

*Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control
& Water Conservation Improvement District*

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item 5: Water Supply Conditions

Monday, August 7, 2023

The Strategic Plan relevant priorities are: **Security** through ensuring reliable, resilient, and available sources of water; **Advocacy** in support of equitable water resource stewardship; and **Use** of water in effective and beneficial ways as a public resource, all in alignment with the District's Mission to steward water resources for the benefit of people and the environment.

Operations of the Trans-Basin Diversion Through PG&E Owned "Potter Valley Project"

On July 5th, FERC issued a notice of comment period on PG&E's submitted flow variance for 2023 with a deadline for filing comments, motions to intervene, and protests of August 4, 2023. Submissions can be located on the FERC website.

On July 31, 2023, PG&E filed a Long-Term Flow Regime Request Due to Restricted Storage Capacity to FERC, a copy of which can be found on the District website (<https://rrfc.specialdistrict.org/updates>) and excerpts below. The long-term variance is very similar to the 2023 short term variance that FERC is currently reviewing, with added provisions for winter diversions.

"To reduce the potential seismic risk, PG&E has determined the radial gates at Scott Dam will remain open indefinitely, reducing the water storage capacity in Lake Pillsbury by approximately 20,000 acre-feet (af)... Given that the Project is not expected to return to historical normal operations that were the underlying basis for the license-required flows, PG&E is requesting a departure from the current license requirements from 2024 until Project Decommissioning is completed. Specifically, the proposed flow regime until Project Decommissioning would reduce East Branch Russian River (EBRR) flows in the summer and fall to proactively manage reservoir storage in a manner that protects Project facilities and minimizes potential impacts to aquatic species in the Eel River, including salmonid species that are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). In addition, per FERC's letters dated March 28, 2023, and April 28, 2023, PG&E has been engaged in discussions with agencies to develop this proposal to ensure license-required flows (as may be modified by FERC) can be satisfied while the spillway gates remain open indefinitely."

"Based on storage and water temperature projections, with PG&E and Agency coordination, flows at E-16 [East Fork Russian River in Potter Valley] may be adjusted between 5 (Critical WYT – 5 cfs) and 25 cfs (Dry WYT _25 cfs) when mean daily water temperatures at E-2 [in the Eel River] exceed 16 degrees Celsius to maintain cooler water temperatures for ESA-listed salmonid species downstream of Scott Dam. Additionally, E-16 flows can also be adjusted if the Lake Pillsbury storage forecast shows a reduction is needed to preserve adequate storage through the end of the year (or prolonged dry period).

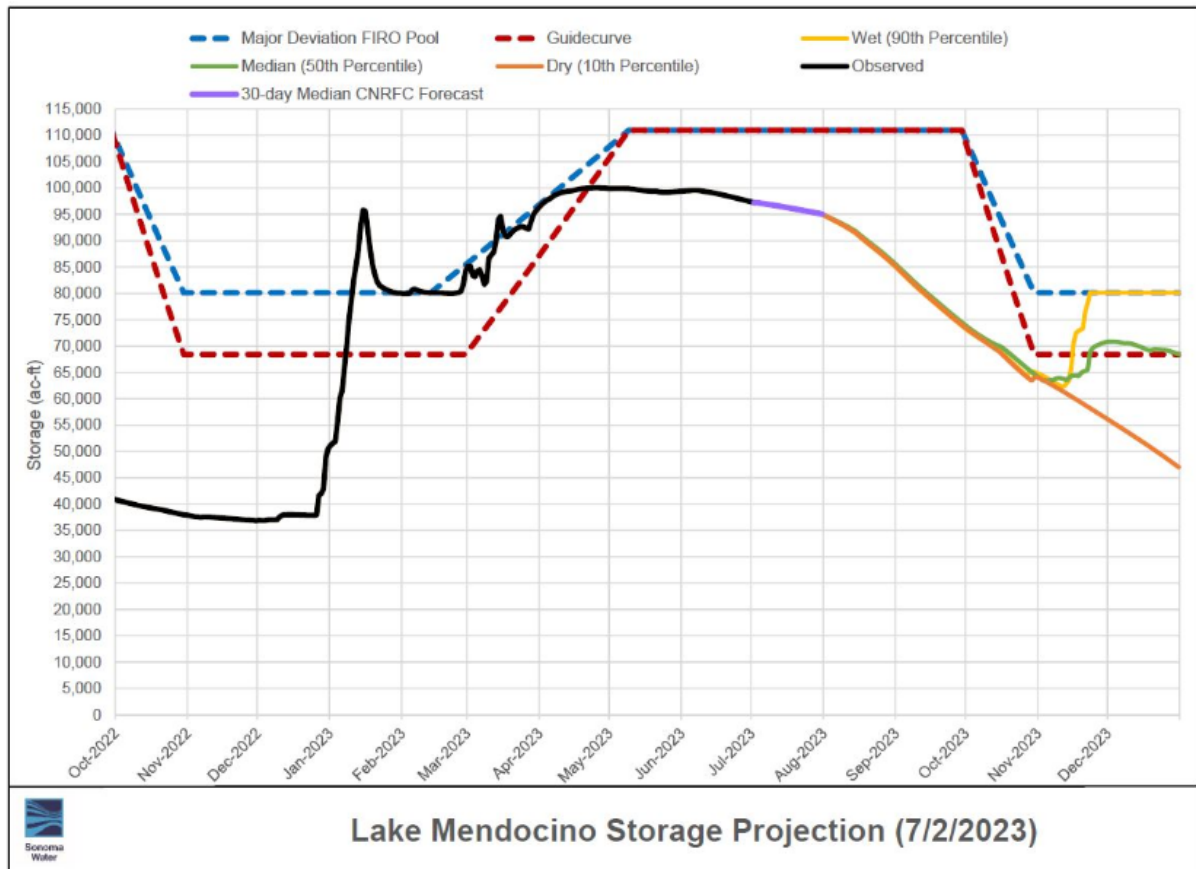
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“additional diversions may be allowed to EBRR when Lake Pillsbury is spilling, and all targeted environmental conditions (as determined by the Agencies) are satisfied in the Eel River. Diversions are limited by the bypass pipe capacity of approximately 135 cfs and using appropriate ramping rates and diversion thresholds (exemption from Section E.5 of the RPA). The Agencies will develop initial guidelines to submit to FERC by November 30, 2023, for minimum E-11 flow thresholds for spill diversions to E-16 to commence and end, as well as diversion ramping rates. PG&E may then develop an alternative E.5 diversion prescription based on Agency guidelines, which may be implemented upon Agency review and approval. These guidelines may be refined in subsequent years based on the mitigation monitoring efforts described below. PG&E will inform stakeholders of possible discretionary diversions, details of which will be included in the guidelines submitted by November 30, 2023.”

Lake Mendocino and the Mainstem Upper Russian River

Lake Mendocino storage level was 91,474 acre feet (af) on July 31, 2023, down from 96,212 af on July 9, 2023. The mainstem Russian River continues to operate under a Temporary Urgency Change Order. www.sonomawater.org/tucp
The approved modifications include the following changes:

- From May 1 through October 15, 2023, the instream flow requirements for the upper Russian River will be reduced from 185 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 125 cfs.
- From May 1 through October 15, 2023, the instream flow requirements for the lower Russian River will be reduced from 125 cfs to 70 cfs.



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