

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

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item 6, Water Supply Conditions

Monday, September 9, 2024

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.

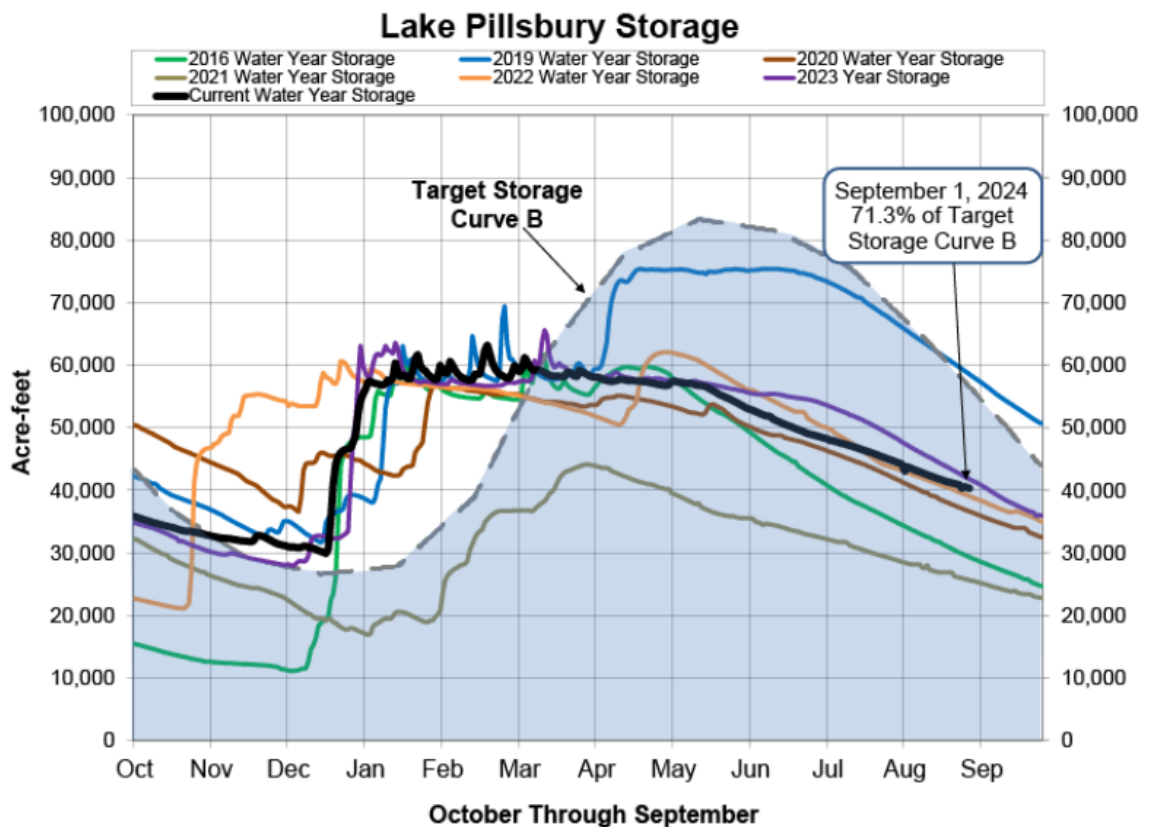
Operations of the Trans-Basin Diversion Through PG&E Owned “Potter Valley Project”

The Federal Energy Resources Commission (FERC) approved the 2024 flow variance submitted by PG&E in late June. PG&E has reconvened the Drought Working Group.

On July 4th, a request from the Round Valley Indian Tribes and the resource agencies was implemented, dropping the East Fork RR minimum flow requirement from 25 cfs to 5 cfs. However, due to the Potter Valley Irrigation District water supply contract with PG&E, there is currently 30-35 cfs in the East Fork. The variance will end with Lake Pillsbury storage exceeds 36,000 acre feet after October 1 or is superseded by another variance/license change (which is being developed by PG&E.)

On Jul 29, 2024, the City of Ukiah filed a Request for Rehearing with FERC regarding the flow variance approval. The City “criticizes FERC and PG&E restrictions that create an unnecessary, administratively-manufactured drought, despite normal water year conditions.” (from the **attached** press release.)

More information can be found on the District’s website: <https://www.rRFC.net/updates>.

