



June 17, 2011

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Re: Tuolumne River Instream Flow Study — Flow Variance Request

Dear Fishery Agency Representative:

As you are aware, Stillwater Sciences is currently conducting separate instream flow (IFIM) and overbank (High Flow) studies on the lower Tuolumne River on behalf of the Turlock Irrigation District and Modesto Irrigation District (Districts) in accordance with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) July 16, 2009 order (128 FERC ¶61,035), as modified by the Commission's May 12, 2010 order Modifying and Approving Instream Flow and Water Temperature Model Study Plans (131 FERC ¶ 62,110).

As outlined in the Study Plan filed with FERC on October 14, 2009 and detailed in planning meetings conducted since August 26, 2010, Stillwater Sciences will be surveying Tuolumne River conditions at 40 transect locations between La Grange Dam, at river mile (RM 52), and downstream of the Hickman Bridge (RM 29). Each survey location is planned to be evaluated under flow conditions of approximately 600 cfs, 250 cfs, and 100 cfs over the next four to five months.

Pursuant to the operating license for the Don Pedro Project (FERC No. 2299), the Districts are required to maintain minimum flow releases from Don Pedro reservoir to the lower Tuolumne River, with minimum summer flows of 250 cfs for summer 2011 based on this year's runoff conditions, as described in an April 14, 2011 flow coordination letter addressed to your attention. In order to achieve the 100 cfs study parameter (which is normally available in drier years), the Districts intend to request a variance from FERC for the required 250 cfs flow during a six-day period between September 11 and September 30. The difference in water release volume between 100 cfs and the required 250 cfs (approximately 1,190 acre-ft over six days) would be released during the planned 5-day fall pulse flow period (October 6–10) as a uniform increase of 120 cfs, or other pulse flow configuration for this time period, or in some other mutually agreeable time period.

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Stillwater Sciences plans to conduct the higher instream flow survey (600 cfs) in mid-summer 2011, on the descending limb of the snowmelt hydrograph. The 250 cfs and 100 cfs surveys are planned during the coolest month (September) of the summer-flow period (June 1 through October 1), but would precede the previously established fall spawning attraction flows planned for early October.

We request any comments you may have along with your concurrence on the Districts' request for a flow variance to conduct the necessary study by June 30, 2011.

Should you have any questions please contact Russ Liebig at Stillwater Sciences (russ@stillwatersci.com or 530-756-7550 ext. 223).

Sincerely,



Noah Hume
Senior Aquatic Ecologist

Cc:
Casey Hashimoto – TID
Robert Nees - TID
Allen Short - MID
Greg Dias - MID
FERC Secretary

