



Panel Discussion on the San Joaquin River Restoration Program

Background

The San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP) is a long-term effort to restore flows and reintroduce Chinook salmon to the San Joaquin River. Chinook salmon live most of their lives in the ocean, but migrate upstream to spawn. The largest historic run of Chinook salmon was in the San Joaquin River, but those runs ended in 1942 when the Friant Dam was constructed and water was diverted for agriculture.

The SJRRP is a direct result of a settlement reached in 2006 on an 18-year lawsuit to provide sufficient fish habitat below Friant Dam. Federal legislation was passed in 2009 authorizing Federal agencies to implement the settlement.

The settlement established two goals:

- *Restoration*: To restore and maintain fish populations in “good condition” in the main stem of the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam to the confluence with the Merced River, including naturally reproducing and self-sustaining populations of salmon and other fish.
- *Water Management*: To reduce or avoid adverse water supply impacts to all of the Friant Division long-term contractors that may result from the Interim Flows and Restoration Flows provided for in the settlement. ([Settlement](#))

The first water releases from Friant Dam, called Interim Flows, occurred October 1, 2009. Interim flows are adjusted based on a number of factors and continue to provide increased flows through the San Joaquin River. Full Restoration Flows are scheduled to begin by January 1, 2014. The SJRRP also conducts field investigations to gather data for future decision-making. Data collection activities include inventory and monitoring of fish abundance and diversity, riparian habitat mapping, topographic surveys, monitoring of temperature and vegetation, and fish telemetry.

A panel discussion will include Alicia Forsythe, Program Manager for the SJRRP, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; Steve Chedester, Executive Director, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority; Monty Schmitt, Senior Scientist and San Joaquin River Restoration Project Manager, Natural Resources Defense Council; Dave Koehler, Executive Director, San Joaquin River Parkway & Conservation Trust; and Ron Jacobsma, General Manager, Friant Water Authority, to provide the Commission with updated information on the program and stakeholder perspectives.

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