



Program Update

May 2015

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.

2015 Flow Update for SJRRP

The amount of water the SJRRP receives each year is based on the Settlement reached in 2006 that identified six different Restoration Year types, each with different amounts of water to be made available to the SJRRP. Based on current conditions, the Program is scheduled to be in the worst case scenario, the critical low year, as of March 1. No water is allocated to the Program under this condition, and unless hydrologic conditions change, there will be no flows for the remainder of the year. Reclamation continues to evaluate and change the water year type as new projections become available. Allocations to the river are typically made on a monthly basis but can be done as frequently as is prudent and at the request of the Restoration Administrator.

Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project

Draft Document Available June 9; Public Meetings Scheduled

The Bureau of Reclamation and the California State Lands Commission plan on releasing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (EIS/R) for the Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project on June 9, 2015. The Project includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Mendota Pool Bypass and improvements in the San Joaquin River channel in Reach 2B. The document release will start a 60-day public review and comment period, and public meetings are scheduled during this time. The Draft EIS/R includes a preferred alternative that incorporates input and concepts provided by Reach 2B landowners, landowner representatives and other project stakeholders.

Public Meetings:

- ▶ Wednesday, July 8, 6 – 8:30 p.m., Piccadilly Inn, 2305 West Shaw Avenue, Fresno
- ▶ Thursday, July 9, 6 – 8:30 p.m., Los Banos Community Center, 645 7th Street, Los Banos
- ▶ Friday, July 10, 9 a.m. – noon, Federal Center, 2800 Cottage Way Room C-1002, Sacramento

A Phase 1 activity of the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act (Public Law 111-11), the Project consists of construction of setback levees and a floodplain able to convey at least 4,500 cubic feet per second (cfs), a method to bypass Restoration Flows around the water delivery infrastructure at Mendota Pool, and a system to convey up to 2,500 cubic feet per second from Millerton Lake into Mendota Pool for delivery to water districts. Riparian and floodplain habitat are planned for the improved Reach 2B channel to support survival of migrating salmon. The Project area (see map on page 2) includes the Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure, Mendota Pool and the San Joaquin River channel to a point approximately one mile downstream of Mendota Dam.

Project Alternatives

The Draft EIS/R describes a No Action Alternative and four action alternatives:

- ▶ No-Action Alternative: The Project would not be implemented. Other components of the SJRRP would be implemented following completion and receipt of appropriate environmental reviews and approvals. The No-Action Alternative generally assumes no channel or structural improvements would be made in Reach 2B, and Restoration Flows would be reduced to not exceed the existing Reach 2B capacity.

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Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements Project (Cont.)

All four Action Alternatives (Alternatives A, B, C, and D, see Action Alternatives table) include the provision of fish habitat and passage, seepage control measures, removal of existing levees and structures, and levee and structure construction and modification, among other activities. The table shows the differences between each alternative. Alternative B (right) is the preferred alternative that incorporates input and concepts provided by Reach 2B landowners, landowner representatives and other project stakeholders.

