

Restoration Administrator Flow Recommendation

To: Don Portz, Chad Moore, Regina Bricka
CC: Rain Emerson, Rufino Gonzalez, Gary Bobker, Steve Ottemoeller, Ian Buck-Macleod, TAC, FWC
Date: March 9, 2026
From: Tom Johnson, Restoration Administrator
Subject: Revised March Recommendation for 2026 Restoration Flows

The following is a revised March 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. This Recommendation is issued in response to additional fisheries and operational information, and **replaces the recommendation dated March 2, 2026.**

Background

The SJRRP has issued an Updated 2026 Restoration Allocation (Allocation) dated February 20, 2026, which designates 2026 as a **Normal-Wet** Water Year Type with an Unimpaired Inflow hybrid forecast of 1,642 thousand acre-feet (TAF) and provides an allocation of Restoration Flows of 310.253 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.

The Upper San Joaquin watershed has experienced above average precipitation so far in the 2026 water year. The first three months of the water year were each above average with January slightly below average. Each of the first four months of the water year were noted for abnormally high air temperatures in the Sierra Nevada, especially during precipitation events. Through January, the rain-snow line has typically ranged from 6,500' to 9,000', resulting in more rain than snow falling in the watershed.

February 11-19, a series of colder storms substantially increased the snowpack volume. These storms added to the modest snowpack at higher elevations and brought the first snow to the lower elevations. Thus, snowpack at elevations below 8,000' improved substantially. Dry conditions are resumed as of early March, and generally dry conditions are forecast through April. In the absence of substantial additional precipitation, it is anticipated that the next Allocation will decrease.

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 March.

2. Ramp flows down in April to balance adult attraction, cold pool preservation and ability to capture adults below Sack Dam.
3. Maintain a connected river through June – October using spring flows shifted into the summer baseflow period.
4. Potentially release a fall pulse in one or 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 URFs 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, b) provide sufficient flows in Reaches 4 and 5 for adult spring run migration and trapping, c) allow for adult salmon trapping and monitoring downstream of Sack Dam, and d) 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.

Restoration Flow Period	Date Range	Objective	Friant Release (est., varies due to Holding Contracts)	Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford	Total Flow at Gravelly Ford¹	Target Restoration Flow at Sack Dam (est.)
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 685 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 – March 30, 2026	Maximum Reach 3 flows	As necessary, est. 1,000 cfs	850 cfs	855 cfs	685 cfs
	<i>Maintain flows near maximum R3 seepage limits Mar 16 – March 30, without substantial recapture. Flow bench test if conditions permit.</i>					
	March 31 – April 4, 2026	Ramp down	As necessary, est. 950 - 750 cfs	580 cfs by April 4	585 cfs by April 4	685 to 480 cfs
April 5 – May 14, 2026	Hold flow to promote adult migration	As necessary, estimated at 695 cfs	580 cfs	585 cfs	480 cfs	

Restoration Flow Period	Date Range	Objective	Friant Release (est., varies due to Holding Contracts)	Restoration Flows at Gravelly Ford	Total Flow at Gravelly Ford¹	Target Restoration Flow at Sack Dam (est.)
	<i>Commencing March 31, ramp down to achieve a RF target flow of 580 cfs at GRF by April 5, then hold at 580 cfs of RF through May 14</i>					
	May 15 – May 28, 2026	Ramp Down and hold	As necessary, est. 800 - 510 cfs	As occurs	As occurs	200 cfs from May 16 th onwards
	<i>Drop flows at Sack Dam to 200 cfs on May 15th, by using recapture. Starting no earlier than May 15th, reduce flows from Friant Dam to achieve a target flow of 300 cfs of Restoration Flows at GRF as soon as possible thereafter.</i>					
Summer Connectivity	May 29 – June 10, 2026	Summer connectivity	As necessary, est. 465 cfs	250 cfs	265 cfs	125 cfs
	June 11 – September 30, 2026	Summer connectivity	As necessary, est. 375 cfs	160 cfs	165 cfs	70 cfs
	<i>Reduce flows to achieve 250 cfs of Restoration Flows at GRF by May 30. Further reduce flows to achieve 160 cfs of Restoration Flows at GRF by June 10.</i>					
Base Flow	October 1 – October 31, 2026	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, 2026	Connected river, spring run egg incubation,	As necessary, est. 420 cfs	230 cfs	235 cfs	135 cfs
Fall Pulse	December 1 – December 31, 2026	Connected river, juvenile rearing	As necessary, est. 440 cfs	320 cfs	325 cfs	190 cfs
Base Flows	January 1 – February 28, 2027	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 approximately 221 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):		310.253 TAF	220.800 TAF	89.453 TAF
Restoration Allocation Flow		310.253 TAF	220.800 TAF	89.453 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	89.453 TAF

