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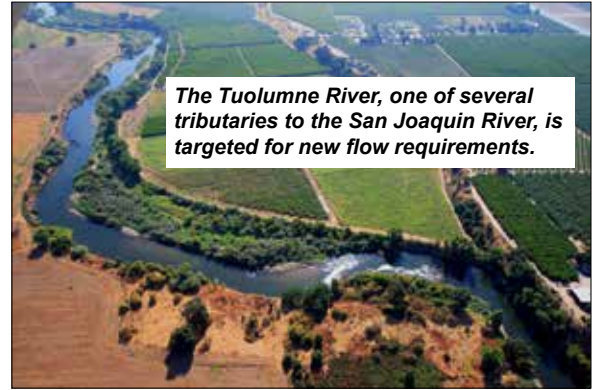
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An informational newsletter for water users and landowners in the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors' service area.

EXCHANGE perspective

FEBRUARY 2019

Water Board votes to restrict water supplies despite voluntary settlement agreements



The hopes that a group of proposed voluntary settlement agreements between water districts and others that would result in substantial amounts of water dedicated for instream flow in most tributaries to the Sacramento

– San Joaquin Rivers Delta and Delta outflow would be enough to avoid far-reaching restrictions on available water supplies were dashed by the State Water Resources Control Board.

The agreements were hammered out in an effort to avoid the Water Board's action that was taken during its Dec. 12 meeting.

"A lot of work went into those proposals and it was significant that various water groups and agencies agreed on a method to make the additional water flows available," said Executive Director Chris White of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors. "The proposals were pulled together up to the last minute and we are still hoping that the Board may reconsider its action."

Continued Page 2

Agencies considering new bi-op

Recent years of drought and improved science prompted a federal Biological Assessment calling for a re-initiation of consultation on the coordinated long-term operation of State and federal water projects.

"This is good news, especially for water users south of the Delta," commented Executive Director Chris White of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors. "The current Biological Opinion governing exports of water from the Delta have curtailed deliveries."

"It has been 10 years since the biological opinions on the coordinated

longterm operation of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project were issued," added Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Regional Director Ernest Conant.

The new Biological Assessment has been delivered to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for consideration in developing new biological opinions covering CVP and SWP operations. The agencies are expected to issue final biological opinions during the summer.

"We will continue to monitor this process and provide appropriate information and research in order to safeguard and increase water supply," said White.

Emergency resolution ---

Quick action taken to safeguard Sack Dam

Investigations with engineers regarding the modifying of the existing Sack Dam, coupled with newly discovered information relating to the existing Dam led to some startling news that the current Dam was in jeopardy of failing.

“Earlier this year I began working with engineers on how to raise the dam a couple of feet to preserve water lost to subsidence until the new dam (as part of the San Joaquin River Restoration Project) could be built,” explained John Wiersma, San Luis Canal Company General Manager. “I found out that the existing Dam was in jeopardy of failing structurally.”

“Engineering drawings revealed that there was insufficient reinforcement underneath the Dam”, Wiersma explained. “Wood pilings were used when the Dam was rebuilt in 1947 and that underpinning had more than likely since rotted away.

“I also learned from discussions with district staff that during the 2012 flood the water created a hole underneath the Dam, which was repaired with rock,” he added. “More work still needed to be done.”

Resolution of Emergency

Wiersma acted quickly and the Henry Miller Reclamation District’s Board of Trustees passed a Resolution of Emergency in November. Work began December 3rd to reinforce the Dam and was completed in January.

“Key to the quickness of getting the work done was the emergency nature surrounding the potential loss of the Dam, and the rapid response by the Army Corps of Engineers to fast-track the permitting process,” he said.

Water Board’s decision poses threat...

Continued from Page 1

“The Board adopted the Substitute Environmental Document (SED) for Phase 1 of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan that included restrictions on water supply to farms and cities,” White said. “But the Board also directed their staff to analyze the volunteer settlement agreements and report back their findings. The adoption of Phase 1 is expected to set off a series of legal actions as the east side tributary agencies and others try to protect themselves against the unjustified taking of Valley water supplies for outflow.”

The Water Board’s December meeting was the first opportunity for the Board members to view the voluntary settlement agreements since the various groups developed the final



While the emergency work of reinforcing the structure of Sack Dam was being completed, the height of the Dam was raised several feet.

An RG-8 permit, issued by the Corps, streamlined coordination with other agencies to rapidly gain the required approvals. Wiersma added he also worked with the California Fish and Wildlife to gain the necessary permits.

