



Meeting Summary

Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Channel Improvements
Project Stakeholder Meeting
Friday December 20, 2013

Los Banos Community Center, 645 7th St., Los Banos, Calif. 93635
FINAL

Attendees

Michelle Banonis, Reclamation
James Batey, Lower San Joaquin Levee District
Robert Brewer, San Joaquin River Association
Kimberly Brown, Paramount Orchards
Steve Chedester, San Joaquin River Exchange
Contractors Water Authority
Darrel Chism, Lower San Joaquin Levee District
Chris Duke, Reclamation
Steve Emmert, Landowner
Ali Forsythe, Reclamation
Seth Genzler, URS
Blair Greimann, Reclamation
Katrina Harrison, Reclamation
Steve Haugen, Kings River Water Association

Chris Hildebrandt, Ducks Unlimited
Reggie Hill, Lower San Joaquin Levee District
Randy Houk, Columbia Canal Company
Tom Johnson, SJRRP Restoration Administrator
Dave Koehler, San Joaquin River Partnership
Shannon Leonard, URS
Jeremy Lorberau, Reclamation
Bill Luce, Friant Water Authority
Bill Pipes, AMEC Environmental and Infrastructure
Steve Stadler, Kings River Conservation District
Becky Victorine, Reclamation
Chris White, Central California Irrigation District
Craig Moyle, MWH Americas

On Phone

Meghan Hertle, Audubon Society
Janie Logoluso, Logoluso Farms
Jim Merrill, Farmers Water District

Steve Ottemoeller, Friant Water Authority
Paul Romero, Calif. Dept. Water Resources
Lisa Zaffran, Reclamation

Welcome and Introductions

Craig Moyle, the meeting facilitator, welcomed the meeting participants, and led introductions for on-site and phone participants. A webinar was established for remote participants to view and follow along.

Agenda Review and Program Update

Ali Forsythe led review of the meeting agenda provided a general overview of current Program activities.

- Releases from Friant Dam are at approximately 450 cubic feet per second. Base flows are consistent with the Settlement at 350 cfs. Flows past Gravelly Ford are minimal due to holding contracts drawing water for frost protection.
- Per the Settlement, all Program flows starting January 1, 2014, will be designated as Restoration Flows. Reclamation will continue to implement the seepage and levee stability commitments in the Program Environmental Impact Statement/Report. Those flows that are not released down the river will now be banked, stored or sold by Reclamation, consistent with the Settlement, with the money deposited to the Program. Forsythe said the Secretary of the Interior has final authority over how to best use these “Unreleased Restoration Flows” to achieve the Program goals. Friant Division contractors will have first opportunity to purchase Unreleased Restoration Flows. No contracts for a water banking project using Unreleased Restoration Flows have been executed, she said.
- Flows released in 2014 are anticipated to be low due to drought conditions. The tentative schedule will be released in February. Depending on the water year type and completion



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of seepage projects in Reach 4A, the Program may seek to release flows sufficient to discharge up to 300 cfs past Sack Dam. If this occurs, flows will ramp up slowly to allow the groundwater to stabilize.

- Trap and haul efforts this year at Hills Ferry Barrier has resulted in the capture of more than 350 adult fish. Most fish were released at Camp Pashayan at Highway 99. Some of the fish were captured in agricultural drains due, in part, to beaver damage of fyke nets.
- The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is looking to complete the 10(j) and 4(d) rule package by the end of the year for the release of spring run Chinook salmon to the San Joaquin River. NMFS will also need to complete a 10(a)(1)(A) permit for the collection of spring-run. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife would then need to issue documents to concur with the NMFS actions. The fish, sourced from the Feather River, would be released as far down into the river system as possible to allow escape to the ocean and allow imprinting on the San Joaquin River. If the rule package and permits are not in place by the end of March to allow the release, the fish will be released into the Feather River.

A participant expressed concern that as no Phase 1 projects have been completed, there is a risk of returning adult salmon being drawn into irrigation intakes. Forsythe responded that survival of returning salmon are a fraction of the total release. The spring permit will cover approximately 55,000 fish. Of this about 20 could return to the San Joaquin River in 2016 or 2017 between the months of March through June. As such, the Program plans to continue trap and haul efforts in spring 2016 and 2017 and collect fish that avoid fyke nets and wander into irrigation drains.

A participant asked if Reclamation will release the fish and flows due to the dire water supply conditions. Forsythe said Reclamation's Solicitor said the Settlement does not provide the Secretary of the Interior discretion to not release flows.

