



Meeting Notes

Water Management Goal Technical Feedback Meeting

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Silver Legacy, Silver Baron Room E, Reno, Nevada. 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm.

Attendees

Regina Story, Reclamation
Chad Moore, Reclamation
Erika Kegel, Reclamation
Pedro Valverde, Reclamation
Ian Buck Macleod, FWA
John Wiersma, HMRD
Skye Grass, KTWD
Vanessa Escobedo, KTWD
Eric Limas, LTRID, Pixley ID, TPDWD
Wilson Orvis, FWA
Kris Lawrence, KTWD
Cliff Loeffler, LSID
Craig Moyle, Stantec
Bill Stretch, FID
Adam Claes, FID
Gene Kilgore, EID, IID
Mark Tompkins, FlowWest

Eric Quinley, DEID
David Wierenga, DEID
Kelly Hampton, DEID
Sean Quarnstrom, HMRD
Ben Fenters, CCID
Steve Chedester, SJRECWA
Layne Brazier, Reclamation
Shane Smith, KDWCD
Aaron Fukuda, TID
Rick Borges, TID
Craig Wallace, LSID
Katie Duncan, FWA
Nick Keller, HVID, LCWD, TVWD
Tom Biglione, Friends of the River
Kevin Werbylo, Stantec
Evan Perez, Stantec

On the phone/webinar:

Lauren Adams, SWRCB
Paul Adelizi, CDFW
Hossein Aghazeynali, DWR
Karlyn Armstrong, Reclamation
Chantell Aubut, Reclamation
Bill Luce, TAC
Dennis Blakeman, CDFW
Oliver Burgess, Reclamation
Carson Burton, Reclamation
Chauncey Lee, SLDMWA
Christine Ruiz, HMRD
Christopher Hunter, LSID
Breanne Cooney, Reclamation
Levi Gray, USFWS
Chris Harper, USFWS
Hillary Glenn, NMFS
Howard Logan, Reclamation

John Shelton, Friends of the River
Kassy Chauhan, FID
Anna Kladzyk Constantino, Reclamation
Karen Kramer, SWRCB
Steve Ottemoeller, FWA
Joaquin Ramirez, DWR
Jose Rodriguez, Reclamation
Sean Geivet, SID, TBID, Porterville ID
Shane Swartz, Lower San Joaquin Levee District
Andy Shriver, CDFW
Phillip Street, USFWS
Peter Vorster, Friends of the River
Tom Greci, MID
Tom Johnson, RA
Kaitlyn Willems, Reclamation
Sean Windell, SWRCB
Josh Newcom, Reclamation

Next Meetings

Planning for mid-year WMTF Meeting, Location TBD

Introductions

Regina Story opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, introduced the Reclamation SJRRP staff, and provided an overview of the agenda.

State of the Program

Regina presented a brief overview of the history of the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement, the Restoration and Water Management Goals, and a specific update on recent Restoration Goal Activities. Construction project on the Eastside Bypass by DWR, where two miles of levee were modified with a slurry wall to meet seepage and stability criteria completed in 2020 (Reach O Project). Channel capacity and fish passage improvements were made by removing the lower and upper weirs at the Merced National Wildlife Refuge Weir, these projects were completed in 2019 and 2021, respectively. Construction of the Salmon Conservation and Research Facility construction is substantially completed and is expected to be commissioned by California Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2025. Mendota Pool Bypass and Reach 2B Improvements Project to increase capacity from 1,200 cfs to 4,500 cfs, is currently in design. Phase 1a is at 60% design and will be completed by Reclamation, estimate being able to solicit for construction bids in Fall 2026. Phase 1b is at 30% and will solicit for design bids in Fall 2025. Phase 2 is at 90% design. The Arroyo Canal Fish Screen and Sack Dam Passage Facility project is currently accepting construction bids until February 3rd. The SJRRP expects the construction contract to be awarded in July, and mobilize for construction by September 2025. The SJRRP is funding-constrained but was able to commit \$120M of the Restoration Fund to the Arroyo Canal Project, currently looking for funding opportunities to continue with other Program projects.

Water Management Goal Activities

Delta and Lower San Joaquin Recapture

Erika Kegel provided an update on Delta and Lower San Joaquin River recapture efforts the SJRRP are working on. Significant effort has been spent by the SJRRP to identify a path on Delta Recapture, this has been progressed by the efforts to support the South of Delta Drought Plan. There is the permitted capability to recapture Restoration Flows in the Delta and working to get recapture integrated into Delta operations for implementation. There has been retrospective modeling of Restoration Flows from Friant Dam to the Delta. The SJRRP developed the model in parallel with the modeling support for the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes and the South of Delta Drought Plan. The maximum potential recapture simulated was about 21% of the Restoration Flows that reach Vernalis.

