

Newsletter

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER AGREEMENT

September 1998

Reclamation Releases Draft EIS/EIR on Meeting Flow Objectives

September 22, 1998, is the proposed release date for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) on Meeting Flow Objectives for the San Joaquin River Agreement.

The document analyzes the proposed action -- a water supply program for instream flows in the San Joaquin River system. This water would provide protective measures for fall-run chinook salmon in the San Joaquin River under the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP), an experimental study on the impact of flow, non-flow, and export rates on the salmon fisheries in the lower San Joaquin River. Water would be used over the period 1999-2010, and the flows would vary annually depending on hydrologic conditions.

The draft EIS/EIR also discusses the relative impacts of one alternative action and the No Action alternative. A summary of the hydrologic modeling conducted for the impact analysis is included as Appendix A. Modeling results will be available on the Internet at www.mp.usbr.gov/mp140/vampdir.html upon release of the Draft EIS/EIR.

During the 45-day public review period, two public hearings will be held in October to receive public comments (see box for

meeting information). Participants will receive a poster depicting the life cycle of the chinook salmon and explaining key components of the San Joaquin River Agreement. The projected deadline for written comments is November 6, 1998.

Public Hearings on Draft EIS/EIR

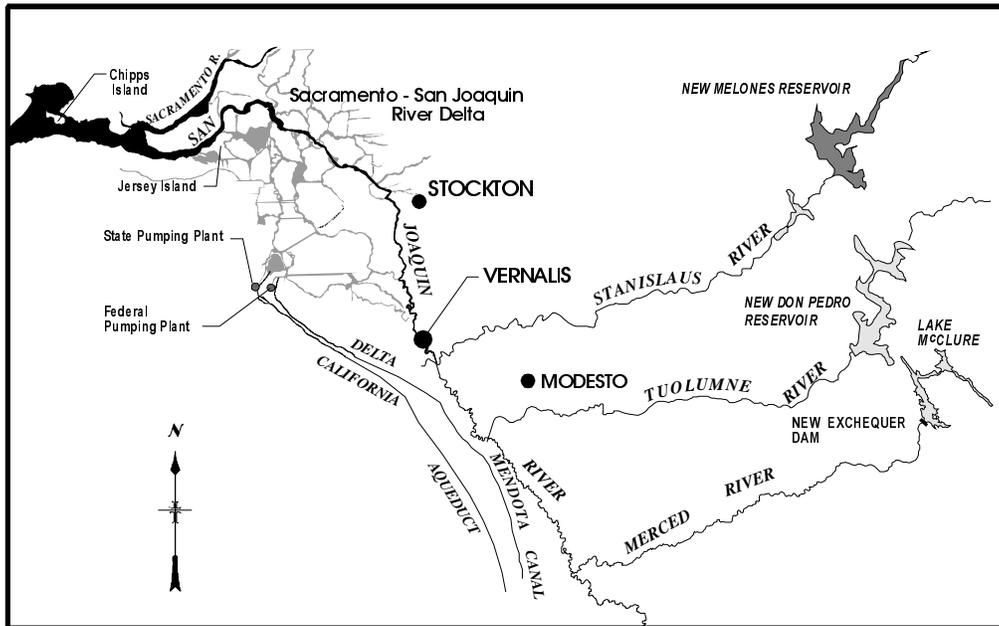
In Sacramento

Friday, October 23, 1998
2:00 - 4:30 p.m.
3310 El Camino Avenue
Basement Conference Room A

In Modesto

Thursday, October 29, 1998
6:30 - 9:00 p.m.
1231 Eleventh Street
Modesto Irrigation District Multi-Purpose
Room (South Entrance, Second Floor)

Written comments may be faxed to 209/487-5397 or mailed to Mr. Mike Delamore, South Central California Area Office, 2666 N. Grove Industrial Drive, Suite #106, Fresno, CA 95727-1551.