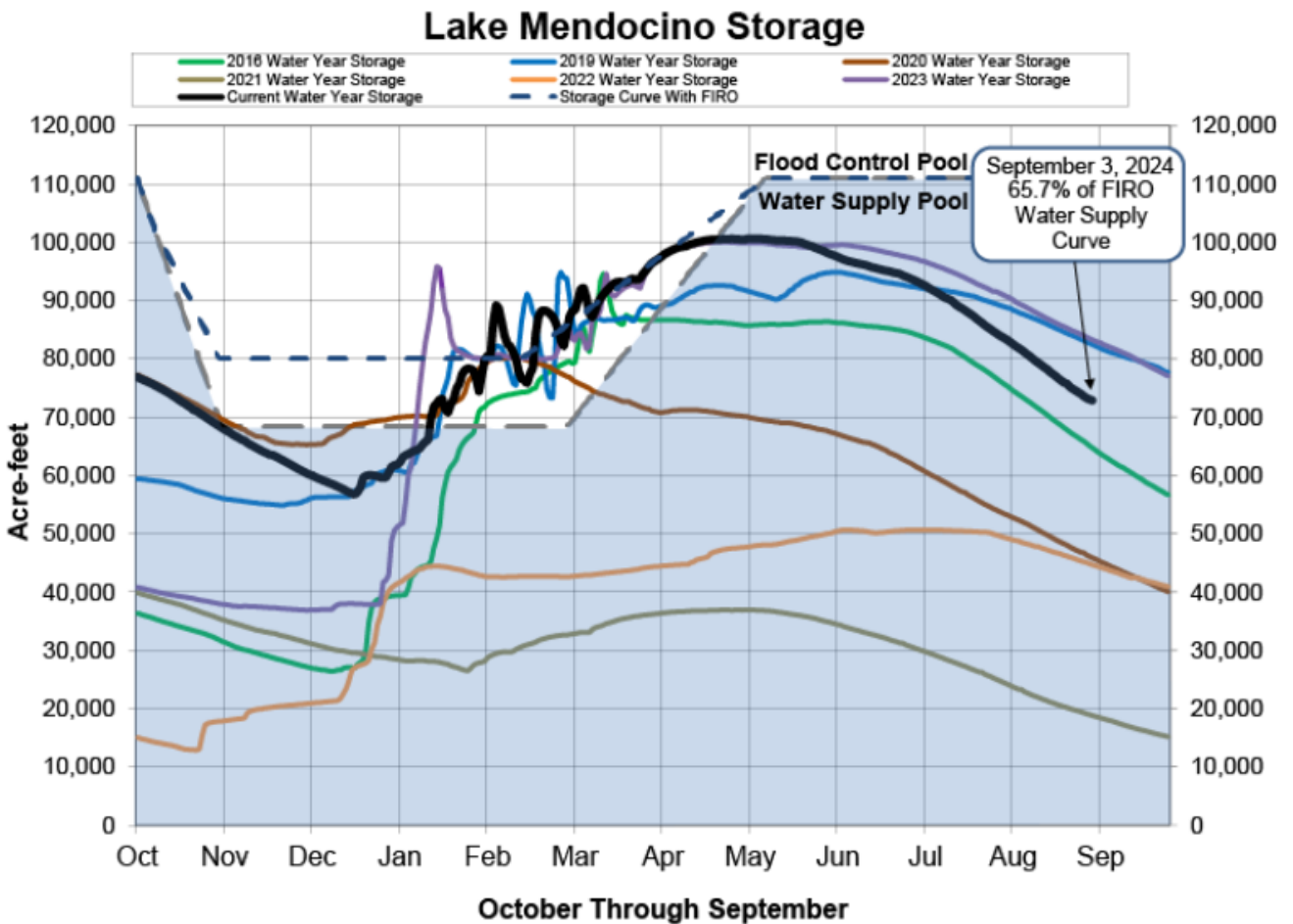


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Lake Mendocino and the Mainstem Upper Russian River

Lake Mendocino storage level was 72,876 acre feet (af) on September 3, 2024, down from 85,359 af on July 29, 2024. Sonoma Water filed temporary urgency change petitions with the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Water Rights requesting approval of temporary changes to water right Permits. The petitions seek authorization to implement a hydrologic index based on Lake Mendocino storage values, rather than the current index based on cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury, starting November 1, 2024. In the absence of the proposed changes, the applicable minimum instream flow requirements may require releases of water from Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma at levels that would risk significant depletions of storage levels that could cause impacts to human health and welfare and reduce water supplies needed for protection of listed salmon species in the Russian River. Therefore, Sonoma Water proposes alternative monthly storage values, in lieu of cumulative Lake Pillsbury inflow, to define the water supply conditions that determine which minimum instream flow requirements. The current Temporary Urgency Change Order is in effect until October 15, 2024 or superseded by another Order.

For more information, visit Sonoma Water’s TUCP webpage: www.sonomawater.org/tucp.



Attachments:

- City of Ukiah press release on rehearing request
- Sonoma Water Agency hydrological report (partial)

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Prepared and submitted to the Board of Trustees by: *Elizabeth Salomone, General Manager*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY OF UKIAH CRITICIZES FERC AND PG&E RESTRICTIONS THAT CREATE AN UNNECESSARY, ADMINISTRATIVELY-MANUFACTURED DROUGHT, DESPITE NORMAL WATER YEAR CONDITIONS

Ukiah, CA. August 9, 2024. – The City of Ukiah is taking action over impacts to the Upper Russian River, including environmental and economic harm to the region, caused by PG&E dramatically reducing flows to the Russian River from the Potter Valley Project. In a formal “Request for Rehearing” filed July 29th, the City again underscored how the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s (FERC) approval for PG&E’s reduction in water flows was made without fairly or adequately considering the harmful impacts to the Upper Russian River.

