



Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP)

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

TO: ERIC PETERSON, SCIENCE COORDINATOR,
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, IDT
COORDINATOR

FROM: PATRICK FLYNN, FLOW WORKGROUP
COORDINATOR

CC: MIKE DIXON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM

FORWARD TO: TRINITY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FROM: INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Consensus agreement with Flow
Workgroup at IDT meeting March 11,
2026.

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FROM FLOW WORK GROUP TO IDT FOR FLOWS FROM THE
PERIOD OF APRIL 15, 2026 TO DECEMBER 14, 2027

DATE: MARCH 9, 2026

ATTACHMENT: DSS TABLE (DSS WY26 ALL.xlsx); SELECTED HYDROGRAPHS WITH FLOW
TABLES (WY2026_hydrographs_final.xlsx); 2021 MEMO TO TMC FROM IDT
(20211202_flowwg_memo-1.pdf)

The Flow Work Group (FWG) met four times during the period of November 2025 to March 2026 to decide upon an approach to flow planning for Water Year 2026 (WY2026). WY2026 marks the second consecutive year that the program implemented the whole and complete Winter Flow Variability (WFV) project. Like WY2025, flow planning for WY2026 required consideration of Safety of Dams (SOD) releases. The volume of water considered for release during the period from April 15, 2025 to September 30, 2025 (the “spring period”) was the amount remaining after implementation of the Winter Flow Variability Project.

The WFV ruleset dictates a synchronized release if a threshold value is predicted between December 15 and February 14, with specific volumes of water to be released above baseflow based on the Bulletin 120 (B120) forecasting tool provided by CA Department of Water Resources (CA DWR). The ruleset utilizes the B120 forecasts issued for the month of February and the month of March to determine volumes to be released during the period of February 16 to April 14, and March 16 to April 14, respectively. A synchronized release was implemented starting December 23 and used 60,000 acre-feet (af). The February B120 was issued on February 11, 2025, and forecasted a Dry year, which resulted in no water volume released beginning February 16.

Because the flow planning process was ongoing through the month of February and into early March, the FWG did not have the information provided by the March B120 (usually issued around the 10th or 11th of the month) and therefore did not know exactly how much water volume would be released during the period of March 15 to April 14. Additionally, flow planning for the release of ROD volumes during the spring period is always, by necessity, done before the April B120 is issued. Since the WY2026 planning process took place before these

two forecasts were issued, a series of likely scenarios was envisioned and planned for. The FWG reached a consensus recommendation to implement a series of hydrographs, one per possible water year scenario, as described below. Only one of these hydrographs would be implemented, depending on which water year scenario materializes and contingent on IDT and TMC support.

WY2026 appears to be significantly drier than WY2025. The FWG envisioned two scenarios during planning, both of which release 80,000 af during the period from December 15 to April 14 (the “winter period”), based on the WFV ruleset. These volumes result from the implementation of the synchronization peak flow in late December (60,000 af released), the Dry February B120 90% forecast (0 af released from February 15 to April 14), and a Dry March B120 90% forecast (20,000 af released from March 15 to April 14), for a total of 80,000 af released above baseflow prior to April 15. Although the FWG met prior to the issuance of the March B120, forecasting tools available indicated that any scenario other than a Dry March B120 was unlikely. As such, only a Dry March B120 was considered during flow planning. The FWG planned for the chance of either a Dry or Normal water year type based on the April B120. In total, hydrographs were developed and modeled for two scenarios (Table 1), both of which assumed a Dry March B120, given the forecasting tools available. Between the FWG’s last meeting and the drafting of this memo, the March B120 was issued and confirmed to be Dry. Hydrographs to be used for elevated baseflow releases are those that were approved by the Trinity Management Council (TMC) for the WY2023 water year and described in the December 2, 2021 memo to TMC from IDT (attached).

Table 1: Water year scenarios envisioned for WY2025

Scenario	Sync	Feb B120	Mar B120	Apr B120	Total released from Dec 16-Apr 15
1	60kaf	Dry-0kaf	Dry-20kf	Dry	80kaf
2	60kaf	Dry-0kaf	Dry-20kaf	Normal	80kaf

Safety of Dams (SOD) releases began on January 7, 2025, when the recession limb of the synchronization peak flow was superseded by a static 1,500 cfs flow. SOD releases were increased to 3,000 cfs on January 12 until January 22, when they were ramped down to 800 cfs, before returning to winter baseflow of 300 cfs on January 30. The volume of water released as a result of SOD releases was not accounted for as elevated baseflow volume, following a consensus reached among the FWG members in February 2025.

The FWG did not specifically consider SODs during modeling for WY2026. This approach differs from that which was followed in WY2025, when SOD releases were included in model runs. Although model outputs may have changed if SODs were included, model results should still be consistent among the different hydrographs because SODs are a static input (i.e. if SODs caused an change of X number of fish in hydrograph A, they would also cause the same change in hydrograph B). Models should still reflect actual hydrologic and biological conditions to the degree possible.

