

Memorandum

To : Walter Pettit, Chief  
Division of Water Rights

Date : OCT 27 1989

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

From : Gerald E. Johns  
Assistant Division Chief  
Division of Water Rights  
: STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

Subject : WATER QUALITY CONDITIONS AT VERNALIS

John Johannis of the Bureau of Reclamation called today to inform us that starting this month the Bureau will not be making specific releases for water quality at Vernalis. Water quality this month should be below 500 ppm TDS at Vernalis.

Mr. Johannis stated that the water accounts for both D-1422 standards (500 ppm TDS at Vernalis and 5 ppm DO at Rippon - 70,000 af) and South Delta Water Agency objectives (450 and 500 ppm TDS 150,000 af) have both been exhausted. New Melones Reservoir is currently at 700,00 af of its 2.4 Af capacity. Mr. Johannis was concerned that in the next couple of months, water quality objectives may not be achieved. The Bureau believes water should not be released to meet water quality at Vernalis the rest of this year, since these accounts are exhausted and the storage level in New Melones is so low.

Running out of water quality water this early in the year is largely due to the revised scheduling of fishery releases from New Melones by the Department of Fish & Game. In the past, DFG has requested fishery flows in each month of the year. However, this year DFG requested no fishery flows from mid-March through September. This means that the entire New Melones release during the summer was charged to the water quality accounts. Water releases from New Melones are first assessed to the fishery needs, then to D-1422 requirements, and last to South Delta Water Agency contract requirements.

Releases from New Melones for October are expected to be 125 cfs (minimum fish flows); however, flows needed to meet water quality may be around 300 cfs. This, of course, may change

Walter Pettit, Chief

-2-

OCT 27 1989

dramatically based on hydrologic conditions and salt loads to the river.

I told Mr. Johannis that the staff's willingness to allow increases above the 500 ppm TDS standard without recommending enforcement action last year was based on the critical water supply conditions the previous two years and the uncertainty of the 1989 water supply. It was also influenced by the fact that water from storage in New Melones would be needed to maintain water quality. However, this year we are on the heels of a below normal water year and currently New Melones is gaining water to storage. I emphasized that the State Board did not recognize the 70,000 af limit when it established the D-1422 standards.

I stated that he needed to inform South Delta of this situation since their response would weigh heavily on the course of action the State Board may take. I told Mr. Johannis that I would inform management of the current situation and get back to him with our thoughts on how it should be best approached.

cc: Dave Beringer ✓  
Roger Johnson