For 120 years, abandoned flows diverted from the Eel through the Potter Valley Project have been the foundation for progress in the Upper Russian River. But in the past few years PG&E has made yearly requests for a “variance” to reduce these flows. This year PG&E requested to reduce flows to the East Branch Russian River to match the dry water year minimum flow requirement of 25 cfs, with the “flexibility” to drop all the way down to 5 cfs. FERC granted the request.

FERC approved the request, despite the fact that this 2024 water-year is on track for a normal water-year. Eight days after FERC’s approval, PG&E immediately dropped flows all the way down to the extremely restricted 5 cfs level – as if we were in a dry or critical water year.

“Water is being diverted into the Russian River as if we were in a serious drought year, despite the fact that both water basins are clearly in at least normal conditions,” said Mari Rodin, City Council Member for the City of Ukiah. “This dramatic reduction risks creating a manufactured drought for our entire region reminiscent of the real drought in 2021, all without analyzing the impacts to our ecology, economy, and community. They dismissed our interests and took away our region’s water. It’s untenable.”

The National Environmental Policy Act requires federal agencies to carefully review the impacts of a proposed federal action on the human environment. But FERC’s Order did not include such an analysis, instead referencing a 24 year-old environmental impact statement (EIS) that is outdated and incomplete. FERC did not meaningfully discuss or consider how its approval would impact water users dependent on the Russian River and abandoned PVP flows, Ukiah’s ability to generate clean electricity through its hydropower facility, or endangered salmonids in the Russian River.

The City's Request for Rehearing asked FERC to comply with NEPA and conduct a new or supplemental analysis of the impacts to the Upper Russian River from reduced imports of PVP water. While this analysis is conducted, and acknowledging the interests of the Eel River, the City has only asked that in the meantime PG&E be allowed to reduce flows to no lower than 25 cfs, rather than down to 5 cfs.

Following the Order, Sonoma Water notified the State Water Resources Control Board that FERC's Order means that Lake Mendocino storage would be about 12,000 acre-feet lower by the end of this water year than it would be without the Order. This may have major impacts to the entire Upper Russian River – despite the second consecutive year of healthy rainfall.

"We recognize and acknowledge the needs our neighbors on the Eel have, but our needs must be recognized as well," said Glenn McGourty, Mendocino County Supervisor. "There is so much at stake for our community in the greater Ukiah Valley, and yet a thoughtful consideration of our interests is entirely lacking in PG&E's request and in FERC's decision. It's as if we don't matter to them."

"The fish and habitat in the Russian River deserve protection too," said Sean White, a fisheries biologist who filed a successful lawsuit against the Army Corps of Engineers and National Marine Fisheries Service for failure to protect endangered salmon below Coyote Valley Dam. "There is a pattern – a systemic, institutionalized pattern by federal agencies – of disregarding the interests of the Upper Russian River. It is time for our community to say, 'Enough – we are done being ignored.' "

"Our farms and businesses will suffer from the acceptance of this dramatic and unnecessary reduction," said Jazzmynn Randall, Executive Director of the Mendocino Farm Bureau. "We have worked hard to survive during dry years while waiting for the rains to return, but now in a good water year we are facing a manufactured drought that creates a standard that will harm agricultural output and cause long term economic damage."

The City of Ukiah's Request to FERC observes "The entire focus [of FERC's analysis] is on the Eel at the expense of the Russian.... To be clear, we ask for nothing more than that our interests be given equal weight to others' and that the impacts to our community: our families, our schools, our businesses, our orchards and vineyards, our listed species, and our environment, simply be identified and analyzed in accordance with the mandates of the National Environmental Policy Act."

For more information, contact Deputy City Manager, Shannon Riley, at sriley@cityofukiah.com.



Shannon Riley, Deputy City Manager

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State Water Resources Control Board
 Temporary Urgency Change Orders (6/6/2024)
 Russian River Hydrologic & Water Quality Report
 August 23, 2024 - August 29, 2024

Prepared as a requirement of the Orders approving Sonoma Water's Petition for Temporary Urgency Change in Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950, and 16596 (Applications 12919A, 15736, 15737, and 19351).

