

**San Joaquin River Restoration Program**  
**Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group Meeting**  
**Wednesday, April 28, 2010**  
**Stanislaus County Agricultural Center**  
**Modesto, CA**

**MEETING NOTES**

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**Attendees:**

Chris Acree	RSJ/SJVWLF
Michelle Banonis	Reclamation
Tina Bauer	Brown & Caldwell
Shannon Brewer	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Brent Cain	Brown & Caldwell
Steve Centerwall	ICF/Jones & Stokes
Jill Chomycia	MWH
Dave Encinas	CA Department of Water Resources
Kevin Faulkenberry	CA Department of Water Resources
Elif Fehm-Sullivan	NMFS
Ron Forbes	NCCFFF/OCSPA/Delta FF
Alicia Gasdick	Reclamation
Benjamin Gettleman	Kearns & West (recorder)
Seth Gentzler	URS
Sarge Green	CWI/RMC
Jessica Hammond	River Partners
Katrina Harrison	Reclamation
Randy Houk	Columbia Canal Company
TJ Kopshy	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control
Neil Lassetre	Entrix
Shannon Leonard	URS
Bill Luce	Friant Water Users Authority
John Mann	HDR
Sandy Matsumoto	Nature Conservancy
Scott McBain	SJRRP Technical Advisory Committee
Rob Meade	SJRRP Restoration Administrator
Leslie Mirise	NMFS
Dave Mooney	Reclamation
Bob Mussetter	TetraTech-MEI/DWR
Bruce Orr	Stillwater Sciences
Gary Palhegyi	Entrix
Rhonda Reed	NMFS
Julie Rentner	River Partners
Erin Rice	Reclamation
Stephanie Rickabaugh	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Paul Romero	CA Department of Water Resources
Monty Schmitt	NRDC

**Attendees (cont.):**

Erin Strange	NMFS
Mike Widhalm	Paramount Farming Company
Michelle Workman	US Fish & Wildlife Service

**MEETING SUMMARY:**

**Introductions (Bureau of Reclamation)**

Alicia Gasdick, Reclamation, welcomed the group and reviewed the meeting agenda and goals. The purpose of the meeting is to review and discuss the initial options, data needs, and analytical tools for the Mendota Pool Bypass/Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project (Project). The meeting attendees introduced themselves.

**Program Restoration Goals Context (Reclamation)**

Ms. Gasdick reviewed the Settlement's Restoration Goal, which is to restore and maintain fish populations in "good condition" in the main stem of the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River. Ms. Gasdick noted that the Program's focus is currently on spring-run and fall-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead.

**Updates (Reclamation)**

**Interim Flows**

Dave Mooney, Reclamation, informed the group that Interim Flows resumed on February 1, 2010. Based on the Restoration Administrator's recommendations, Reclamation anticipates reaching a maximum release from Friant Dam of 1,600 cubic feet per second (cfs). Mr. Mooney noted that 1,350 cfs are currently being released from Friant.

**Program EIS/R**

Ms. Gasdick informed the group that the public release of the Draft Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (PEIS/R) is targeted for late June 2010 and that public meetings will be scheduled to comment on the document. She also noted that there will be a 60-day comment period following the release of the Draft PEIS/R.

**Mendota Pool Bypass/Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project Update**

**Background/Existing Conditions Review (URS)**

Seth Gentzler, URS, provided an overview of key Reach 2B existing conditions. The reach currently has limited channel capacity (1,300-2,500 cfs) and is primarily dry upstream. The Mendota Pool backs water up to San Mateo Avenue, so the lower portion of the reach is typically wet year-round. There is shallow groundwater throughout most of the reach.

Mr. Gentzler outlined the Settlement requirements related to the Project. The requirements are generally as follows: increase channel capacity to convey 4,500 cfs, construct a bypass around the Mendota Pool, and create floodplain and related riparian habitat in Reach 2B.

## **Schedule (URS)**

Seth Gentzler informed the group that the Initial Options Technical Memorandum and Draft Data Needs and Survey Approach Technical Memorandum are complete, and that field surveys are expected to begin in May 2010. He also noted that the refinement of initial alternatives is expected to take place during the summer of 2010 and that the completion of the Alternative Evaluation Technical Memorandum is projected for the fall of 2010.

The group noted the following:

- It was asked if the Draft EIS/R for the Project would include the preferred alternative. Alicia Gasdick indicated that the preferred alternative would likely be identified in the Final EIS/R (February 2012), but it is not clear if there will be a preferred alternative identified in the draft document. The Record of Decision will represent the final decision on the preferred alternative.

## **Specific Updates**

### Initial Options (URS)

Seth Gentzler shared that the intent of developing initial options is to bracket the range of possibilities, not to identify actual alternatives. Mr. Gentzler reviewed the four current floodplain options that feature corridor widths ranging from approximately 360 to 3,770 feet. He then reviewed the three current Mendota Pool bypass options that include the alignment outlined in the document that formed the Settlement (Settlement Alignment), an alignment proposed by local landowners (Compact Alignment), and the relocation of Mendota Dam. Mr. Gentzler also reviewed the Mendota Pool bifurcation structure options.

