



Program Update

January 2012

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.



Hills Ferry Barrier Studies

Every fall, the California Department of Fish and Game constructs the Hills Ferry Barrier (HFB) on the San Joaquin River near the Merced River confluence to restrict passage of adult fall-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead upstream where habitat and water quality may be unsuitable for these fish. One of the studies identified in the legislation authorizing the SJRRP (Public Law 111-11) was to evaluate the effectiveness of the HFB in preventing upstream migration of anadromous fish in the San Joaquin River and any false migratory pathways. In Fiscal Year 2011, the first year of this study concluded and a report is available on the SJRRP website at www.restoresjr.net/program_library/02-Program_Docs/index.html.

Another year of study is under way and improvements to the structure have been made for the fall 2011 season in order to improve opportunities for data collection, manage fish movement, better evaluate barrier effectiveness, and increase the rigidity and “fish tightness” of the structure.



Key Upcoming Program Activities in 2012

The third year of Interim Flows runs from October 1, 2011, through September 2012. Frequent monitoring of the shallow groundwater table will continue while working closely with landowners to address potential seepage concerns.

Also in 2012, supporting the Water Management Goal, the Program expects to complete the Friant-Kern Canal Capacity Restoration Feasibility Study and begin construction on the project in 2012. The Program also expects to release draft Friant-Kern Canal Reverse Flow Pumpback and Madera Canal Capacity Restoration Feasibility Studies for public review.

Draft Environmental Impact Statements/Reports will be released for public comment on two major projects: the Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project; and the Reach 4B, Eastside Bypass, and Mariposa Bypass Channel and Structural Improvements Project. Once completed, those projects will significantly improve the ability to move water through the river system and sustain fish habitat. A Draft Environmental Assessment and Initial Study for the Arroyo Canal Fish Screen and Sack Dam Fish Passage Project is anticipated in the summer with the final documents released by the end of the year.

The Monitoring and Analysis Plan (available at www.restoresjr.net/flows/ATR/index.html) presents studies, monitoring network changes, and the development of analytical tools scheduled for 2012 implementation. Monitoring and analysis are conducted to meet environmental commitments and inform Settlement implementation, including Friant Dam operations, channel and facilities improvements, and salmon reintroduction.

Recent Tour Highlights River Restoration Efforts

The Water Education Foundation successfully conducted its San Joaquin River Restoration tour on November 2 and 3 for the fourth year running. The tour's 41 attendees and staff made about 15 stops along the San Joaquin River and bypass system from Millerton Lake to the Merced River confluence, and heard a variety of experts speak about the progress of the SJRRP and challenges of restoring the river. Tour participants represented diverse perspectives and backgrounds, and included educators, landowners, elected officials, southern California and San Joaquin Valley water users, staff from SJRRP implementing agencies, and consultants. The tour is partially funded by a grant from Reclamation.

SJRRP Project selected as part of White House New Public Website Tracking Tool

The White House Office of Management and Budget launched a new website, the *Federal Infrastructure Projects Dashboard*, where the federal permitting and environmental review process for expedited high priority infrastructure projects can be tracked. Located at <http://permits.performance.gov>, one of the initial 14 priority federal infrastructure projects highlighted is the SJRRP's Arroyo Canal Fish Screen and Sack Dam Fish Passage Project. The site lists pending permits, studies and interagency agreements for this specific project and will track the progress on the activities in keeping with the current project schedule, improving the accountability, transparency, and efficiency of Project actions.

SJRRP Received Department of the Interior Partners in Conservation Award

In September, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar selected the SJRRP as one of 17 recipients for the 2011 *Partners in Conservation Award* for its outstanding conservation, collaboration, cooperation, and communication achievements.

Secretary Salazar said in his announcement congratulating awardees, "The Partners in Conservation Awards demonstrate that our nation's greatest conservation legacies often emerge when agencies and citizens from a wide range of backgrounds come together to address shared challenges. I am pleased to recognize the efforts of dedicated people from across our nation to conserve and restore our treasured landscapes, address water issues and forge solutions to complex natural resource issues through good government and strong partnerships."



DOI photographer Tami Heilemann

Left to right: David Murillo, Reclamation Deputy Commissioner; Rhonda Reed, National Marine Fisheries Service; DOI Secretary Ken Salazar; Alicia Forsythe, Reclamation; Doug Obegi, Natural Resources Defense Council; Bob Clarke, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

SJR Parkway and Conservation Trust Receives Invasive Plant Monitoring and Management Grant

The Bureau of Reclamation has awarded the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust (Trust) a \$2 million grant to help fulfill Reclamation's invasive vegetation monitoring and management commitments as part of the SJRRP.

"Our project team is anxious to put our expertise to work removing invasive plants on the San Joaquin River. It's a local effort creating local jobs. We will be reaching out to landowners affected by these invasive weeds and directing youth service corps and agricultural labor crews in removal and monitoring protocols," said Dave Koehler, Executive Director of the Trust.

The SJRRP began releasing experimental flows, called Interim Flows, from Friant Dam in October 2009. While having many positive consequences, the flows also have the potential to increase the quantity and distribution of invasive plant species. The Program's Environmental Assessments (EAs) supporting the release of the Interim Flows require Reclamation to monitor and manage invasive vegetation in the San Joaquin River.