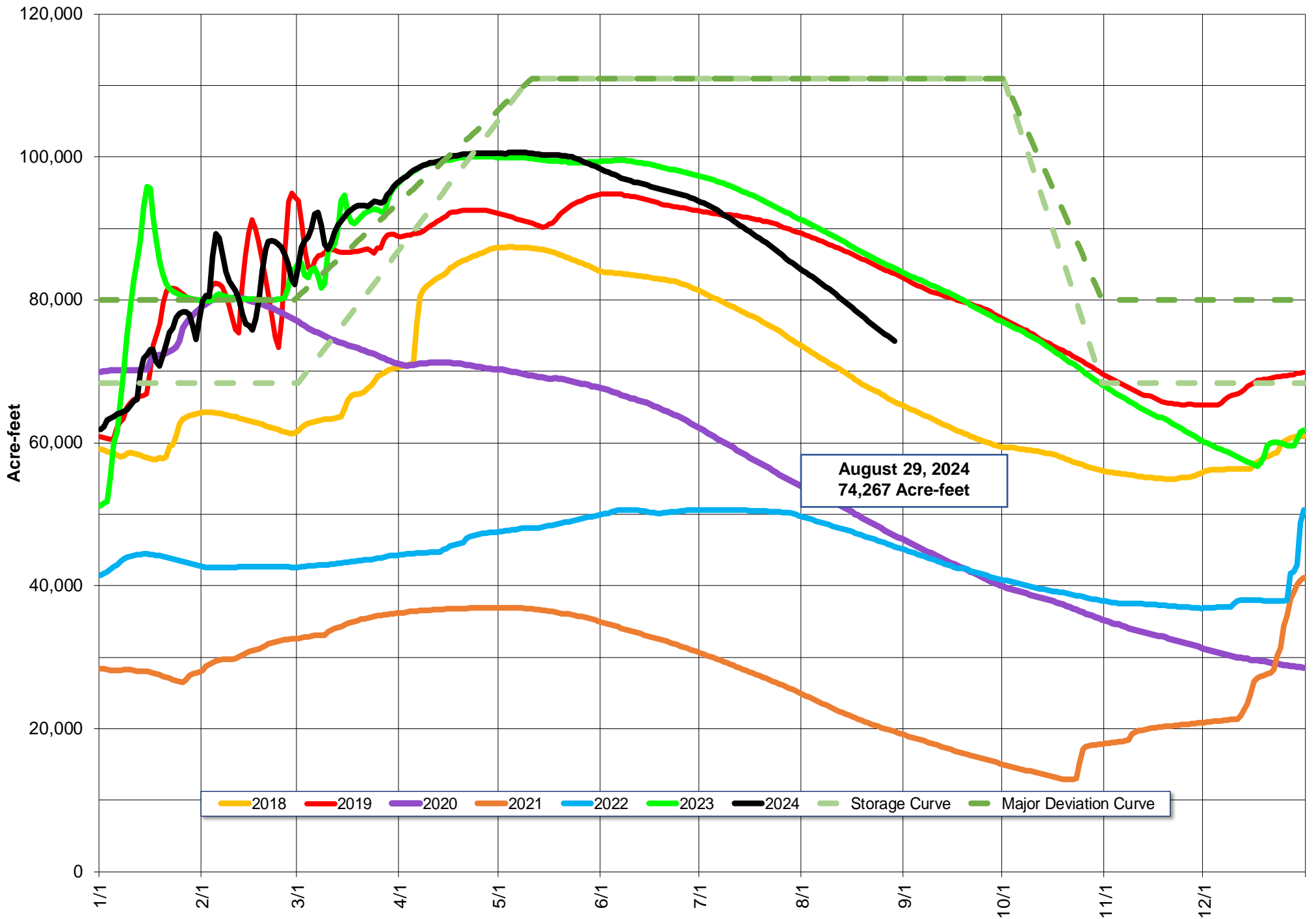
Instream Flow Requirements as of August 29, 2024

Basis	Reach	Instantaneous (cfs)	5-day Average (cfs)
Modified Per Order: Normal Condition	Upper Russian River	110	125
D-1610: Normal Condition	Dry Creek	80	-
Modified Per Order: Normal Condition	Lower Russian River	60	70

Upper and Lower Russian River are based on criteria as established in the Order issued 6/6/2024.

Lake Mendocino

Lake Mendocino Storage 2018 - 2024 and Storage Curve



Storage (acre-feet)	August 29, 2024	74,267	
Change in Storage (acre-feet)	Last 30 days	-10,499	-350
	Last 7 days	-2,010	-287
Daily Inflow (cfs)	Last 7 days	Min	28
		Max	59
		Mean	49
Release (cfs)	Last 7 days	Min	197
		Max	219
		Mean	205

