



For Immediate Release:
June 3, 2021

Contact: Johnny Amaral (559-799-6192)
Alex Biering (916-628-0431)

STATEMENT FROM FRIANT WATER AUTHORITY ON 2021 DROUGHT OPERATIONS

The following statement from Friant Water Authority Chief Executive Officer Jason Phillips addresses potential drought operations during the remainder of 2021 and potential effects for the Friant Division and San Joaquin Valley:

Recent actions by the State Water Resources Control Board, Bureau of Reclamation, and California Department of Water Resources to adjust operations for the historic low water available in the Central Valley – including approval of the Temporary Urgency Change Permit, the Sacramento River Temperature Management Plan, and the Drought Operations Plan – are all critical in establishing an updated operations plan for 2021 to best meet multiple beneficial uses in the Central Valley and throughout California. Although the Friant Water Authority team is still evaluating certain details, the actions and decisions this week appear to be consistent with the recent operations plans and assumptions that we have discussed with Federal and State partners and other water agencies, which will preserve the current limited Class 1 allocation and prevent the potentially disastrous action of releasing water from Friant Dam this summer to meet the Exchange Contract requirements.

Especially in a year such as this, any further reductions in the Friant Division's water allocation will worsen the drought's effects in the San Joaquin Valley by reducing the amount of surface water delivered for irrigation and groundwater recharge. The Friant service area includes more than 55 disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged communities that are almost entirely reliant on groundwater wells for their supplies. Additionally, it could reduce the cold-water pool behind Friant Dam through the fall months, increasing temperature-dependent mortality of the spawning population of Spring-run chinook salmon that was established by the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement and Program.

It is important to recognize that the dry hydrologic conditions this year puts us in unprecedented territory, particularly in Northern California, which adds to the uncertainty of water availability forecasts and could mean this estimated outlook for water supply could still change as the year progresses. As such, Friant Water Authority will continue working with our California water community to reduce the risk of further impacts to the Friant Division's water supply this year, and we are grateful for the close coordination occurring that facilitates a shared, transparent vision for weathering the hydrologic challenges of 2021.