Restoration Administrator Flow Recommendation

To: Don Portz, Chad Moore, David van Rijin, Regina Story

cc: Michael Jackson, Rufino Gonzalez, Gary Bobker, Steve Ottemoeller, Ian Buck-Macleod, TAC, FWC

Date: February 24, 2025

From: Tom Johnson, Restoration Administrator

Subject: Updated Recommendation for 2025 Restoration Flows

The following is a Restoration Flow Recommendation (Recommendation) by the Restoration Administrator (RA) for the 2025 Restoration Year Flows pursuant to the Restoration Flow Guidelines (RFG) Ver. 2.1, as amended, and Exhibit B of the Settlement.

Background

The SJRRP has issued an Updated 2025 Restoration Allocation (Allocation) dated February 14, 2025, which designates 2025 as a **Normal-Dry** Water Year Type with an Unimpaired Inflow hybrid forecast of 1,049 thousand acre-feet (TAF) and provides an allocation of Restoration Flows of 229.374 TAF as measured at Gravelly Ford (GRF) based on the 75% exceedance forecast. The Allocation also specified certain contractual and operational constraints on Restoration Flow releases for 2025.

January was very dry in the San Joaquin River (SJR) watershed, one of the driest Januarys of record. In contrast, the first two weeks of February brought 114% of the February monthly average precipitation.

I have consulted with the TAC and the FMWG on this Recommendation, and this Recommendation reflects the best use of the Allocation of Restoration Flows for the fisheries resources at this time.

Recommendation for the 2025 Restoration Year

At this time, I am recommending a flow schedule for the 2025 Restoration Year as shown in Table 1, and as follows:

1. Provide a fairly high flow bench in March and early April to facilitate the release and subsequent escape of juvenile Chinook salmon from the Restoration Area. Tagged juvenile Chinook salmon releases from the iSCARF into Reach 5 are scheduled for March.
2. Maintain connectivity of the lower SJR below EBM until at least late May at a flow that will encourage adult spring-run Chinook salmon returns at least as far upstream as EBM. Hopefully, given a wetter water year and successful juvenile releases in 2023, adult spring-run Chinook salmon returns this year will be higher than the past couple of years.
3. Reduce Restoration Flows from mid-May through October to preserve cold-water pool in Millerton Reservoir to support adult spring-run Chinook salmon spawning and egg incubation.
4. No exchanges or buffer flows are called upon at this time.

5. Additionally, the fall pulse will likely be deployed in two parts in November and December to support a river science experiment at Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure.

This Recommendation is intended to release the maximum possible volume of Restoration Flows down the river, as limited by seepage and cold-water pool considerations. However, given the early season uncertainty as to Restoration Year hydrology, I anticipate additional adjustments to this Recommendation in the coming months.

In particular, should runoff or cold-water pool conditions dictate, further reductions in summer flows will be enacted to conserve cold-water pool until the adult spring-run Chinook salmon spawning and egg incubation season.

No Restoration Flow recapture other than de-minimus amounts are planned in the Restoration Area. All Restoration Flow releases are to flow through the entirety of the Restoration Area. If there are operational or other constraints that preclude Restoration Flows traveling the entire length of the Restoration Area, the Restoration Recommendation will be adjusted to reduce Restoration Flow releases to the level of the controlling operational constraint.

Table 1. Summary of Restoration Flow Recommendations for February 24, 2025, through February 28, 2026.

Restoration Flow Period	Date Range	Objective	Friant Release (est., varies due to Holding Contracts)	Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford	Total Flow at Gravelly Ford[1]	Target Restoration Flow at Sack Dam (est.)
Restoration Year 2024	To February 28, 2025		605 cfs	430 cfs	435 cfs	310 cfs
2025 Spring Flex. Flow Period[3]	March 1, 2025	Ramp up flows	As necessary, est. 630 cfs	Ramp up to 490 cfs	495 cfs	365 cfs
	March 2–April 12, 2025	Juvenile release pulse, flow bench test at SDP	As necessary, est. 780 cfs	640 cfs	645 cfs	500+ cfs
	April 13–May 16, 2025	Ramp down from Juvenile pulse, 40 cfs RF's every three days at Friant Dam	Estimated 780–395 cfs	As occurs until 180 cfs, then hold at 180 cfs	As occurs until 185 cfs, then hold at 185 cfs	As occurs until 90 cfs
Summer Flow (Enhanced Base Flow)	May 25–September 30, 2025	SR adult attraction at EBM, river connectivity	As necessary, est. 395–410 cfs	180 cfs	185 cfs	90 cfs
Base Flow	October 1–31, 2025	Spring run spawning and egg incubation	As necessary, est. 400 cfs	190 cfs	195 cfs	100 cfs

Restoration Flow Period	Date Range	Objective	Friant Release (est., varies due to Holding Contracts)	Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford	Total Flow at Gravelly Ford[1]	Target Restoration Flow at Sack Dam (est.)
Base Flow[2]	November 1–30, 2025	Connected river, spring run egg incubation.	As necessary, est. 420 cfs	230 cfs	235 cfs	135 cfs
	December 1–31, 2025	Connected river, juvenile rearing	As necessary, est. 440 cfs	285 cfs	290 cfs	190 cfs
Base Flows	January 1– February 28, 2026	Connected river, juvenile rearing	As necessary, est. 400 – 410 cfs	250 cfs	255 cfs	157 cfs

[1] Total Flow includes the minimum Holding Contract flows of 5 cfs required at Gravelly Ford
[2] Fall Pulse Flow may be added during this period to support a river science experiment at Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure

Additional Elements of this Recommendation

This Recommendation anticipates the release of approximately 202 TAF of Restoration Flows to the river, leaving approximately 27.5 TAF of Unreleased Restoration Flows (URFs). **No URFs are released at this time – with the balance of February looking dry, a reduced allocation in March is a distinct possibility. All URFs are retained until the runoff forecast becomes clearer.**

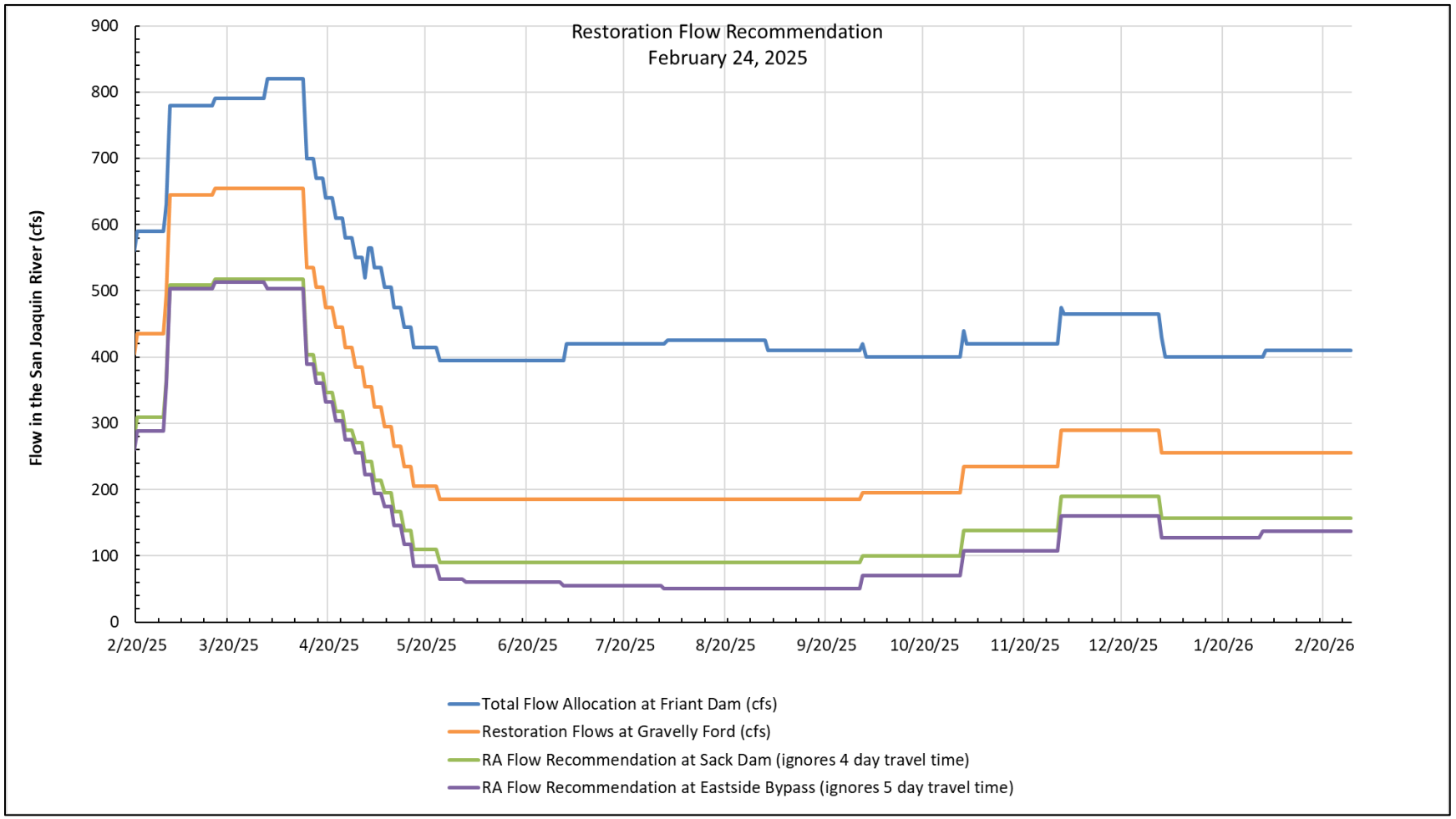
Depending on changing hydrologic and operations conditions, I will adjust or revise this Recommendation as necessary.

Additional Consultation

I will continue to coordinate with the TAC, Program Office, and Implementing Agencies to monitor hydrologic conditions, fish population conditions, uncontrolled season releases, operational conditions, and other factors, and will update the Restoration Flow Recommendation as conditions change.

Table 2. Summary Volumes

Gravelly Ford Flows Available Versus Ra Recommendation	Available	Used	Balance
Total GRF River Flow Target without 5 cfs (March 1, 2024–February 28, 2025):	229.374 TAF	202.621TAF	26.753TAF
Restoration Allocation Flow	229.374 TAF	203.593TAF	25.781TAF
Exchange Flow	0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF
Buffer Flows	0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF
URFs Disposed of as of 1/15/2025			0.000
Use Buffer Flows? no		Net Alloc Remainder	25.781 TAF


Restoration Flow Recommendation
February 24, 2025
Flow in the San Joaquin River (cfs)
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
2/20/25
3/20/25
4/20/25
5/20/25
6/20/25
7/20/25
8/20/25
9/20/25
10/20/25
11/20/25
12/20/25
1/20/26
2/20/26
Total Flow Allocation at Friant Dam (cfs)
Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford (cfs)
RA Flow Recommendation at Sack Dam (ignores 4 day travel time)
RA Flow Recommendation at Eastside Bypass (ignores 5 day travel time)