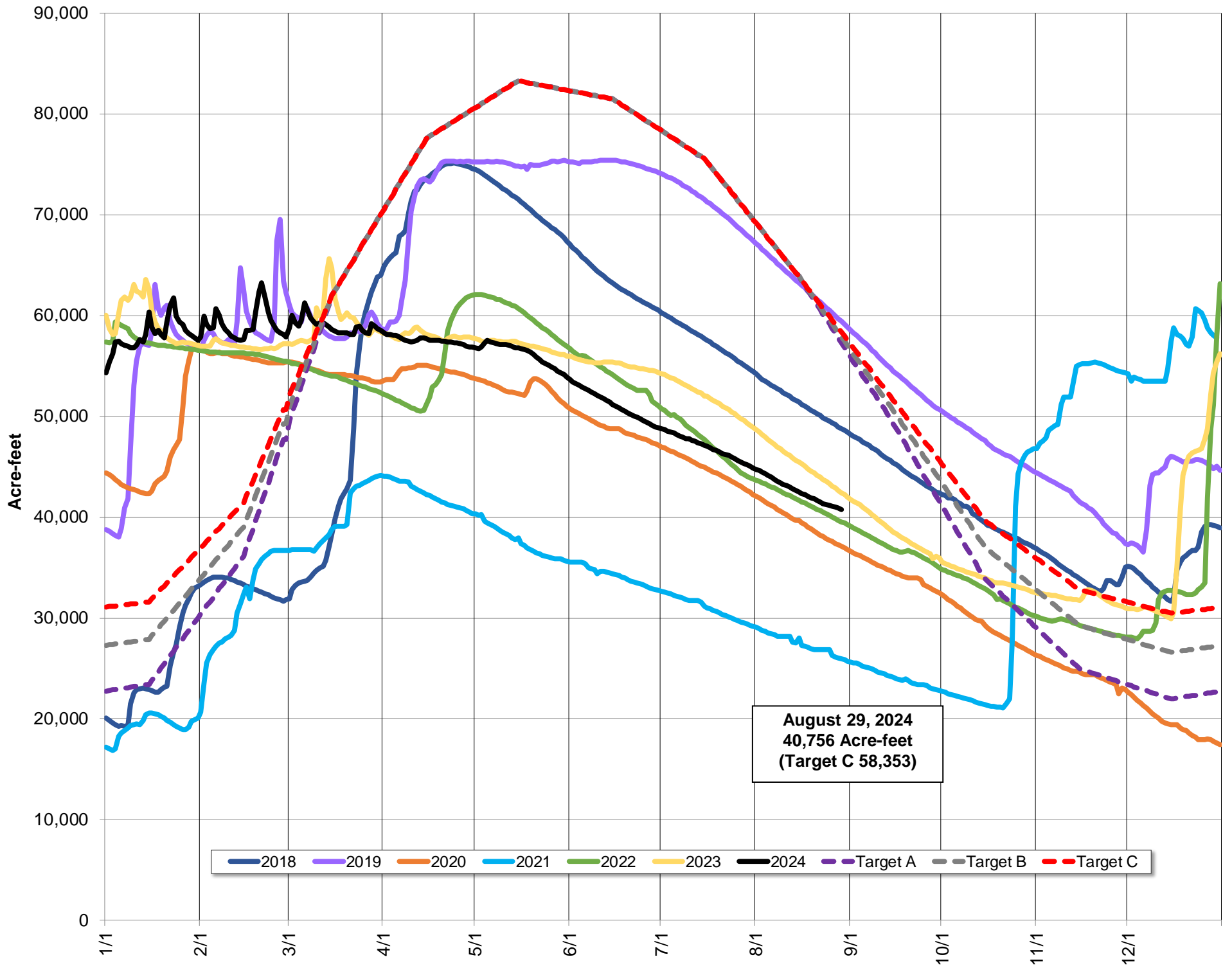
Potter Valley Project

PVP Diversion (cfs)	August 29, 2024	47
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Parameter	Date Range	Cumulative	Daily Average
Inflow* (acre-feet)	October 1, 2023 - August 30, 2024	487,132	1,458
	Last 7 days	257	37