- Seepage projects are moving forward and Reclamation is working with CCID to complete some priority projects to allow flows past Sack Dam in 2014.
- The Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B EIS/R is slated for release in August 2014. Based on meetings with landowners, stakeholders, Third Parties and other interested parties, Reclamation may include a preferred alternative in the Public Draft EIS/R. Forsythe said the document would be available for a 90 day public comment period. The Program would then start land acquisition processes in early 2015 and release the Final EIS/R and Record of Decision in late 2015. Acquisitions would be finalized once the Record of Decision is approved. Construction is estimated to start in early 2017, she said.

Reach 2B Geologic Investigation Update

Katrina Harrison provided an overview of the number of cone penetration tests (CPT) and standard penetration tests (SPT) completed to date by site led Lisa Zaffran. The geologic investigations have thus far focused on the Fresno County side of the river. The team will start surveys on the Madera County side in 2014. Borings into the river bed from a barge are planned



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for this summer. Final survey results will be provided to landowners at least 15 days before a public document is released. The Program will also provide drill logs to landowners once available and on request.

Reach 2B Operations Overview

Chris Duke provided an overview of the current major control features in Reach 2B including the Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure, Mendota Dam, canal structures, pipelines, wells and intake structures. He also reviewed major constraints including water quality, availability of inflows and delivery demands. The overview was informed through various field meetings with area irrigation district managers. The presentation is part of an initial kick off for the Program's design team. Participants provided Duke the following updates:

- Outside Canal design flow is now 700 cfs.
- Unusual flood events can be up to 6,000 cfs in Fresno Slough.
- Firebaugh Canal capacity is 300 cfs

Mendota Pool Operations Overview

Jeremy Lorbreau led an overview of the Mendota Pool Operations including inflows, outflows, and capacities. The information provided to participants was drawn from published data and will need confirmation by local operators and maintenance agencies. He said Mendota Pool has a small operational window of about a half a foot in order to meet canal delivery requirements and the terms of the Exchange Contract. This narrow operating threshold is due to the effects of long-term subsidence to Mendota Dam. A participant said the Division of Dam Safety has set Mendota Dam's maximum height at approximately 14.5 feet. This operational window continues to narrow as Mendota Dam continues to be affected by subsidence. Mendota Pool demands are collected by the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority and provided to the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority, which reports these demands to Reclamation.

Lorbreau then provided a review of Project Description Alternatives No. 3.5 and 3.6. Each of these alternatives is associated with the Compact Bypass alternative currently under evaluation by the Program. Fresno Slough Dam alternatives are also being evaluated, but were not presented during the meeting. The presentation for Alternatives No. 3.5¹ and 3.6² focused on potential new features (e.g. new bifurcation structures, dikes and canals); effects on existing structures/channels (e.g. Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure, Mendota Dam, and Fresno Slough); and other control features (e.g. Big and Little Bertha pumps, Mowery intake, City of Mendota wells and Columbia Canal intake). Discussions on certain features included:

- South Canal - Sized at 2,500 cfs to slightly exceed the maximum delivery called for in the Exchange Contract. Program is working out flood operations of the canal. The installation of a bifurcation structure to deliver water via a canal would provide operational flexibility to deliver Exchange Contractor water if Mendota Dam is rendered obsolete due to subsidence. A participant felt an upstream bifurcation structure would not be necessary if the dikes and other features at the compact bypass control structure were sized appropriately.

¹ See document: 20131213_SJRRP_2B_ALTS35s_PLOTS.pdf

² See document: 20131213_SJRRP_2B_ALTS36s_PLOTS.pdf



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- A decision is pending to whether Lone Willow Slough, located below Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure, could once again be an intake for Columbia Canal Company deliveries.
- If flood operations were moved downstream of the existing bifurcation structure, the levee would be armored and designed to maintain existing operations at Chowchilla Bypass. The operation of this structure during flood scenarios would be a decision of the Lower San Joaquin Levee District.
- A fish screen at Chowchilla Bifurcation Structure is not proposed for the near future. It may be evaluated later in the Program, likely around 2025.
- The relocated intake for Columbia Canal Company would be accessible via a bridge incorporated into the bifurcation works proposed at the compact bypass.
- The Program anticipates that maintenance of the structures would be transferred to a local operator and maintainer under contract to Reclamation. A local operator has not been selected.

Levee & Structure Design

Forsythe led an update on levee and structure design. She said all levees built via the Program will be constructed to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers design criteria. The Program continues to evaluate two levee alignments (narrow and wide). She said an operational plan for the system would be developed at a later date during final design. The structures would likely be owned by Reclamation and contracted out to a local operator and maintainer.

Additional Comments

- Forsythe said the landowner preferred alternative provided to Reclamation via the Consensus Based Alternative process is being incorporated into current project alternatives. Results of this incorporation will be provided at a follow-up Reach 2B Stakeholder meeting.

Meeting Adjourned

11:30 a.m.