The Trust, in collaboration with River Partners and The Nature Conservancy, will complete actions and provide information needed for Reclamation to successfully meet the requirements in the EAs. The purpose of the Interim Flows is to collect relevant data concerning flows, temperatures, fish needs, seepage losses, recirculation, and recapture and reuse.



Technical Feedback Group Meeting Updates

Several public Technical Feedback Group (TFG) meetings were held in the fall of 2011 to present information and solicit input on many aspects of the SJRRP. TFG meetings provide a forum for updates and exchange of technical information between SJRRP Implementing Agencies and stakeholders.

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.

Fisheries Management TFG Meetings:

- ▶ September 29. Discussed progress on the development of the Donor Stock Collection Plan for the reintroduction of salmon into the

San Joaquin River, and solicited technical input on specific topics regarding the Donor Stock Collection Plan.

Restoration Goal TFG Meetings:

- ▶ November 1. Discussed Endangered Species Act Section 10(j) and 4(d), the San Joaquin River Recreational Impact Study, the 2012 Monitoring and Analysis Plan fisheries studies, and the Hills Ferry Barrier evaluation.

Seepage and Conveyance TFG Meetings:

- ▶ September 6. Discussed Interim Flows and fall pulse flows, reviewed input on parcel groupings, reviewed comments on the site evaluation process, and solicited input on landowner

involvement and level of detail of the Seepage Project Handbook.

- ▶ November 10. Discussed Interim Flows and reviewed the plan formulation, design data, and design process sections of the Seepage Project Handbook.

Water Management TFG Meetings:

- ▶ September 16. Discussed Interim Flow releases, Restoration Flow Guidelines, Recapture and Recirculation Plan, Recovered Water Account, Friant-Kern and Madera Canal Capacity Restoration Projects, and the Friant-Kern Canal Reverse-flow Pumpback Facilities Project.
- ▶ December 16. 2012 water supply briefing given and previous meeting topic discussions continued.

Landowner and Field Activities Update

Fall Field Activities

The SJRRP launched its fifth round of shallow groundwater monitoring well installations in November, an action that will bring the number of wells installed to 167 since 2009. The 17 new wells being installed at various locations from Reach 2A to Reach 4B help the Program work with local operators to limit releases from Friant Dam, Mendota Dam, and Sack Dam to non-damaging flow rates and identify projects that could help reduce or avoid SJRRP-induced seepage impacts along the San Joaquin River and Eastside and Mariposa Bypasses.

Other recent field activities include the replacement of manhole covers at monitoring wells installed at or near the public right-of-way; the completion of geologic investigations at five crossings in Reach 4B and the control structures for the Eastside and Mariposa Bypasses; and streambed permeability surveys in Reach 1A.

To view field advisories or a list of planned field activities, visit: www.restoresjr.net/activities/field.

Landowner Meetings

Setback levee alignments and boundary survey results were key focuses of back-to-back meetings held in October by the SJRRP for private property owners along two reaches of the San Joaquin River.

Held October 3, the landowner meetings were tailored for those in Reach 4B (Sand Slough to the Bear River confluence) and Reach 2B (Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure to Mendota Dam), and held at San Luis Canal Company, Dos Palos, and the Andrew Firebaugh Community Center, Firebaugh, respectively.

For the Reach 4B meeting, the project team presented its first map illustrating four preliminary levee alignments for landowner comment. The alignments are preliminary and subject to change as the process moves forward, including detailed field surveys and further stakeholder input.

The Reach 2B project team presented a revised map illustrating two

alternatives currently under review: the Compact Bypass Alternative, and the Fresno Slough Dam Alternative. A follow-up workshop to present detailed information of structures illustrated on the maps was held November 14 at the Kings River Conservation District in Fresno.

Staff from the California State Lands Commission presented results of boundary surveys at both meetings. Reach 2B landowners were shown draft final administrative maps, while Reach 4B landowners were shown preliminary plat maps. Commission staff will ultimately produce Administrative Maps that depict the low and high water lines indicating the State's sovereign ownership along the San Joaquin River from Highway 99 to the Merced River confluence.

To review content provided at landowner meetings, visit: www.restoresjr.net/activities/site_specific



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Upcoming Key Meetings, Events, and Document Releases

Please visit the Program website for detailed information on meetings, documents and program milestones at www.restoresjr.net/index.html.

- ▶ March 2012 – Seepage and Conveyance Technical Feedback Group Meeting
- ▶ Draft Environmental Assessment for Reintroduction (includes 10(a)1(A) Permit, 10(j) Rule and 4(d) Rule) – Early 2012
- ▶ 2011 SJRRP Annual Report – February 2012
- ▶ Water Management Technical Feedback Group Meeting – March 2012
- ▶ Final SJRRP Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (PEIS/R) – April/May 2012

- ▶ Hills Ferry Barrier Study
- ▶ Key Upcoming Program Activities in 2012
- ▶ Recent Tour Highlights River Restoration Efforts
- ▶ SJRRP Project Selected as part of White House New Public Website Tracking Tool
- ▶ SJRRP Received Department of the Interior Partners in Conservation Award
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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.