



SOUTH SAN JOAQUIN
IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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Contact: Steve Knell, OID general manager, (209) 840-5508 or srknell@oakdaleirrigation.com
Peter Rietkerk, SSJID general manager, (209) 249-4645 or prietkerk@ssjid.com

OID, SSJID propose water release on Stanislaus River to support juvenile salmon and water supply needs

The Oakdale and South San Joaquin Irrigation Districts – in an effort to support the outmigration of juvenile salmon as well as assist water-short farms and communities – are seeking approval to send up to 100,000 acre-feet of additional water down the Stanislaus River to the Delta this spring.

The proposal was submitted three weeks ago to the federal Departments of Interior and Commerce for evaluation pursuant to the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act. A follow-up request was sent by SSJID General Manager Peter Rietkerk last week. To date, there has been no response from federal officials despite the sensitivity of the timing of the additional flows, which would begin in two weeks.

Signing on to the proposal are the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (SLDMWA) and the State Water Contractors (SWC). (A copy of the letter is attached.)

Due to below-average hydrology, flows this spring at Vernalis near the confluence of the San Joaquin and Stanislaus rivers are projected to be 50% of what is required by State Water Board Decision D-1641 to provide protection to outmigrating juvenile salmon in the Stanislaus River. The dry hydrology also has resulted in suspended water allocations to federal agricultural water service contractors by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and only 5% allocations to the SWC by the California Department of Water Resources, reduced from 10% earlier this year.

For fisheries, D-1641 pulse flow requirements are required to be an average of 3,140 cfs between April 15 and May 15. However, based on current planned water releases, flows are projected to be less than 1,500 cfs during those 31 days. The proposed releases by OID and SSJID from their shared water rights could produce nearly 3,000 cfs at Vernalis and provide up to 100,000 acre-feet of water to farmers and communities in the San Joaquin Valley. (The attached fact sheet illustrates the benefits of the proposed releases.)

SLDMWA and the State Water Contractors would pay \$250 per acre-foot for the released water. The amount of water ultimately available for the release is dependent on continuing hydrology in the Stanislaus River watershed and the resulting supply available to OID and SSJID this spring. Funds generated from this proposal would support both Districts' ongoing commitment to modernization and conservation projects in their delivery systems, and fishery science in the Stanislaus River.

"The Districts are fortunate to have been able to make these releases in the past -- to generate revenue to build projects that allow us to conserve water -- so that in tough times like these we can help those farmers who have helped us develop that conserved water," said OID General Manager Steve Knell.

The pulse flow releases are consistent with the Districts' long-term policies in support of fisheries in the Stanislaus River.

"With California water being as contentious as ever, this proposal illustrates the art of the possible for collaborative water management that supports both the environmental and human water supply needs," said Rietkerk.

The water made available under the release would not resolve the shortage in state and federal allocations this year, but nonetheless would be critical for San Joaquin Valley farmers and communities.

"In dry years like this one, every acre-foot of water is precious," said Federico Barajas, Executive Director of the SLDMWA. "Water transfers are a lifeline for our members and the communities that are reliant upon the water they deliver, particularly with low allocations. Multi-benefit transfers like this one -- which benefit both outmigrating salmon and provide additional water supplies for our members -- simply make good sense. The Water Authority appreciates our partnership with OID and SSJID, and we are hopeful that federal agencies approve this action."

The Districts also are hopeful that federal agencies will be willing to coordinate and facilitate this multi-benefit proposal.

About Us: The [South San Joaquin Irrigation District](#) was established in 1909 and is located in Manteca. It provides agricultural irrigation water to about 55,000 acres in Escalon, Ripon and Manteca. In 2005, the district expanded into providing domestic water service to selected cities within its territory. The [Oakdale Irrigation District](#) was created in 1909 and provides agricultural water to about 62,000 acres in northeastern Stanislaus County and southeastern San Joaquin County.

OID and SSJID hold senior water rights on the Stanislaus River. For more than 100 years, the Districts have responsibly delivered surface water to farms in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, and for SSJID, thousands of homes in San Joaquin County. The Districts committed to sensible water policies, innovative irrigation techniques, prudent conservation practices, and important investments in biological studies of the river and fish habitat.