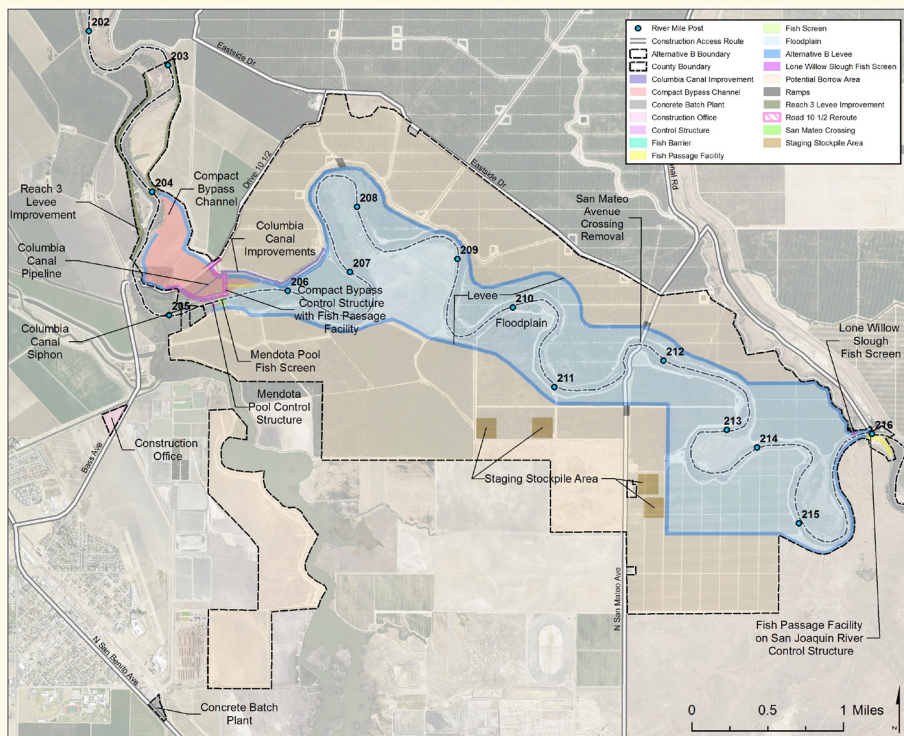
The Draft EIS/R will be available for viewing at Reclamation's web site at www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?ProjectID=4032. A full list of locations where the final EIS/R is available for public inspection can be found at the above web address as well. The following is a partial list of locations where the EIS/R can be viewed:

- ▶ Bureau of Reclamation, South-Central California Area Office, 1243 N Street, Fresno, CA 93721.
- ▶ Los Banos Library, 1312 S 7th St, Los Banos, CA 93635.
- ▶ Fresno County Public Library - Mendota Branch Library, 1246 Belmont Ave, Mendota, CA 93640.
- ▶ Fresno County Public Library - Firebaugh Branch Library, 1315 O St, Firebaugh, CA 93622.

Written comments can be sent to Ms. Becky Victorine, Bureau of Reclamation, San Joaquin River Restoration Program Office, MP-170, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, California 95825-1898; or via e-mail to Reach2B_EISEIR_Comments@restoresjr.net. To request an Executive Summary or compact disc of the Draft EIS/R, please contact Ms. Becky Victorine at 916-978-4624.

For further information on the Project, contact Ms. Katrina Harrison, Program Engineer, Bureau of Reclamation, via e-mail at Reach2B_EISEIR_Comments@restoresjr.net, or at 916-978-5465; or, for information regarding California Environmental Quality Act, contact Mr. Christopher Huitt, Senior Environmental Scientist, California State Lands Commission, 100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100 South, Sacramento, CA 95825, 916- 574-208; or via e-mail to christopher.huitt@slc.ca.gov.

Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Improvements Project - Preferred (Alternative B)



Action Alternatives

	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Mendota Pool Bypass Option				
Compact Bypass	X	X		
Fresno Slough Dam			X	X
2,500 cfs Water Delivery Option				
South Canal	X			
North Canal				X
Short Canal			X	
Bifurcation Structures		X		
Levee Alignment				
Narrow	X		X	
Wide				X
Consensus-Based		X		
Other Structures				
Reach 3 Fish Barrier	X		X	X
SJR Control Structure at Chowchilla	Removed	Passage Modifications	Passage Modifications	Removed
San Mateo Avenue Crossing	New	Removed	New	Removed



Framework for Implementation 2015 Update Available for Comment

In 2012, Reclamation went through a process to prepare a revised schedule and budget for the Program. The resulting document was called the Working Draft Framework for Implementation, dated June 2012 (available on the web site). The 2012 Framework was successful in establishing “core” projects and limiting actions that were being requested of the Program.