*Inflow calculation based on criteria established in D1610

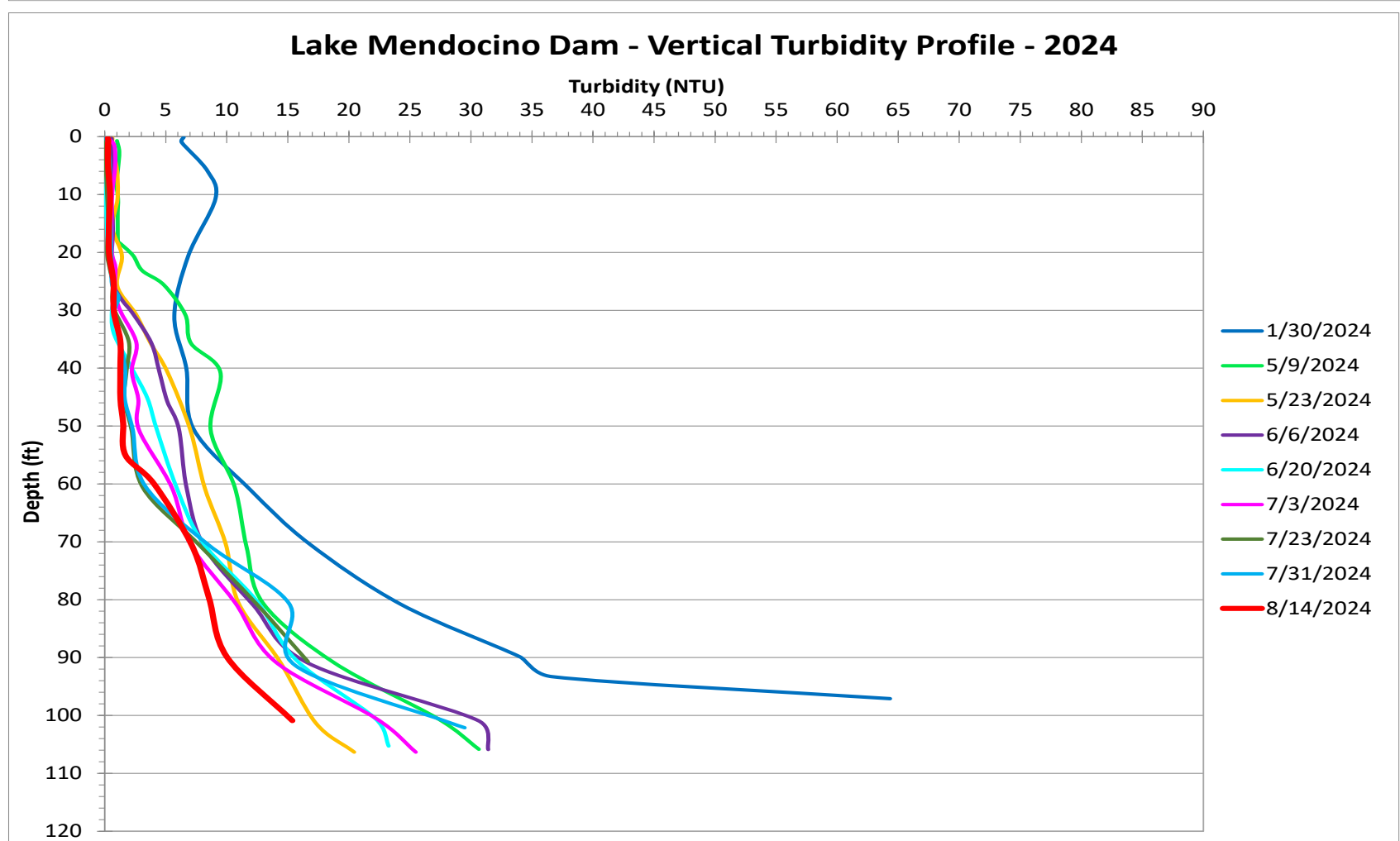
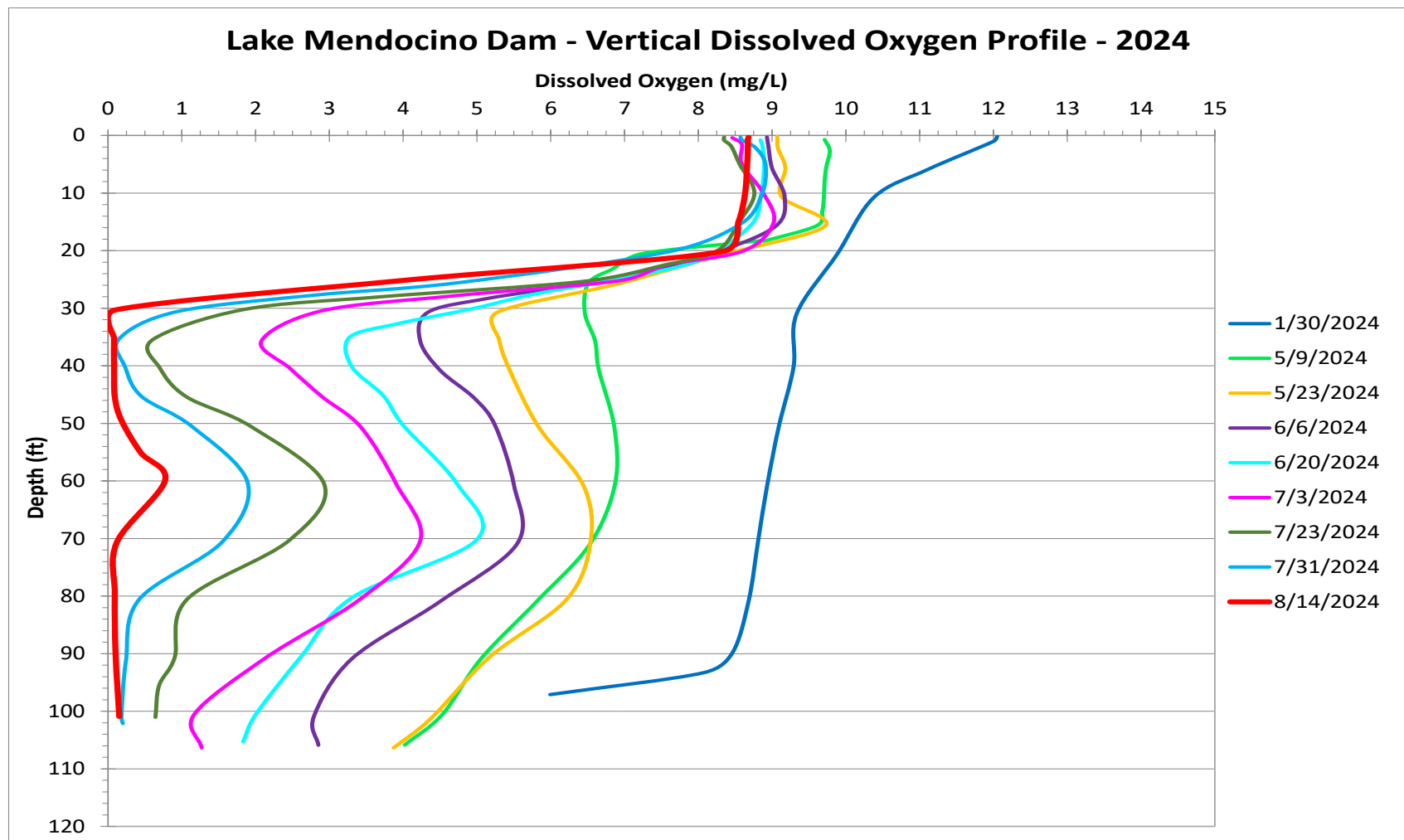