Three sets of hydrographs were developed for consideration, but two of the three sets were similar enough to be combined into a single set. This resulted in two sets produced for modeling purposes, one that included a steeper geomorphic peak, and one that included a lesser peak with a broad swell of water which was intended to benefit riparian plants and non-fish species. The FWG used the Decision Support System (DSS) to determine which hydrographs of those chosen were most beneficial to the ecology of the Trinity River. The DSS collates numerical outputs from various models into a single spreadsheet that is used to inform decision-making by the FWG in a quantitative fashion.

Fish-related model results did not show enough of a contrast between the two sets of hydrographs to be effectively used for decision-making. For example, Stream Salmonid Simulator (S3) results showed only a 3% difference in parr abundance between the two hydrograph sets. Temperature modeling produced similar results.

An additional model, a foodscape/inundation duration model, was considered for WY2026. Results from this model were also relatively inconclusive, with little difference (<10%) between the two sets of hydrographs. Since this was the case, we leaned on the non-fish model results for decision-making. The riparian recruitment model (TARGETs), Foothill Yellow-legged Frog Assessment Model (FYFAM), and the bedload mobilization models all indicated the hydrograph with the relatively steep geomorphic peak would yield the most benefit, including greater benefit to woody riparian plants and non-fish species. Therefore the FWG recommends, by consensus, the hydrographs shown below (see figures 1 and 2).

As stated above, only one of these hydrographs would be implemented this year, depending on which water year scenario materializes. Since the March B120 has been issued as dry, and the flow planning process assumed a Dry March B120, the only remaining unknown is the April B120, which could be Dry or Normal. **The FWG is providing one recommended hydrograph for a Dry April B120 and one for a Normal April B120, shown in figures 1 and 2, below. The FWG recommends that the IDT forward the recommendation to TMC for their consideration during the March quarterly meeting.**

The FWG has noted the lack of contrast among fish-focused model results in the DSS. This has been a consistent theme over the past few years. We intend to focus on resolving this issue by sensitizing/tailoring the models to the input types specific to the Trinity River between now and the next flow planning process.

