

American River Region Proposed Voluntary Agreement and Associated Documents Key Points

1. Our Proposal Will Achieve Better Results

Voluntary agreements can provide a more comprehensive and durable set of solutions to improving Delta watershed conditions than would be possible through a one-size-fits-all regulation from the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) that is based solely on requiring reservoir releases to meet a percentage of “unimpaired flows” in rivers and in the Delta. The table below shows the benefits of the modified flow management standard (our proposal), compared to the unimpaired flows approach (described as “high spring outflows” – the State Water Resources Control Board’s staff proposal.)

2. Applying 20 Years of Collaborative Work on the Lower American River

Based on the Water Forum’s collaborative model, our water users and environmental representatives are working with the federal Bureau of Reclamation to maintain the current temperature management program, and revise reservoir release requirements to improve the cold water pool in Folsom Reservoir and temperatures downstream of it. Water Forum organizations are also working with Reclamation to adopt a “planning minimum” for storage levels in Folsom Reservoir that would provide water supply reliability and cold water pool benefits.

3. Advantages of the Conceptual Framework for Voluntary Agreement

Specifically, the conceptual agreement offers the opportunity to achieve the following:

- 15 years of certainty on water supplies and environmental protections on the American River
- Contribute to the statewide improvement of the fishery by making surface water available to the Delta.
- Add 200 acres of new habitat to support salmon and steelhead, a significantly higher commitment than originally envisioned in the Water Forum Agreement, using a cost-sharing agreement between local, state and federal agencies
- Increased diversity in the Sacramento region’s water supply portfolio by expanding the region’s ability to bank groundwater and recharge the aquifer during wet years, and develop the infrastructure and interconnections needed to switch to using more groundwater during dry years so that more surface water can be available for fish in the Lower American River

4. Next Steps

American River water agencies are working to ensure that our proposal is analyzed thoroughly and compared fairly to the unimpaired flows approach. This environmental analysis is expected to be completed by December of this year, at which time state and local agencies would be able to approve the Voluntary Agreement and the environmental documents.

	Metric		Affected Feature	Benefit / Harm: Compared to Existing Condition (2006 FMS)		
				High Spring Flows	Modified FMS	
American River	Water supply	Urban deliveries				
	Steelhead spawning and rearing	Temperature				
		Habitat				
	Fall-run Chinook spawning and rearing	Temperature				
		Habitat				
		Mortality			---	
	Flows under 800 cfs					
Flows under 500 cfs						
Sacramento River	Water supply	Ag & urban delivery		---	---	
	Winter-run Chinook	Temperature			---	
		Mortality		---	---	
	Spring-run Chinook	Temperature			---	
		Mortality			---	
	Fall-run Chinook	Temperature				
	Late fall-run Chinook	Temperature				
Steelhead	Temperature		---	---		
Delta	Water supply	CVP ag supply			---	
		CVP urban supply				
		SWP ag supply		---	---	
		SWP urban supply		---	---	
	Outflow			---	---	
	Water quality			---	---	
- Legend -						
	Water temperature effects (on salmonids)					
	Water supply reliability			Flow and habitat for fish		
Harm			No change	Benefit		
Large	Medium	Small		Small	Medium	Large
