

3 December 2020

To: Trinity Management Council

From: Friends of the Trinity River

Subject: "Trinity Management Council Proposal to Analyze Increased Restoration Flow Release Flexibility" dated September 9, 2020.

Friends of the Trinity River (FOTTR) is expressing our concern with the request from the Trinity Management Council (TMC) to *"analyze increase restoration flow flexibility"* in the memo dated September 9, 2020, from TRRP Executive Director to the NCAO Area Manager.

While it was only a request to *"determine feasibility and potential obstacles"*, environmental analysis for the rescheduling of 60,000 acre-feet of the Record of Decision (ROD) flows appears premature. If there is truly a justified need for releases during the late fall to early spring period, the request should also be expanded to include a legal opinion of increasing flows using *"Proviso 1 or 2 water"* as suggested by the Hoopa Valley Tribe.

In the first paragraph of the "Situation" section the potential benefits of rescheduling flows are listed as *"increase juvenile salmon growth and survival"*, *"increase ability to meet geomorphic objectives, and"* *"potentially increase water availability"*. No information is presented in the memo nor the attachment to support these statements. The *"preliminary analyses"* that led to these conclusions needs to be presented such as redd scour modeling, fish production modeling and fish habitat modeling. Additionally, the potential impacts of rescheduling ROD flow releases needs to be presented. If there has been no preliminary analysis of potential impacts to other objectives by reducing the spring flows, then this request is premature.

The attachment *"Conceptual Plan to Develop Environmental Documents for Peak Flow Synchronization in the Trinity River"* is not a plan to develop environmental documents and it does not provide supporting information justifying a rescheduling of 60,000 acre-feet of ROD water. How was the 60,000 acre-feet determined? What other alternatives exist? The stated purpose of rescheduling ROD flows to *"more closely mimic natural flows"* are *"1) maximize geomorphic change...and 2) provide better temperatures for rearing salmonids"*; but no information is presented to justify this change. The first paragraph of the attachment states *"Peer reviewed literature and research by TRRP partners and staff since the ROD has been implemented indicate that there are fisheries and ecosystem benefits from providing flow releases from Lewiston Dam that more closely mimic natural flow patterns than the current flow schedule"*.

The TMC should present the results of the research that has been conducted by the TRRP partners and staff that support the proposed action. Under the TRRP's so-called Adaptive Management Program, this alternative hypothesis should be presented to your Science Advisory Board for their review and recommendation. For instance, how does the proposal to reduce spring outmigration flows compare to existing literature and your various synthesis reports such as temperature? Are your various synthesis reports complete yet?

We remain particularly concerned that taking 60,000 acre-feet out of existing ROD flows during critically dry and dry years will result in **inadequate flows for spring outmigration and summer temperature control**. It appears likely the Trinity River temperature objectives in the "Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region" during critically dry years would not be met, which would be a violation of the federal Clean Water Act and California's Porter-Cologne Act, as well as a significant negative impact to summer holding and fall spawning Spring Chinook salmon. A reduction from 450 cfs to as low as 150 cfs during the summer would also decimate whitewater rafting businesses that have flourished since flows were increased in the early 1990's. Trinity County's economy is already hanging by a thread. We don't need to lose any additional businesses.

We are also very concerned about releasing high volumes of water during egg incubation and rearing. There could be significant losses of eggs from scour and young fish from stranding.

We support strategies to increase smolt growth and cue outmigration at the appropriate times, but the TMC's proposal is just one option. Other alternatives might provide desired benefits without adverse impacts. Additionally, there may be impacts to power as this action will entail rescheduling of releases which may affect diversion patterns and power generation.

Furthermore, there may be impacts to decreasing the spring/summer releases to the Trinity River that will need to be evaluated. Consideration of using carryover storage from the previous year should also be considered in light of climate change and cold water storage concerns. Before this proposal is ready for environmental review, several alternatives should be modeled.

While we understand this effort is in the preliminary stages, we are concerned there is no technical information presented to justify the potential rescheduling of 60,000 acre-feet of ROD flows and no information presented on what other objectives may not be met by having reduced flows in the spring and summer; this effort can compromise the overall restoration efforts of the TRRP as well as the Trinity County economy.

We ask that this memo be withdrawn and a more thoughtful request, with supporting information included in the attachment, be submitted, including the expansion of the request to use Proviso 1 and/or 2 for these contemplated releases and only then seeking guidance on the extent of NEPA and CEQA documentation that will be necessary for such an action.

Sincerely,

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Trinity County Board of Supervisors

TMC Members