



Program Update

November 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.

Increased Water Releases and River Conditions

The San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to Gravelly Ford is a recreation destination for many area residents, and people who recreate in or along the San Joaquin River should be aware of the potential for periodic higher flows throughout 2010. While Interim Flows are small relative to typical flood releases, more water will be in the river channel than usual and flows will be subject to change. As with all in- and near-water recreation, visitors should adopt appropriate precautions for their safety and the safety of others. For the most current information on the Interim Flows and real-time flow data, please visit www.restoresjr.net.

Water Releases from Friant Dam begin; Final Environmental Assessment Available

On October 1, 2009, the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) met one of its first major milestones. At approximately 6:00 p.m. on that day, additional water releases from Friant Dam, called Interim Flows, began as called for in the Stipulation of Settlement (Settlement) in *NRDC et al., v. Kirk Rodgers, et al.* reached in September 2006. These flows represent significant progress towards meeting the schedule that was agreed upon in the Settlement that ended 18 years of litigation.

The Interim Flows are experimental in nature and will provide valuable information regarding stream flow, water temperature, fish needs, seepage losses, shallow groundwater conditions, recirculation, recapture and reuse conditions, channel capacity (high and low flows), and levee stability. This information will be used in designing the major improvements needed in the river and informing the fish agencies as they craft a salmon reintroduction plan. The Final Environmental Assessment/ Initial Study for the Interim Flows was released on September 25, 2009. To view the complete document, please go to www.restoresjr.net/activities/if/index.html.



First Interim Flow releases on October 1, 2009

Releases occurred in October and November, 2009, and will occur throughout the month of February 2010. Interim Flow release amounts after February 2010 have not been determined and will depend on precipitation levels this winter. The releases will range from 350 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 1,600 cfs, with a maximum flow of 1,300 cfs reaching the Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure. The flows have been limited such that no flooding or seepage impacts are expected to occur. If any such impacts are observed, the flows will be reduced as necessary. Landowners can email SJRRP staff at interimflows@restoresjr.net if they have any seepage concerns or questions.

Reclamation anticipates that some of the flows will be recaptured and recirculated back for agricultural use by Friant water users, although the actual amount cannot be predicted at this time. The amount of water available for recapture and recirculation will depend largely on the amount lost to groundwater infiltration, potential reductions in flows to avoid seepage impacts along the river, safe flow passage amounts past Sack Dam, and the hydrologic and regulatory conditions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta during the flows, among other things.

CDFG Bios Site Invasive Riparian Plant Species Data



Red Sesbania at Sycamore Island

The California Department of Fish & Game's (CDFG) BIOS (Biogeographic Information and Observation System) web pages containing information about the location of invasive riparian plant species along the San Joaquin River and adjacent sloughs and bypasses will be available in November 2009. These GIS data layers and corresponding metadata estimate the occurrence, distribution, and extent of the most invasive riparian plant species along the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the Merced River confluence, major tributaries, as well as the Eastside and Chowchilla Bypasses.

Field surveys sought to locate red sesbania, giant reed or arundo, salt cedar or tamarisk, Chinese tallow, and perennial pepperweed. Data were collected by the SJRRP partner agencies including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), DFG, the Department of Water Resources, and Reclamation with support of California State University, Stanislaus botanists as well as invasive species field crews from Stockton FWS from June through August 2008.

The datasets will be available for public use and are especially useful for SJRRP staff, as it helps them with locating invasive riparian plant species and planning SJRRP projects accordingly. Look for the data by the end of November on the CDFG BIOS site, <http://bios.dfg.ca.gov>.

Draft Program Document Release and Process Update

In 2007, the SJRRP began preparation of the Program Environmental Impact Statement/ Report (PEIS/R) in support of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). For the past 2 years, the Program has worked to evaluate the potential environmental effects of implementing the Settlement as directed in the San Joaquin River Restoration Act (Public Law 111-11.) This Program-level study provides broad direction for a wide range of possible future restoration actions while allowing the opportunity for flexibility to respond to changing needs. In addition to a "first tier" analysis, the document will also include more detailed "project-specific" analysis of actions related to re-operating Friant Dam for the release of Interim and Restoration flows.

The SJRRP anticipates that the Draft PEIS/R will be available for public review in January 2010. As part of the public review process, a series of meetings will be held to gather comments on the document and provide additional information about the Program. Agencies, stakeholders and the public will have 60 days after the document's release to provide comments, accepted in writing via U.S. mail, by fax, and email as well as verbally at the public meetings.

Once the comment period closes, the comments received will be reviewed, compiled, and responded to. The responses to comments will be available in the Final PEIS/R, expected to be available in the fall of 2010.

Please check www.restoresjr.net for the most current information on the status of the Draft PEIS/R and related public meetings.