Sincerely,

Patrick Flynn
Flow Workgroup Coordinator

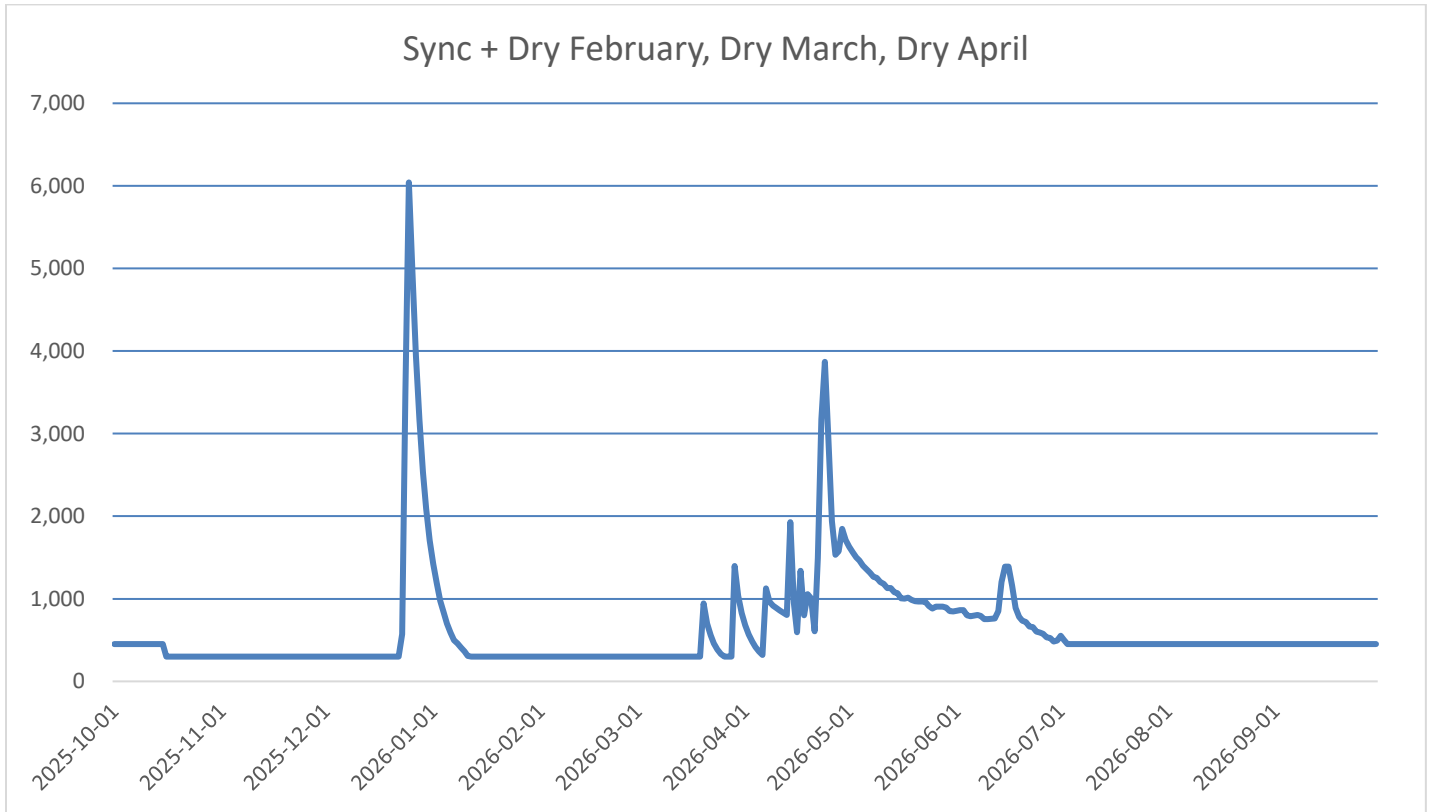


Figure 1: Dry February – Dry March – Dry April Hydrograph

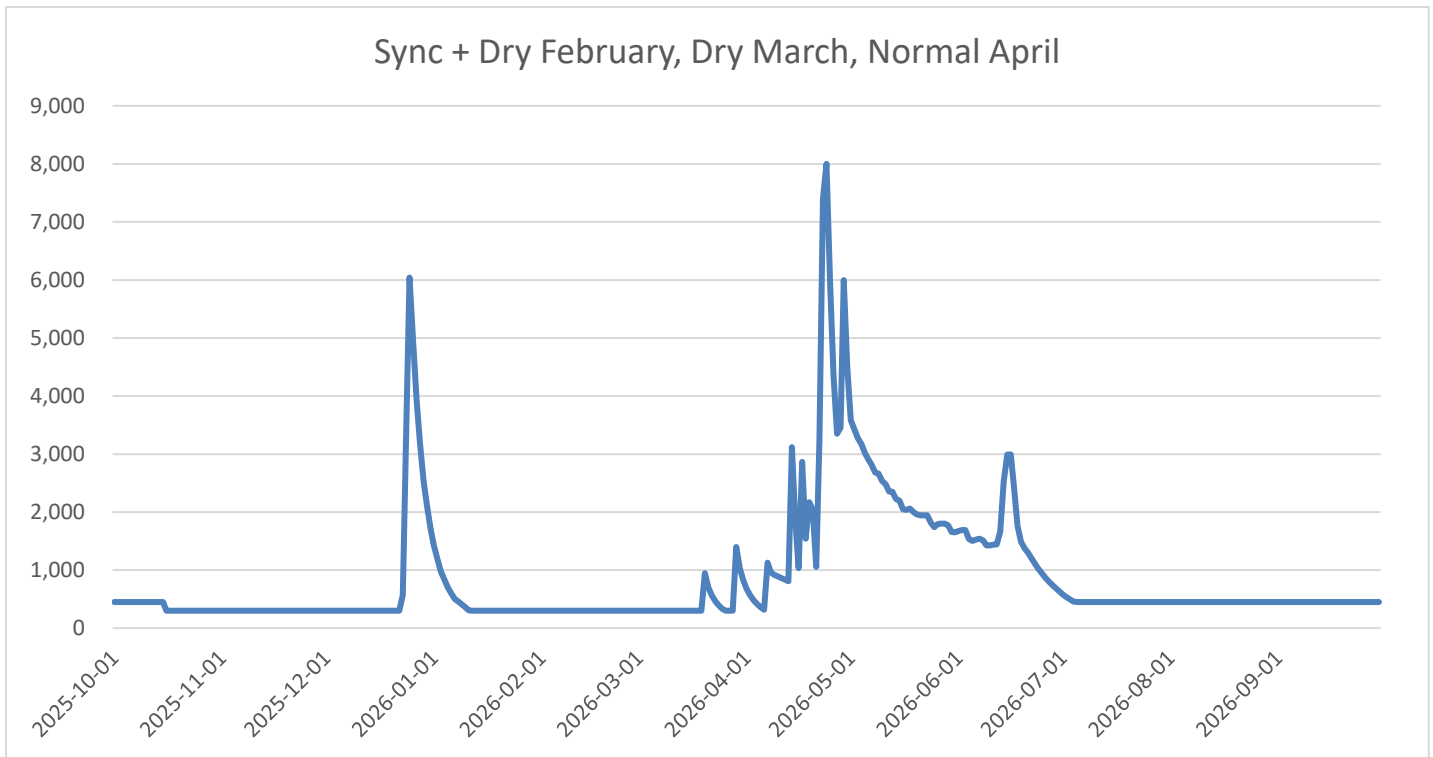


Figure 2: Dry February – Dry March – Normal April Hydrograph