



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
Central Valley Operations Office  
3310 El Camino Avenue, Suite 300  
Sacramento, California 95821

IN REPLY  
REFER TO:

CVO-100  
WTR 4.10

**APR 01 2016**

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. Thomas Howard  
Executive Director  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Howard:

Subject: Temporary Urgency Change Petition – San Joaquin River Flow at Airport Road Bridge, Vernalis; and Dissolved Oxygen on the Stanislaus River

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) requests a modification of Table 3 of Water Rights Decision 1641, River Flows for the San Joaquin at Vernalis for the months of March through June 2016. This request includes both the “base” flows from March 1 to April 14 and May 16 through June 30, as well as the spring “pulse” flows April 15 to May 15. Reclamation also requests modification of the dissolved oxygen objective on the Stanislaus River through the summer of 2016. These requests are consistent with the Central Valley Project and State Water Project Drought Contingency Plan which provides periodic updates of the current and projected hydrologic conditions and actions proposed to balance multiple needs through the remainder of this year. Our petition is enclosed.

Many San Joaquin River indicators continue to remain in drought conditions. California Department of Water Resources’ March 1, 2016, runoff forecast indicated that the San Joaquin Valley Index classification is “critical”. Unimpaired inflow forecasts for the major tributaries to the San Joaquin River are still only below the historical average. Reservoir storage at New Melones Reservoir, Don Pedro Reservoir, and Lake McClure, are only at about 41%, 82%, and 60% of average for this date.

Granting relief for the base flow requirements for March through June will improve storage conditions at New Melones Reservoir; which will improve water temperatures on the Stanislaus River and will assist in making water available for salinity control at Vernalis, San Joaquin River flows later in the year and in subsequent years.

In the past, in order to assist with initial implementation of the Vernalis pulse flows, Reclamation participated in, and funded in large part, the San Joaquin River Agreement (SJRA) from approximately 2000 through 2009, including two extensions through 2011. Under the SJRA, Reclamation funded annually the availability of water from the senior water right holders on the

Stanislaus River, the reservoir operators on the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers and the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority to contribute to the pulse flows. In 2011, Reclamation attempted to negotiate a similar arrangement with the SJRA parties, but such efforts were not successful. Instead, Reclamation purchased water from Merced Irrigation District on the Merced River in 2012 and 2013 to ensure continued compliance with SJRA flows. Since that time, the sequential critically dry years have severely limited any available water for purchase for this purpose.

Reclamation will present the basic elements of our request and solicit input at the April 5, 2016, Board workshop on this topic. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please contact Mr. Jeff Rieker at 916-979-2197.

Sincerely,



Ronald Milligan  
Manager, Operations

Enclosure -3

cc: Mr. Les Grober  
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