Reach 4B, Eastside Bypass and Mariposa Bypass Low Flow Channel and Structural Improvements Project Planning Under Way

Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) held two public scoping meetings on September 23 and 24 in Los Banos and Merced to discuss and receive public input on the proposed Reach 4B, Eastside Bypass and Mariposa Bypass Low Flow Channel and Structural Improvements Project. The public input received will support the two agencies in preparing a joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) pursuant to NEPA and CEQA. The scoping meetings were designed to solicit comments from stakeholders to assist in determining the scope of the EIS/EIR, including the alternatives to be addressed, and to identify any significant environmental issues. The SJRRP team received constructive input on major issues and alternatives to include in the Draft EIS/EIR.

The structural improvements for this project include the construction, operation, and maintenance of a low flow channel in Reach 4B of the San Joaquin River and in the Eastside and Mariposa Bypasses to ensure conveyance of at least 475 cubic feet per second (cfs), and improvements to facilities in the Eastside and Mariposa Bypasses to provide for fish passage. More information about the Project is available on the SJRRP website, at www.restoresjr.net.

This Project is one of the site-specific projects referenced in Paragraph 11 of the Settlement needed to modify the San Joaquin River in preparation of full Restoration Flows scheduled to begin in 2014.



Program engineer Dave Mooney talks with community member at the Merced public scoping meeting



Technical Feedback Work Group Meetings Update

The Water Management Work Group (WMWG) held Technical Feedback Group (TFG) meetings in September, October and November; and the Restoration Goal TFG held meetings in September and November. The Fisheries Management Work Group (FMWG) TFG meeting scheduled for August was combined with the September Restoration Goal TFG meeting. A summary of the discussion topics from the recent TFG meetings is outlined below. The complete TFG meeting schedule, in addition to agendas, meeting summaries, and meeting presentations, are all available on the Program website: www.restoresjr.net/group_activities/index.html.

Water Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ September 4: Discussed the status of water management activities, the Interim Flow water rights petition to the State Water Resources Control Board, the status of Restoration Flow Guideline components, and the Madera and Friant Kern Canals capacity correction assessment and reverse flow facilities.
- ▶ October 2: Discussed the status of water management activities, Part III Guidelines, and further discussed the Madera and Friant Kern Canals capacity correction assessment and associated schedule.
- ▶ November 6: Discussed Interim Flows, Paragraph 16(a) recapture activities, Part III Guidelines, Friant Kern Canal capacity

correction assessment and reverse flows, and the status of the Draft Program EIS/R.

Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

- ▶ September 22: Discussed monitoring analysis and management activities, conceptual models and assumptions, and draft monitoring plans for Interim Flows beginning in October.
- ▶ November 17: Discussed modeling and analysis tools used for the Draft PEIS/R.

Fisheries Management Technical Feedback Group Meetings:

The August 24 FMWG meeting was combined with the September 22 Restoration Goal TFG. FMWG TFG meetings have shifted to a quarterly basis.

Landowner and Field Activities Update

Reach 2B Landowner Meeting

Hosted by Columbia Canal Company, the SJRRP held a Reach 2B landowners meeting on September 24, attended by approximately 15 landowners. It included a display of conceptual setback levee alignments developed by DWR for the Reach 2B area. Included in the presentation was a discussion of two bypasses of the Mendota Pool: a conceptual alignment identified in the Settlement; and a near-Pool alignment identified by area landowners. As the environmental documentation continues to be developed for the Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Project, interaction and coordination with area landowners will continue as well.



Field Activities

Bathymetric surveys of the river channel below Mendota Pool to Sack Dam were completed September 30 by DWR. The surveys, which utilize sophisticated sonar to map the underwater contours of a river channel, will assist in evaluation of the river's channel capacity. After collecting additional data upstream of Mendota Pool earlier this year, the surveys were re-initiated in August. Status and progress of the surveys were provided to landowners by daily emails or by a toll-free number maintained by Reclamation.

Biological surveys for the blunt-nosed leopard lizard were completed in sections of the Eastside Bypass in September. Conducted by staff from California State University Stanislaus, the

surveys sought to identify the presence of the lizard and habitat conditions suitable to support it in relation to the introduction of Interim Flows on October 1. No adult or juvenile blunt-nosed leopard lizards were seen during these surveys. Habitat conditions seen as ideally suited for the lizard were not found in the bypass.



Left side photo: Mendota Dam

Right side photo: Blunt-nosed leopard lizard



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Upcoming Key Meetings, Events, and Document Releases

There are many opportunities for public involvement into the 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.

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| December 3, 2009 | Water Management Work Group Technical Feedback Group Meeting |
| January 2010 | Draft Program Document Release |
| February 2010 | Draft Program Document Public Scoping Meetings |



Lost Lake County Park

- ▶ Increased Water Releases and River Conditions
- ▶ Water Releases from Friant Dam
- ▶ begin; Final Environmental Assessment Available
- ▶ CDFG Bios Site Invasive Riparian Plant Species Data
- ▶ Draft Program Document Release and Process Update
- ▶ Reach 4B, Eastside Bypass and Mariposa Bypass Low Flow Channel and Structural Improvements Project Planning Under Way
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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.