There was discussion on the Delta Recapture modeling and clarification on the historical data used in the model. The model did not include Lower San Joaquin River recapture. Ian Buck-Macleod commented that the model was demonstrating the scale at which recapture of Restoration Flows can be accomplished without impact to other Delta operations.

Erika provided an overview of the Delta conditions for Recapture of Restoration Flows. The SJRRP is working on a pilot recapture in the Delta under the Real-time Demands Controlling and OMR Controlling scenarios.

Recapture on the Lower San Joaquin River continues through annual temporary permits. The State Water Board updates the operating conditions at each renewal. These conditions affect all Restoration Flows and Millerton Operations. The current permit is active through November 2025.

Delta Recapture will require increased communications with the State Water Project and Central Valley Project Central Valley Operations offices. The SJRRP is planning to reinitiate work on the Recapture and Recirculation Plan that will require Paragraph 16(a)(1) to be addressed with the Settling Parties. The long-term recapture actions will require environmental compliance and permitting.

Water Rights

Erika provided a brief update on Water Rights and the following key temporary permit conditions:

- Detailed tracking of SJRRP Flows
- Clarifying Mendota Pool Operations
- Establishing realistic limits to flow gauge accuracy
- Characterization of Reach 1 diverters

Reach 1 Losses and Interconnected Surface Water

Chad provided an update on the efforts related to Reach 1 losses and interconnected surface waters. Increased interest in the Reach 1 diversions and the observed increasing losses in Reach 1. The SJRRP has been compiling information from the administrative record on the history of diverters in Reach 1 and the conversion to Holding Contracts. Of the over 200 Holding Contracts only about 160 were ever signed by landowners. A small technical group received an early draft of the Reach 1 Losses Report for comment, with the intention of sharing the report more broadly for comments soon. Chad also shared the recommended Reach 1 actions many of which will require the coordination with other parties or agencies. Regina reported on the recently signed MOU with the upper reach Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), Friant Water Authority, Restoration Administrator, and Program to establish technical working groups with local GSAs with potential interconnected surface waters. The other reaches of the San Joaquin River will require similar studies and evaluations of losses, but the Program is starting with a focus on Reach 1.

Part III Projects

Regina provided a brief overview of Part III Projects and noted that Reclamation has obligated all \$25 million for the Friant-Kern Canal and for Madera Canal \$5.7 million remains (of \$10M total) for improvements.

Restoration Flow Guidelines

Chad provided an update on the Restoration Flow Guidelines. The SJRRP has draft sections of the Restoration Flow Guidelines that were developed in 2020 that need review. The SJRRP has completed the flow compliance standards at Gravelly Ford, and Sack Dam Flow compliance discussions are ongoing with Henry Miller Reclamation District. The SJRRP is looking to return to Restoration Flow Guidelines development and refinement in the summer of 2025.

2025 Operations

Forecasting

Pedro Valverde provided an overview of the forecasting process and efforts for 2025 including a brief overview of the 2025 operational products available for use. Katie Duncan provided an update on the Reclamation SNOFO Grant awarded to FWA, with technical support and oversight provided by SJRRP. These funds will support the additional ASO surveys, processing additional data, and modeling efforts.

Restoration Flow Allocation

Chad shared the Initial Restoration Allocation issued on January 22 showing a Dry Year type based on a projected 727 TAF of runoff with a 168 TAF Restoration Allocation. The next update to the Restoration Allocation is planned for February 14th. The next allocation will include information from an ASO survey, DWR snow course measurements, and Bulletin 120 runoff forecasts. The April allocation will be used by the SJRRP to set the price of Tier 2 URFs, if available. The final allocation would be issued in May unless there is a chance for Critical Year type, in which case final allocation would be in June. Chad provided an overview of the Restoration Flow Guidelines Table 1 which is used by the SJRRP to determine the probability of exceedance forecast to be used in the Restoration Allocation.

Channel Capacity

Regina presented the planning timeline for channel capacity estimates. Currently, seepage is the most constraining condition in Reach 4A. Arroyo Project construction expected to begin in September 2025 will be the next flow constraint. With future seepage limitations and construction projects to constrain flows in 2028 and beyond.

Unreleased Restoration Flows

Chad shared that SJRRP updated the price structure for Unreleased Restoration Flows for 2025, and that the new umbrella agreements should be signed by March 1st. With the current Restoration Allocation, it is anticipated that little to no Unreleased Restoration Flows will be for sale, but the SJRRP is interested in potential exchanges if the Restoration Allocation increases.

Adjourn