Entry Permits and the pending Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report. Held at Columbia Canal Company in the morning and San Luis Canal Company that afternoon, the meetings were each attended by about 20 landowners and irrigation district representatives.

These reach-specific meetings are slated to be held monthly. Dates of future meetings will be posted on the Program website, with notices sent by mail and email. To be added to the distribution list, please send an email to craig.moyle@mwhglobal.com.

Seepage Meeting Held to Gather Local Expertise

A workshop was held April 23 seeking input from landowners and others with first-hand knowledge of known seepage problem areas along the San Joaquin River and the bypass system downstream of Sand Slough. The workshop presented preliminary monitoring well transects proposed for Reaches 2A, 2B, 3, 4A, 4B, and the Eastside and Mariposa bypasses. These proposed well transects are part of a comprehensive effort by the Program to monitor changes in shallow groundwater elevations in response to changes in river flows. This information will provide a better understanding of the shallow groundwater system, the areas more prone to seepage, and the effectiveness of potential seepage avoidance and reduction measures in these seepage-prone areas.

Wells will be placed in the public right-of-way or on private property through an agreement with the landowner. Data collected from the wells will be provided to participating landowners. As described previously, the Program is in the process of installing up to 50 seepage monitoring wells on public right-of-ways. Program staff visited these sites on April 28 and May 5. Well installation activities are tentatively scheduled to begin in mid-July.

Meetings with landowners in Reaches 2A, 3 and 4A to site seepage monitoring wells in these areas – and to further engage these landowners in Program activities – are planned to be held in late May.

Requesting Access to Private Property Through Temporary Entry Permits

The SJRRP continues to work with local landowners – including the San Joaquin River Resource Management Coalition (RMC) – in the development of the terms and conditions for the Program to conduct pre-construction surveys and investigations on private property. Access to private property is requested through a Temporary Entry Permit, an agreement between property owners, Reclamation, and the Department of Water Resources allowing Program staff access that would assist with a wide range of pre-constructions surveys and investigations including geotechnical surveys, seepage studies, and channel capacity studies.



Program staff David Mooney and Alicia Gasdick review seepage monitoring well transects with Reach 2B landowners.



Technical Feedback Workgroup Meetings

The Water Management Work Group (WMWG) and the Fisheries Management Work Group (FMWG) continued to hold Technical Feedback Group (TFG) meetings with technical experts, interested stakeholders and the public in early 2009. These meetings have primarily been supporting the FMWG's development of the Fisheries Management Plan, and the WMWG's efforts to develop a plan to recapture, re-circulate, reuse, exchange, or transfer Interim and Restoration Flows and develop a Recovered Water Account (Paragraphs 16(a) and (b) of the Settlement, respectively). The TFG meetings provide an open and transparent process for the Work Groups to solicit input from stakeholders in the development of key Program documents and implementation activities. A summary of the discussion topics from the early 2009 meetings is outlined below.

Meeting agendas, summaries and presentations are available on the Program website at www.restoresjr.net/group_activities/index.html.

Fisheries Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ January 16: Update given on the Fisheries Management Plan development status and schedule in addition to a detailed summary of the plan and a general Program update.
- ▶ February 10: Received input on identified data needs, proposed actions (routing), and the tentative schedule for the Fisheries Management Plan.

Water Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ January 9: An overview of Paragraph 16(b) modeling assumptions was provided and the initial draft of the Title III guidelines for obtaining

Federal financial assistance on local groundwater projects was distributed and reviewed.

- ▶ February 20: The TFG continued discussions on the draft Title III guidelines, reviewed the draft Restoration Flow guidelines flow chart, and were provided an overview of anticipated Paragraph 16(a) activities to be covered under the PEIS/R.
- ▶ March 20: The required water right petition to the State Water Resource Control Board and anticipated third-party agreements for Paragraph 16(a) recapture activities were discussed.
- ▶ April 17: The approach and technical support for the recapture and recirculation of Interim and Restoration Flows were discussed.

Stream Gage Installation Continued from Page 1

and in the San Joaquin River Restoration Act, Interim Flows will not exceed existing channel capacities and will be reduced, as needed, to avoid seepage impacts.

Installation of stream gages at five locations in the San Joaquin River and the Eastside Bypass are planned to begin this summer. These stream gages will be used to monitor surface water conditions, such as velocity and the amount of water in the river. The Program plans to install a few new gages at in the Eastside Bypass near Sand Slough, Reach 4B, and Reach 5 near the Merced River Confluence. Existing gages at the Chowchilla Bypass Bifurcation Structure and downstream of Sack Dam will be retrofitted. The new gages and improvements to existing gages will be completed prior to the start of the Interim Flow releases.

Additionally, the Program plans to install a network of 20- to 80-foot-deep groundwater monitoring wells designed to measure and monitor seepage to adjoining lands. The purpose of these monitoring wells is to monitor near-river groundwater conditions and river losses from both Interim Flows and future Restoration Flows released from Friant Dam. The Program plans to initially install up to 50 wells within the public right-of-way adjacent to Highway 41, Highway 145, San Mateo Avenue, Highway 152, and Highway 140. Sites adjacent to Washington Avenue and Turner Island Road in Reach 4B are also being considered. These monitoring wells will be installed prior to the start of Interim Flow releases. Landowner meetings are underway for siting wells on private property.

An Environmental Assessment/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the first year of Interim Flows, referred to as Water Year 2010 Interim Flows, is currently under preparation. The draft document will be available for public review and comment in the late May timeframe. More information on the Interim Flows can be found on the Program website at www.restoresjr.net/activities/if/index.html.



Looking Ahead in 2009

Program documents and Technical Memoranda (TM) to be released in the coming months include:

- ▶ Draft Fisheries Management Plan
- ▶ Interim Flows Environmental Assessment/Mitigated Negative Declaration
- ▶ Seepage Management Plan
- ▶ Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report

There are also frequent Technical Feedback Group meetings and reach-specific landowner meetings scheduled, in addition to anticipated public meetings for the release of the Draft PEIS/R. For more information on Program activities, please contact the Program Outreach Contacts or visit the Program website at: www.restoresjr.net.

Second WEF San Joaquin River Tour Scheduled for 2009

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.



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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.