

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
MEMORANDUM

Date: June 11, 2024

To: Commission public record for Potter Valley Project No. 77-320

From: John Aedo
Office of Energy Projects, Division of Hydropower Administration and Compliance

Project: Project No. 77, Potter Valley Project, California

Subject: Letter from Sonoma Water regarding Russian River water management

By letter dated March 1, 2024, Sonoma Water sent a letter to the California State Water Resources Control Board regarding water management in the Russian River. The letter contains information related to Pacific Gas and Electric Company's 2023 minimum flow variance and its proposed 2024 flow variance and its effects on Lake Mendocino water supply. The correspondence is also publicly available on Sonoma Water's website at https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Environment/BiologicalOpinion/TUCP/2023/Term10_rpt_1Mar24.pdf



March 1, 2024

Erik Ekdahl, Deputy Director of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

VIA EMAIL erik.ekdahl@waterboards.ca.gov

RE: May 2023 Temporary Urgency Change Order Term 10 and December 2023 Temporary Urgency Change Order Term 11 Report

Mr. Ekdahl,

In accordance with the requirements of Term 10 in the order issued on May 19, 2023, approving Sonoma Water's Temporary Urgency Change Petitions on Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950, and 16596 (Applications 12919A, 15736, 15737, and 19351) and restated in Term 11 of the order issued on December 27, 2023, Sonoma Water submits this report in response to these requirements.

The MOU dated March 21, 2022, on Lake Mendocino Storage Planning and Russian River Management between Sonoma Water and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District (District) describes water supply planning efforts and analysis to assess the adequacy of stored water to meet the anticipated demands. Accordingly, Sonoma Water has developed reservoir level projections for Lake Mendocino for the current water year. The reservoir projections are updated approximately monthly and published on Sonoma Water's website at <https://www.sonomawater.org/WaterSupplyProjections>. A copy of the latest projection from February 13th is included as an attachment.

With approximately two months remaining of the wet season, the hydrologic conditions in the Russian River are above normal for this time of year. Flows in the Russian River are above the median flow rates for the observed period of record. Most of the tributary stream gages are also above their median flow rates. While the current hydrologic conditions are robust, the remaining months of the wet season are a critical period for ensuring adequate water supplies to meet all of the demands through the dry season in the watershed.

Lake Mendocino reservoir levels have been in the flood control pool since early January 2024. Lake Mendocino operates under a Planned Major Deviation (Deviation) of the Coyote Valley Dam/Lake Mendocino Water Control Manual (WCM) that was approved by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in February 2021. At the discretion of the USACE, the Deviation authorizes encroachment into the flood control pool for the benefit of water supply of an additional 11,650 ac-ft to 17,048 ac-ft. Since February 1st, reservoir levels have been mostly at or above the top of the Deviation pool. The Deviation pool has been increasing since February 15th. It will reach a maximum of 111,000 ac-ft on May 11, which coincides with the maximum water supply pool as specified in the WCM.

The Lake Mendocino storage thresholds that were approved as the hydrologic index in the December 27, 2023, order establishes the water supply condition in the Russian River watershed. The evaluation period for these thresholds started January 1st and continues to June 1st, setting minimum instream flow conditions until the order expires after June 28, 2024. Based on the most recent threshold evaluation on February 1st, the storage level in Lake Mendocino at 79,829 ac-ft exceeded the criteria of 68,400 ac-ft to establish a *Normal* water supply condition. Based on reservoir projections, it's anticipated that a *Normal* water supply condition will likely remain through, at least, the beginning of May.

Similar to last year, the seasonal drying of tributary flows is anticipated to be later than average. As tributary flows nearly cease, storage releases will increase to support the beneficial uses in the mainstem of the Russian River. Last year, Sonoma Water expressed concerns about the impact of an anticipated flow variance request by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) for their Potter Valley Project (PVP) FERC license that potentially would significantly impact the summertime inflows into Lake Mendocino via reductions in the minimum flow requirements for the East Fork Russian River. PG&E submitted the flow variance request on May 23, 2023, and those concerns were largely negated due to the flow changes not going into effect until October 2, 2023, when the request was approved. This maintained releases to the East Fork Russian River from the PVP through the critical summer months of June through September at an average of 80 cfs, which provided a substantial benefit that limited the depletion of Lake Mendocino storage levels. A similar flow variance request for this year has already been filed by PG&E on February 21, 2024, which would reduce East Fork Russian River minimum flows to rates specified for *Dry* or *Critical* water year classifications in the PVP FERC license. Unlike last year, Sonoma Water anticipates that this request will be operative throughout this summer and significantly reduce dry season inflows into Lake Mendocino. This will effectively increase reliance on Sonoma Water's release of storage to maintain instream flows in the Upper Russian River. Under a *Normal* water year classification, the East Fork Russian River minimum instream flows are passed through Lake Mendocino and are sufficient enough to meet pre-1949 water rights and provide additional water to Sonoma Water to offset some of the storage releases needed to meet the minimum instream flows of the Upper Russian River.