“Without the agencies working in response to the emergency that we were facing,” he said, “the Dam could have failed at any time and that would have been a disaster.”

“The Dam is now structurally sound, and we will continue with plans already underway to construct a new Dam,” said Wiersma. “This is at least a four to five year project, and we now have the confidence we will be able to continue delivering water to our farmers in the meantime.”

version of the agreements as the meeting neared.

“At least the Board gave recognition to the tremendous amount of work that went in to developing the agreements,” he added. “Individuals within both the Department of Water Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife were invaluable in their efforts to develop the agreements.”

The Board is now focusing on Phase 2, which pertains to the Sacramento River and its tributaries. White noted that the analysis of the voluntary agreements by the Board’s staff could lead to an adoption of voluntary

Continued Next Page

Sac Valley tour provides insights for projects planned for San Joaquin River

A tour of successful fish screens and other structures along the Sacramento River is assisting local water officials in planning major facilities along the San Joaquin River.

Central California Irrigation District and San Luis Canal Company are working with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the San Joaquin River Restoration Program to design and construct a fish screen at the new Sack Dam and new Arroyo Canal headworks and a fish screen and new control structure at Mendota Pool.

“We arranged a tour for key staff and board members within the Exchange Contractors service area to visit similar type structures in the Sacramento Valley on the Sacramento River System,” reported Executive Director Chris White of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors and Water Authority.

“We were able to see the facilities in place and interact with those board members and staff at the local level to get a sense of the challenges in building those facilities,” he

Water Board...

Continued from previous page

agreements as opposed to the proposed taking under the SED, which would greatly reduce water supplies south of the Delta that could cripple the economy of the valley.

If adopted by the Board, the voluntary settlement agreements could provide:

- Improved water supply reliability to the Sacramento Valley, the Sacramento region, the San Joaquin Valley, and southern California.
- Significant quantities of water, on a voluntary basis, for instream flow in nearly every major stream tributary to the

added. “It was especially helpful to learn what they had to accomplish to put together a successful project.”

Officials with the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority and the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District served as hosts for the tour.

“I do think the insights provided by both agencies rela-

tive to how to put together a successful project will be invaluable for us,” White said, “The facilities are modern and state of the art; plus, the level of reliability since installation has been very successful.”

A two-year design process has begun for the projects at Sack Dam and the Mendota Pool. Once the design work is completed and approved, White expects a two-year building

Directors and staff from the Exchange Contractors service area were able to see facilities along the Sacramento River system as part of their research efforts to build similar



facilities at Sack Dam and the Mendota Pool. Fish screens installed by the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority (above) and Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District are pictured.

process to follow.

The estimated cost for the two projects is approximately \$55-60 million for Sack Dam and \$80 million for the Mendota Pool. Funding for the two projects is derived from the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.

Sacramento - San Joaquin Rivers Delta and Delta outflow, while balancing the impacts that may result from land fallowing and other actions to generate these flows.

- Habitat improvements and other non-flow measures to enhance fish and wildlife resources in the Delta and streams tributary to the Delta.
- A secure and ongoing source of funding to implement water purchase programs, habitat restoration, and robust science programs to ensure that both water and money dedicated to environmental enhancement and restoration are being used wisely.



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'Non-critical' year provides assurances

*By Chris White
Executive Director*

A February 15 announcement by the Bureau of Reclamation has classified 2019 as a non-critical water year under the Exchange Contract regarding allocations to member entities of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority.

This is good news for landowners within the service area of the four member units of the Authority. Even though our contract with the Bureau of Reclamation provides a "reliable" supply of water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, knowing that the water is there through a non-critical water year designation provides a welcoming assurance.

Our landowners can now expect a 100 percent delivery this year. Under the Exchange Contract, water years classified as "critical" could result in only 75 percent of supplies delivered from the Delta.

In the weeks leading up to the announcement, we had expected the non-critical announcement would be

forthcoming based on the Department of Water Resources February 1 forecast announcement for inflows into Lake Shasta.

According to a letter received from Michael Jackson, Area Manager for the Bureau's Mid-Pacific Region, the agency "will continue to review the forecasted full natural inflow to Shasta Lake as frequently as conditions and information warrant." That means there could always be a change to the non-critical classification but we do not expect that to take place.

State Water Project water users have been informed that they will receive 35 percent of their contract deliveries. That number is the third estimate made by DWR and could go higher as the water season develops.

Despite the non-critical water year announcement, uncertainties related to environmental regulations issued in recent years could still jeopardize the level of water deliveries into our service area.