Three Components Key to Proposed Water Supply Program

Three components comprise the proposed water supply program:

- 1) a 31-day pulse flow in April-May to support the VAMP that would require up to 110,000 acre-feet annually;
- 2) additional water for a fall attraction flow for salmon in October (12,500 acre-feet) from the Merced Irrigation District; and
- 3) Additional water from the Oakdale Irrigation District (up to 26,000 acre-feet less amount used for 31-day pulse flow) as required by the Bureau of Reclamation for any authorized purpose of the New Melones project including the Central Valley Project Improvement Act environmental purposes of fish and wildlife habitat restoration, endangered species protection, and Bay-Delta water quality and flow objectives.

The water would be provided by the San Joaquin River Group Authority from members

who are willing sellers. These willing sellers are Oakdale and South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts on the Stanislaus River, Turlock and Modesto Irrigation Districts on the Tuolumne River, Merced Irrigation District on the Merced River, and the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority on the San Joaquin River. A total of 137,500 acre-feet of water (up to 110,000 acre-feet for the VAMP) could be provided, and up to 92 percent of this water is expected to come directly from surface water sources including reservoir storage and changes in diversions and release patterns from reservoirs. Other possible sources of the water would be groundwater, tailwater recovery, and conservation.

Testimony Heard at SWRCB Water Rights Proceeding

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is conducting a major water right proceeding to assign responsibility to water users for implementation of the standards established in its 1995 Water Quality Control

Plan (WQCP) for the San Francisco Bay/
Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta Estuary.

In Phase 2, which commenced July 21, 1998, the SWRCB heard the case-in-chief or supporting arguments for the San Joaquin River Agreement presented by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In an unprecedented team effort, Federal, State, and local agencies urged the SWRCB to consider adopting the agreement as the San Joaquin River alternative for implementing the WQCP.

The presentation included testimony by a panel of eminent biologists from the public and private sectors: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the San Joaquin River Group, and the State Water Contractors. While not all agreed that more flows would not be needed, these scientists did concur that the San Joaquin River Agreement and VAMP provide protection equivalent to the WQCP. This equivalency determination was based on the provision of additional flows--up to 110,000 acre-feet in some year types--coupled with export reductions during the pulse flow period, the installation of a barrier at the head of Old River in the Delta, as well as the basic flow requirements.

On August 12, 1998, the SWRCB issued a supplemental hearing notice for a Phase 2A. The exhibits and evidence for this phase are due September 15, 1998. In Phase 2A, the SWRCB will consider what requirements for implementing the flow-dependent objectives in the WQCP should be adopted in a water right decision applicable to the San Joaquin River watershed. The San Joaquin River Agreement and VAMP will be compared to other alternatives for implementing the flow objectives.

Fish Story

The fall run chinook salmon is the subject of ever-closer study as scientists piece together the intriguing story of its life in the San Joaquin River system. Detailed information is required to clearly understand how human activity impacts or can work to improve living conditions for this species. An informative poster depicting the life cycle of the San Joaquin River fall run chinook salmon is being developed. Its graphical and narrative descriptions will also feature the VAMP monitoring and study programs. Copies of the poster will be available at the October public hearings on the Draft EIS/EIR.

ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED WITH THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER AGREEMENT INCLUDE:

*California Department of Fish and Game
California Department of Water Resources
City and County of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Reclamation
 Fish and Wildlife Service
Environmental Protection Agency*
Kern County Water Agency
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Natural Heritage Institute*
San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority
San Joaquin River Group Authority
 Modesto Irrigation District
 Turlock Irrigation District
 Merced Irrigation District
 South San Joaquin Irrigation District
 Oakdale Irrigation District
 Friant Water Users Authority
 San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors
 Water Authority and member districts
Santa Clara Valley Water District
State Water Contractors
The Bay Institute of San Francisco*
Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District
Westlands Water District*

**participated in development but have not signed the Letter of Support*



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***Got questions
Want copies
Changed your address***



Please contact:

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Dan Fults
Friant Water Users Authority
916/441-1931

-or-

visit our webpage
www.mp.usbr.gov/mp140/vampdir.html

Prepared by Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region, Office of Public Affairs
For information, call 916/978-5100 (TDD 916/978-5608) or visit www.mp.usbr.gov