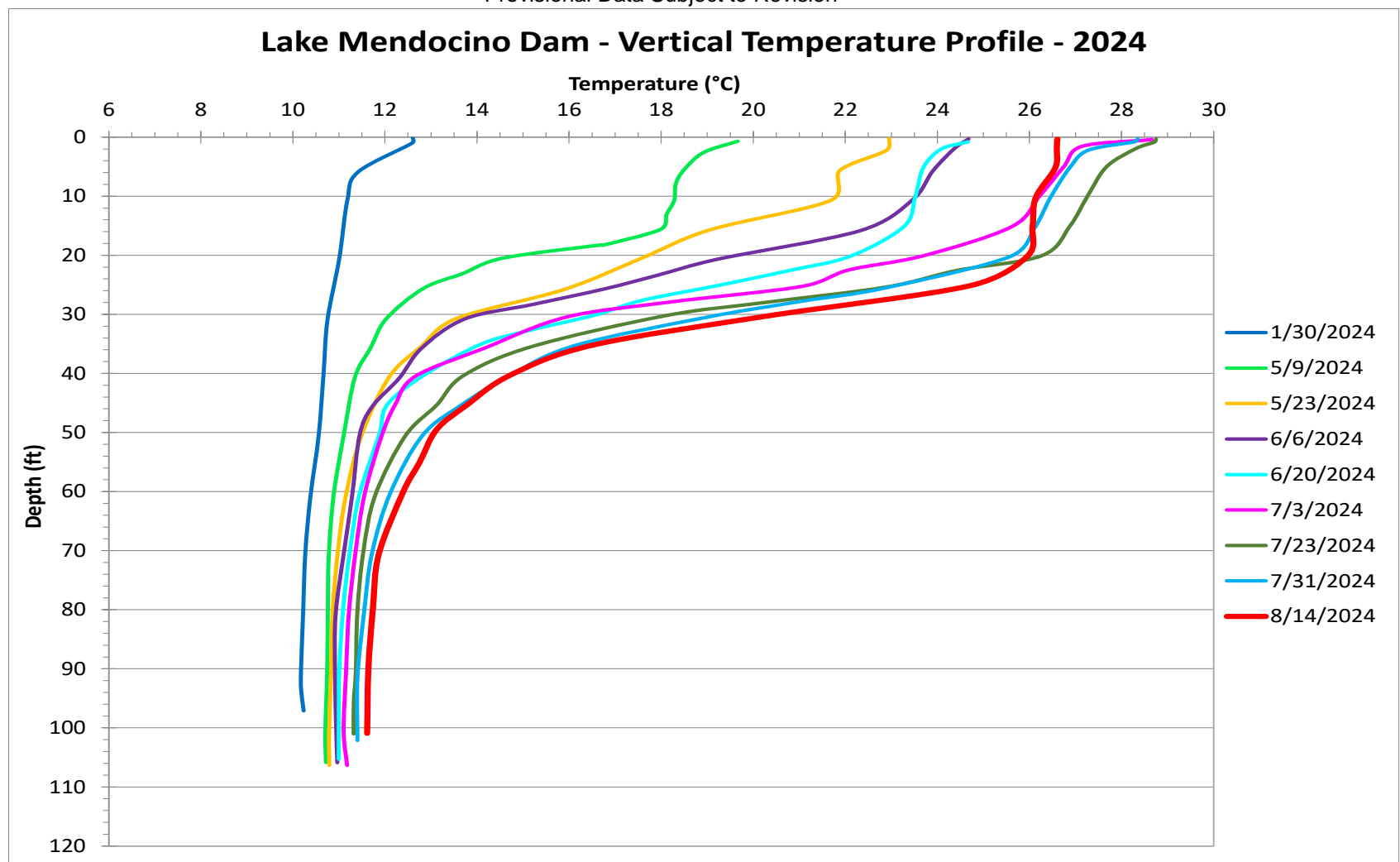
Lake Pillsbury Storage 2018 - 2024 and Target Storage Scenarios



