

San Joaquin River Restoration Program Restoration Administrator

Date: September 14, 2011

To: Ali Forsythe – SJRRP Program Manager cc. Michael Jackson, Ed Salazar,
Doug DeFlicht, Dave Mooney,
Technical Advisory Committee

From: Rod Meade – Restoration Administrator

Subject: Updated RA Interim Flow Release Recommendations – October 1, 2011 through
February 29, 2012

I am submitting an updated Interim Flow Release Recommendation for your consideration and action. This updated recommendation complements the Real Time Management Recommendations that I submitted on May 11, 2011, Interim Flow Release Recommendation. As provided for in the Draft Restoration Flow Guidelines (Draft RFG), my recommendation covers the period from October 1, 2011, through February 29, 2012.

This Recommendation is based on the premise that the State Water Resources Control Board will issue the necessary regulatory approvals to continue Interim Flow releases from Friant Dam beyond the term of its current permits, which terminate on September 30, 2011.

Background

This Interim Flow Release Recommendation reflects both the September 9, 2011 Allocation and Default Flow Report (September 9 Allocation) released by Reclamation. It also reflects the recent conference call with your staff, discussions with Chris White of CCID, and consultation with my Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) at our September 12 TAC meeting. Consultation also included discussion of the ongoing seepage management constraints that continue to limit Interim Flows from being routed downstream of Sack Dam. Reclamation has indicated that Interim Flows below Sack Dam may soon be resumed up to a maximum of 50 cubic feet per second (cfs).

Based on these consultations, my understanding is that CCID is requesting and Reclamation concurs that the Fall Interim Flow releases should be managed in a manner that would eliminate all flows from entering Mendota Pool (Pool) in time for the Pool to be drained by November 15, 2011. The purpose for eliminating Interim Flows into the Pool by November 15 is to allow CCID to conduct several activities that, over the longer-term, are seen to benefit the SJRRP and operations of the Pool. These activities include:

- Completion of the safety inspection of the Mendota Pool Dam (Dam) required to be conducted every other year;
- Removal of bottom layer mud from the Upper and Lower Pool terraces;

- Completion of other construction activities designed to eliminate “piping” under the Dam that led to Division of Dam Safety (DSOD) requirements to conduct the safety inspections; and
- Replacement of existing non-automated Dam gates with fully automated gates that would enable CCID to automate and improve Dam operations.

It is estimated by CCID and Reclamation that the above measures will require the Pool to be drained between November 15, 2011, and January 15, 2012, when the Pool could again receive Interim Flows.

My understanding is that CCID and Reclamation believe that completion of the proposed CCID inspection, maintenance and improvement activities could benefit the SJRRP by potentially eliminating the need for future de-watering for inspection purposes. The proposed Dam improvement measures also could improve the efficiency of Dam and Pool operations by providing for an automated operating and monitoring process to replace the manual operations currently being employed. Given these potential benefits, there appears to be a consensus among those consulted that the proposed Dam improvements are desirable and, if these actions are undertaken, it would be better to complete the measures sooner, rather than later in the SJRRP implementation schedule.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above background discussion and the terms of the Draft Restoration Flow Guidelines, I recommend that the following Interim Flow Schedule be implemented commencing October 1, 2011, through February 29, 2012.

1. On October 1, 2011, combined Interim Flow and Riparian releases should be maintained at 350 cfs for ten (10) days.
2. Commencing October 11, 2011, combined Interim Flow and Riparian releases from Friant Dam are recommended to increase to a rate of 700 cfs and be maintained for ten (10) days, through October 20, provided that such release rates do not exceed groundwater well thresholds established by the SJRRP for Reaches 2A and 2B.
3. Commencing October 21, 2011, combined Interim Flow and Riparian releases from Friant Dam are recommended to be reduced to 350 cfs and continue through November 5, 2011.
4. Starting November 6, 2011, and continuing through January 15, 2012, Riparian Flow Releases will be maintained but Interim Flow releases from Friant Dam will be eliminated to enable Dam inspection, maintenance and construction activities.
5. Commencing January 16, 2012, combined Interim Flow and Riparian releases from Friant Dam are recommended to be increased to 350 cfs and continue at the 350 cfs release through February 29, 2012, (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

I will continue to consult with the TAC, Reclamation staff and other affected parties to monitor conditions instream and on adjacent properties, and to follow progress on completion of Pool and Dam inspection, maintenance and improvement activities. Should circumstances dictate, I may need to amend this Recommendation at a future time.

If you have questions concerning my Recommendation please let me know. I will be out of the state starting September 15 through October 3 but reachable by phone/email in the event we need to talk.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of these recommendations and requests.