In late 2014, the Program once again began working with representatives from the Friant Districts, NRDC, and the downstream landowners and water districts to prioritize the core projects based on realistic amounts of state and federal funding. The update seeks to sequence projects and phases of projects based on realistic funding and resources in a logical order to achieve Program goals. Reclamation is looking to achieve as much agreement as possible on schedules, budget, and priorities.

The draft Framework document will be posted on the Program Documents page of the web site, restoresjr.net, May 15, for public review and comment through June 15. Reclamation will respond to comments received and publicly release the ‘final’ Framework document on July 15, 2015.

Release of Juvenile Spring-run Chinook Salmon

On April 18, 2015, Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife released 54,000 hatchery produced juvenile spring-run Chinook salmon into the San Joaquin River as part of Program implementation.

The salmon were from the Feather River Hatchery and were released near the confluence of the Merced and San Joaquin rivers near Newman, California. The release effort will provide an opportunity to carry out fisheries studies while contributing to the long-term reintroduction of spring-run salmon to the San Joaquin River as called for in the San Joaquin River Settlement.

As part of this effort, some of these juvenile spring-run are anticipated to return to the river as adults in spring 2017. However dry year conditions will likely impact the number of returning fish. Any returning adults will be monitored to determine what parts of the river they use, their survival over the summer, and where they spawn in the fall of 2017. This information will help further inform future spring-run reintroduction efforts.

Adult Trap and Haul

A total of 510 adult fall-run Chinook salmon were captured between November 4, 2014, and January 9, 2015, from Reach 5 upstream of the Hills Ferry Barrier and relocated to Reach 1. Fish passing the Hills Ferry Barrier would otherwise be lost in the system, so trapping and relocating these fish provides an opportunity to study their behavior and spawning site preference prior to reintroduction. The 2014 Trap



and Haul efforts resulted in much higher capture rates than efforts conducted in both 2012 and 2013. While the majority of fish were released back into the San Joaquin River, some fish were retained for artificial spawning and incubation purposes. Salmon released into Reach 1, naturally produced more than 80 spawning redds (nests).

Juvenile Trap and Haul

In 2015, trap and haul study efforts continue to capture and move juvenile Chinook salmon from unsuitable conditions in Reach 1, past currently impassable barriers, to a downstream location in Reach 5 where they could continue their migration to the ocean.



In 2015, more than 600 juvenile salmon were caught and moved. In 2014, a total of 2,393 salmon were captured during the effort. Low water conditions and water temperatures exceeding salmon thermal tolerance limits last year provided the opportunity to conduct this study in an effort to prepare for future drought years.



The successful outmigration of juvenile salmon is critical for survival to adulthood and to support the goal of the Restoration Program to restore Chinook salmon. This study tested possible juvenile trap and haul efforts in preparation for future similar dry years.



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Science Meeting – Hold the Dates

The SJRRP will conduct its first Science Meeting June 11 and 12 in Los Banos to share data collected by various groups that support the Program, collaborate between investigators, and present the current state of knowledge of the science supporting the Program. All parties funded by the SJRRP will be presenting their findings at the 2-day event. The meeting is intended for a technical audience familiar with the SJRRP, and will be open to the public. This will be the first in a series of Annual SJRRP Science Meetings that will continue to report the scientific findings of the SJRRP.

**June 11 - 12, 2015, at the Los Banos Community Center,
645 7th Street, Los Banos**

- ▶ June 11 will be a full day of presentations, from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- ▶ June 12 will be a half day, from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m. (subject to change depending on the number of abstracts received)

2014 Annual Report Available

Learn more about the SJRRP 2014 activities and accomplishments and direction for 2015: www.restoresjr.net/program_library/01-General_Outreach/index.html

Upcoming Water Education Foundation SJRR tour November 5 and 6, 2015

Visit <http://www.watereducation.org/tour/san-joaquin-river-restoration-tour-2015> for more details.



SJRRP Outreach Contacts:

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916-978-5461

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916-418-8248

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.