With significant tributary flows and maximum storage levels in Lake Mendocino at this time, the projections for storage water supplies in Lake Mendocino indicate that there will likely be sufficient supplies to fully meet the requirements of the authorized uses of storage releases:

- a) minimum instream flow requirements on the Russian River
- b) rediversion by the District pursuant to License No. 13898
- c) rediversion by Sonoma Water pursuant to its Permit No. 12947A
- d) rediversion by post-1949 water-right permittees and licensees within Sonoma County that are under the 10,000 ac-ft storage reservation.

The amount of late-spring rainfall over the next few months will determine with much greater certainty the capability of Lake Mendocino's storage water supplies to meet the dry season demands for water supply, irrigation, and habitat and to maintain prudent reserves of carry-over storage for the upcoming water year.

Please reach out to me or Don Seymour if you have any questions.

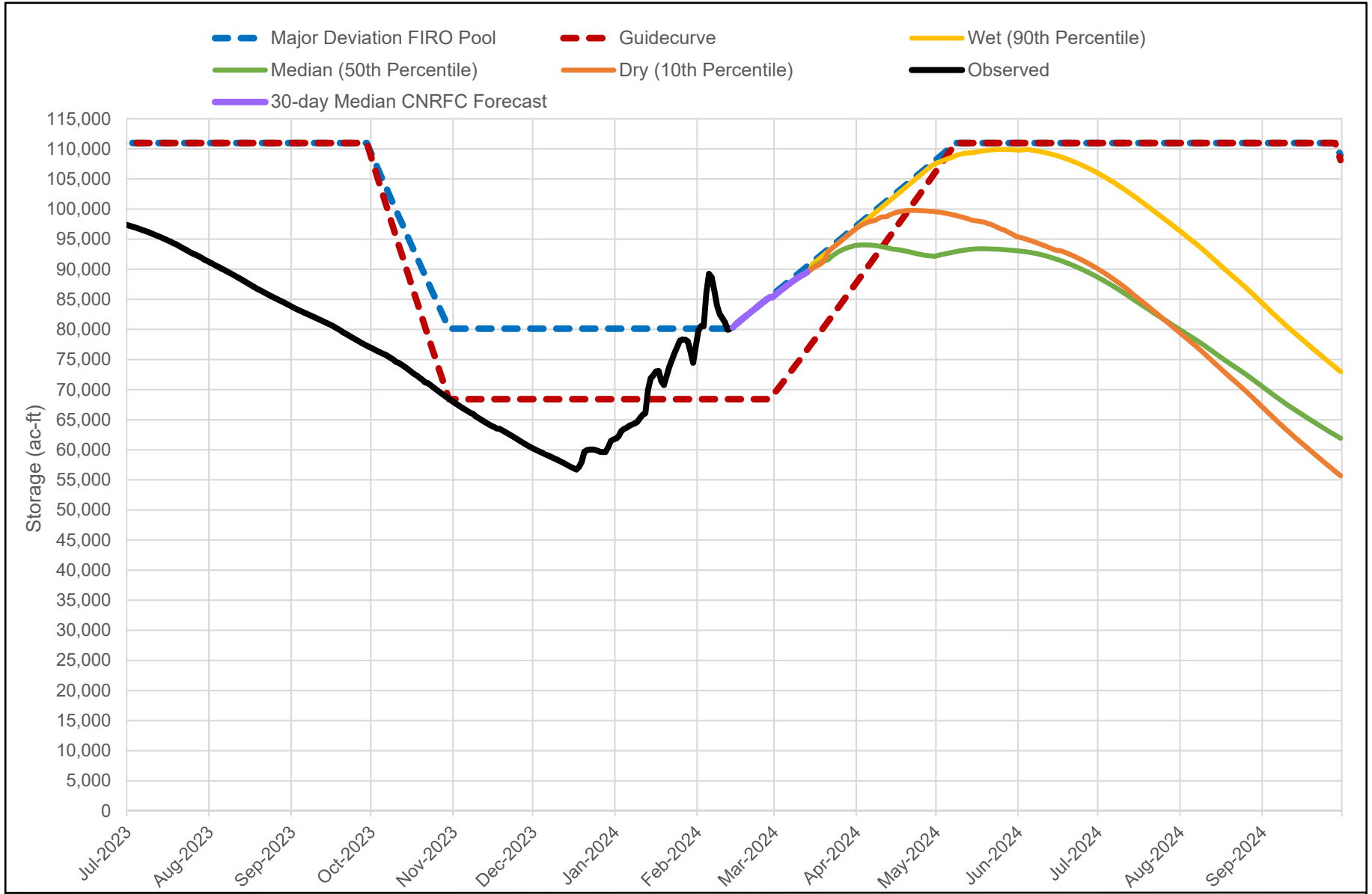
Regards,



Todd J. Schram, P.E.
Water Agency Engineer IV, Resources Planning

Enc.

- c: G. Davis, P. Jeane, D. Seymour - Sonoma Water
C. O'Donnell - Sonoma County Counsel
Ryan Bezerra - Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan



Lake Mendocino Storage Projection (2/13/2024)