August 29, 2024
40,756 Acre-feet
(Target C 58,353)

Lake Mendocino Water Quality Vertical Profiles (January 30 – August 14, 2024)

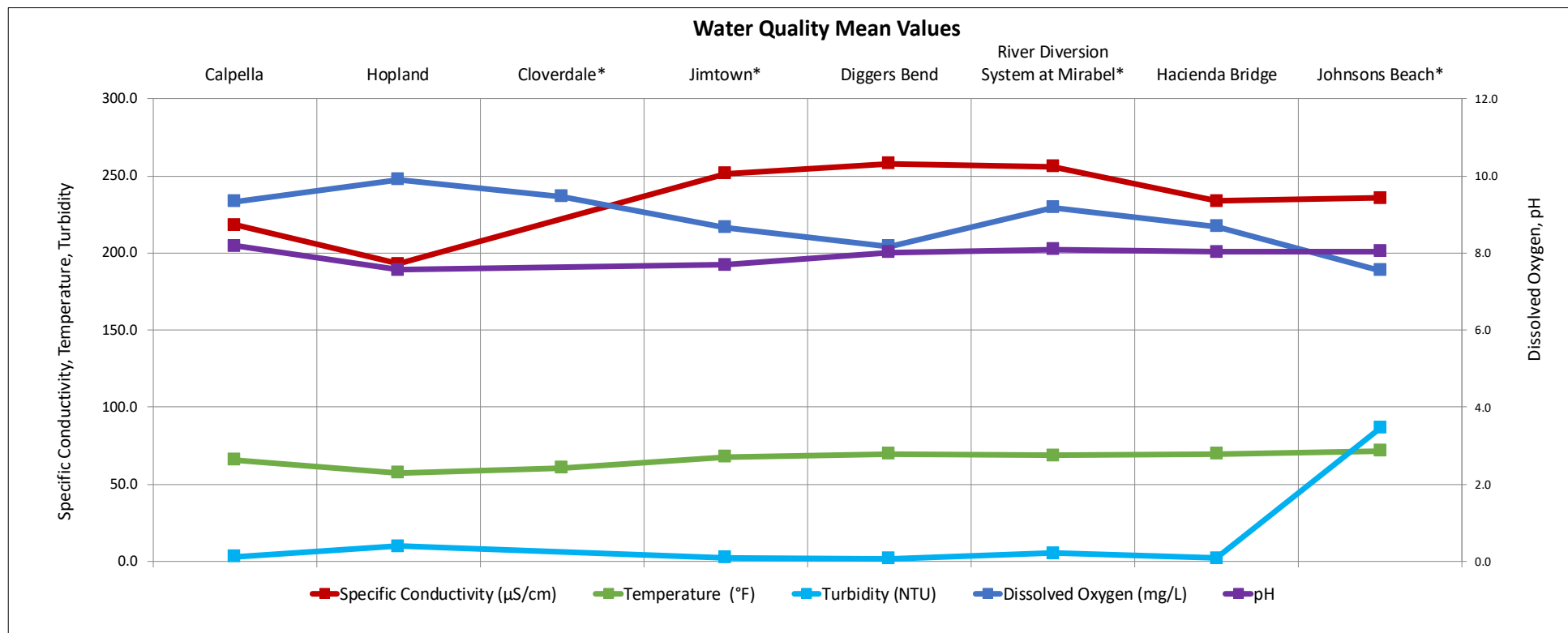
Provisional Data Subject to Revision



Russian River Flows (August 23, 2024 - August 29, 2024)

Parameter		Calpella	Hopland	Cloverdale*	Jimtown*	Diggers Bend	River Diversion System at Mirabel*	Hacienda Bridge	Johnsons Beach*
		USGS 11461500	USGS 11462500	USGS 11463000	USGS 11463682	USGS 11463980	SCWA	USGS 11467000	SCWA
Temperature (°F)	Min	62.1	54.9	57.6	64.2	66.2	66.7	65.8	70.1
	Max	70.7	60.3	65.1	72.0	74.1	71.2	74.1	74.3
	Mean	65.6	57.4	60.6	67.6	69.7	68.5	69.6	71.4
Specific Conductivity (µS/cm)	Min	214.0	191.0		249.0	256.0	238.6	231.0	135.4
	Max	223.0	195.0		257.0	261.0	276.8	237.0	249.6
	Mean	218.4	193.0		251.4	258.1	256.2	233.7	235.7
Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	Min	8.3	8.9	8.7	7.0	7.2	8.3	6.8	4.7
	Max	11.0	11.2	10.4	11.0	9.2	10.1	9.5	8.2
	Mean	9.3	9.9	9.5	8.7	8.2	9.2	8.7	7.5
Dissolved Oxygen (% Saturation)	Min	91.7	87.3	89.2	75.7	79.5	91.8	73.9	54.2
	Max	117.0	111.5	109.2	121.9	106.5	113.1	109.2	93.6
	Mean	100.0	96.4	95.7	95.0	91.6	101.6	97.6	86.2
pH	Min	8.0	7.4		7.4	7.8	7.9	7.4	7.8
	Max	8.5	7.9		8.1	8.2	8.2	8.5	8.1
	Mean	8.2	7.6		7.7	8.0	8.1	8.0	8.0
Turbidity (NTU)	Min	1.7	7.5		1.3	1.0	3.1	1.1	7.1
	Max	5.2	12.1		4.0	2.4	52.1	3.4	1484.1
	Mean	2.8	9.7		2.2	1.6	5.1	2.0	86.3

*Station operated seasonally



Gage	24-hr Average Flow (cfs)						
	Aug 23, 2024	Aug 24, 2024	Aug 25, 2024	Aug 26, 2024	Aug 27, 2024	Aug 28, 2024	Aug 29, 2024
The Forks*	219	219	214	210	205	197	197
Talmage USGS 11462080	200	197	194	188	185	174	174
Hopland USGS 11462500	220	218	219	214	210	199	198
Cloverdale USGS 11463000	195	195	194	194	188	175	169
Healdsburg USGS 11464000	158	163	166	165	162	157	151
Hacienda USGS 11467000	146	150	153	152	147	145	143

*West Fork(USGS 11461000) + East Fork (Coyote Valley Dam Release)