The group noted the following:

- It was asked how the riparian habitat needs are being considered in analyzing the floodplain options. It was indicated that there is coordination between teams to factor in the riparian habitat needs and that the first option (360-foot corridor) would not likely move forward since it does not provide riparian habitat and therefore, may not be consistent with the Settlement.
- It was asked if there is a target flow for floodplain inundation. It was indicated that floodplain inundation will mainly be analyzed based on depth and duration/frequency of inundation, not flow, and that a range of flows are being considered. It was also noted that flows will change throughout the year and that there will be flexibility in terms of the how the water is released.

### Analytical Tools (URS)

Seth Gentzler noted that the main objectives of using analytical tools were to evaluate the initial alternatives, to formulate a final set of alternatives, and to evaluate the final set of alternatives in the EIS/R. He also noted that analytical tools should assess the relative ability of the alternatives to meet the Project's purpose and need, goals and objectives. The analytical tools should also be able to assess the physical, economic, and environmental effects of the alternatives along with the fisheries impacts and benefits of each alternative.

### Fisheries Analytical Tools (Entrix)

Neil Lassetre, Entrix, presented the proposed fisheries analytical tools and evaluation criteria. Mr. Lassetre noted that the objective of the analysis is to address the migration and habitat use goals for Reach 2B and to compare passage and habitat conditions between initial alternatives using specific criteria. Mr. Lassetre reviewed the fish passage and rearing habitat evaluation criteria that will be used to evaluate the initial alternatives and also provided an overview of the analytical tools that will be used for fish passage- and habitat-related evaluation of the initial options.

The group noted the following:

- It was asked whether there will be a range of “passability” when evaluating whether channel options or structures are passable or simply a “yes” or “no” conclusion. It was indicated that the conclusion will mainly be a “yes” or “no,” but that the amount of time it would require a fish to pass through a structure will also be considered.

### Geomorphology Analytical Tools (Entrix)

Gary Palhegyi, Entrix, presented the proposed geomorphology analytical tools and evaluation criteria. Mr. Palhegyi described that the geomorphology analytical tools will be used to predict the expected response of the reconstructed river to the Restoration Flows and to understand how the initial alternatives will interact with the expected river’s response. Mr. Palhegyi outlined the geomorphology evaluation criteria that will be applied to the initial options that include:

- Potential to reach a stable channel configuration in dynamic equilibrium
- Potential to accommodate meander migration
- Potential for pool/bar formation, and
- Potential to develop floodplain topographic features

Mr. Palhegyi also provided an overview of the geomorphic analytical tools that will be used for the geomorphic-related evaluation of the initial options.

The group noted the following:

- It was asked what meander migration addresses. Mr. Palhegyi indicated that potential for the alternative to accommodate meander migration addresses whether the alternative incorporates sufficient width to accommodate channel spatial and temporal variability.
- It was asked if vegetation will be part of the geomorphic analysis. Mr. Palhegyi indicated that vegetation would be part of the geomorphic analysis through hydraulic and sediment transport modeling, as well as within the bank erosion analysis. It was also noted that there are separate metrics that will be used to evaluate habitat and vegetation.

### Groundwater Analytical Tools (Brown & Caldwell)

Brent Cain, Brown & Caldwell, presented the proposed groundwater analytical tools and evaluation criteria. Mr. Cain described that the groundwater analytical tools will be used to assess how the initial options affect the water logging of crops, root zone salinity, and levee instability. He also noted that the evaluation criteria will be used to assess the impacts that will be measured by acres of water logging.

The group noted the following:

- It was asked if levee design will affect water logging and, if so, how. It was also noted that the groundwater analysis will inform levee design.
- It was asked whether Reach 2B will continue to be a losing reach and if that will factor into the evaluation. Mr. Cain indicated that this consideration will be factored into the groundwater model. However, whether the reach is losing or gaining may not have a large impact on inundation.

### **Specific Updates**

Alicia Gasdick opened up the discussion to additional questions on the Project or the overall San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP). Below is a summary of the discussion.

- It was asked why a screen at the Chowchilla Bifurcation was necessary. Ms. Gasdick noted that a screen at the Chowchilla Bifurcation was a Phase 2 project and was not part of the current Project. However, the Program recognizes that any screen constructed as part of the Project (i.e. the Mendota Pool Bypass screen) would likely affect a future Chowchilla Bifurcation screen, if any is constructed. There are a variety of possible options for a Chowchilla Bifurcation screen, including no screen, partial screening, or full screening.
- It was asked if more alignments or alternatives will be considered before the Final EIS/R is prepared in 2012. More alternatives could be introduced in the future. The alternatives that were presented at this meeting are very preliminary and will be refined during the alternatives refinement and evaluation process.
- It was asked what flows are being used to evaluate the channel designs. A 20-year range is being used that allows the evaluation of a range of flows with variable peaks. Additional coordination with the Restoration Administrator may be needed to refine possible future flow scenarios and hydrograph shapes.
- It was asked if there is coordination with FloodSAFE. FloodSAFE and the SJRRP are coordinating activities. However, the SJRRP is further ahead in its process so the programs don't completely align yet. It was noted that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, DWR and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board have been having discussions to communicate on how the two programs will work together. It was also noted that Reach 2B is not currently considered part of the Flood Control Project.

### **Next Meeting**

Alicia Gasdick reported that the next Restoration Goal Technical Feedback Group meeting would likely be held for Reach 4B in approximately six weeks. The public is also welcome to send recommended agenda topics for future meetings to Ms. Gasdick at [agasdick@usbr.gov](mailto:agasdick@usbr.gov).