

Restoration Administrator Flow Recommendation

To: Don Portz, Chad Moore, Regina Story
CC: Rain Emmerson, Rufino Gonzalez, Gary Bobker, Steve Ottemoeller, Ian Buck-Macleod, TAC, FWC
Date: January 30, 2026
From: Tom Johnson, Restoration Administrator
Subject: Initial Recommendation for 2026 Restoration Flows

The following is the initial Restoration Flow Recommendation (Recommendation) by the Restoration Administrator (RA) for the 2026 Restoration Year Flows pursuant to the Restoration Flow Guidelines (RFG) Ver. 2.1, as amended, and Exhibit B of the Settlement.

Background

The SJRRP has issued an Initial 2026 Restoration Allocation (Allocation) dated January 16, 2026, which designates 2026 as a **Normal-Wet** Water Year Type with an Unimpaired Inflow hybrid forecast of 1,606 thousand acre-feet (TAF) and provides an allocation of Restoration Flows of 305.210 TAF as measured at Gravelly Ford (GRF) based on the blended 75% exceedance forecast. The Allocation also specified certain contractual and operational constraints on Restoration Flow releases for 2026.

To date, January has been very dry in the San Joaquin River (SJR) watershed, and all forecasts indicate a continued dry condition for at least the next 10 days to 2 weeks. In the absence of substantial additional precipitation, it is anticipated that the next Allocation will decrease. Over the course of the next few weeks, I will continue to consult with the SJRRP's biologists and the TAC to refine objectives for this Restoration Year.

I have consulted with the TAC and the FMWG on this Recommendation, and this Recommendation reflects the best use of the Allocation of Restoration Flows for the aquatic resources at this time.

Recommendation for the 2026 Restoration Year

At this time, I am recommending a flow schedule for the 2026 Restoration Year as shown in Table 1, and as follows:

1. Ramp up from February Restoration Year 2025 flows to close to maximum seepage limits for Reach 3 and hold that estimated maximum through April. If opportunity presents, release whatever modest additional flow is possible to conduct a flow bench evaluation for Reach 4A (any flow adjustments will be based on then-current conditions).
2. Ramp flows down through the first half of May to a baseflow condition.
3. Maintain a connected river through June – October using spring flows shifted into the summer baseflow period.
4. Potentially release a fall pulse in two parts in November and December to support a river science experiment.
5. No exchanges or buffer flows are called upon at this time.

6. Although this initial Recommendation ostensibly produces URF's, no URF's are released for distribution at this time until the relief of dry conditions and demonstration that future Allocations will not substantially decrease.
7. No Restoration Flow recapture other than de-minimus amounts are planned in the Restoration Area. All Restoration Flow releases are to flow through the entirety of the Restoration Area.

This Recommendation is intended to a) release the maximum possible volume of Restoration Flows down the river, as limited by seepage considerations, b) provide sufficient flows in Reaches 4 and 5 for adult spring run migration and trapping, and c) provide a connected SJR through all reaches while minimizing impacts to Millerton cold water pool. However, given the early season uncertainty as to Restoration Year hydrology, I anticipate additional adjustments to this Recommendation in the coming months.

If there are operational or other constraints that preclude Restoration Flows traveling the entire length of the Restoration Area, the Restoration Recommendation will be adjusted to reduce Restoration Flow releases to the level of the controlling operational constraint.

Table 1. Summary of Restoration Flow Recommendations for March 1, 2026, through February 28, 2027.

<i>Restoration Flow Period</i>	<i>Date Range</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Friant Release (est., varies due to Holding Contracts)</i>	<i>Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford</i>	<i>Total Flow at Gravelly Ford¹</i>	<i>Target Restoration Flow at Sack Dam (est.)</i>
2025 Spring Flex. Flow Period ³	Commencing March 1, 2026	Ramp up flows at 50 cfs/day	As necessary, est. 455 – 1,000 cfs	Ramp up to 850 cfs	855 cfs	Up to 675 cfs
	<i>Commencing March 1, ramp up at 50 cfs/day (or as staffing allows) to achieve a RF target flow of 850 cfs at GRF by approximately mid-March.</i>					
	March 16 – April 15, 2026	Maximum Reach 3 flows	As necessary, est. 1,000 cfs	850 cfs	855 cfs	Up to 675 cfs
	April 16 – April 30, 2026	Maximum Reach 3 flows	As necessary, est. 950 cfs	770 cfs	775 cfs	Up to 625 cfs
	<i>Maintain flows near maximum R3 seepage limits Mar 16 – April 30, without substantial recapture. Flow bench test if conditions permit.</i>					
	May 1 – May 16, 2026	Ramp down, 50 cfs RF's every one to two days at Friant Dam	Estimated 950 to 435 cfs	As occurs until 200 cfs, then hold at 220 cfs	As occurs until 205 cfs, then hold at 225 cfs	As occurs until 105 cfs
	<i>Commencing May 1, ramp down at 50 cfs/day or 2 days (or as staffing allows) to achieve a RF target flow of 220 cfs at GRF by approximately mid-May.</i>					
	May 17 – May 28, 2026	Attraction flow	As necessary, est. 435 cfs	220 cfs	225 cfs	105 cfs

<i>Restoration Flow Period</i>	<i>Date Range</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Friant Release (est., varies due to Holding Contracts)</i>	<i>Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford</i>	<i>Total Flow at Gravelly Ford¹</i>	<i>Target Restoration Flow at Sack Dam (est.)</i>
	May 29 – September 30, 2026	Summer connectivity	As necessary, est. 400 cfs	160 cfs	165 cfs	70 cfs
Base Flow	October 1 – October 31, 2025	Reconnect Reach 4 & 5, spring run spawning and egg incubation	As necessary, est. 400 cfs	190 cfs	195 cfs	100 cfs
	November 1 – November 30, 2025	Connected river, spring run egg incubation,	As necessary, est. 420 cfs	230 cfs	235 cfs	135 cfs
Fall Pulse	December 1 – December 31, 2025	Connected river, juvenile rearing	As necessary, est. 440 cfs	285 cfs	290 cfs	190 cfs
Base Flows	January 1 – February 28, 2026	Connected river, juvenile rearing	As necessary, est. 400 – 410 cfs	250 cfs	255 cfs	157 cfs

¹*Total Flow includes the minimum Holding Contract flows of 5 cfs required at Gravelly Ford*

Additional Elements of this Recommendation

This Recommendation anticipates the release of 220.879 TAF of Restoration Flows to the river.

Depending on changing hydrologic conditions, I will adjust or revise this Recommendation as necessary.

Additional Consultation

I will continue to coordinate with the TAC, Program Office, and Implementing Agencies to monitor hydrologic conditions, fish population conditions, uncontrolled season releases, operational conditions, and other factors, and will update the Restoration Flow Recommendation as conditions change.

Summary Volumes				
GRAVELLY FORD FLOWS AVAILABLE VERSUS RA RECOMMENDATION				
		Available	Used	Balance
Total GRF River Flow Target without 5 cfs (March 1, 2025 - Feb 28, 2026):		305.210 TAF	220.879 TAF	84.330 TAF
Restoration Allocation Flow		305.210 TAF	220.879 TAF	84.330 TAF
Exchange Flow		0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF
Buffer Flows		0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF	0.000 TAF
URF's Disposed of as of			2/1/2026	0.000
Use Buffer Flows? no		Net Alloc Remainder		84.330 TAF

