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## **Outflow From Lake Mendocino Reduced**



**As of Monday, Lake Mendocino contained 33,774 acre-feet of water. (Nathan DeHart?Ukiah Daily Journal)**

By Justine Frederiksen

Less water is now leaving Lake Mendocino as a combined request by the Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District and the Sonoma County Water Agency to reduce flows in the Russian River was granted Monday.

Sean White, general manager of the RRFC&WCID, said Tuesday that the minimum flows between Coyote Valley Dam and Healdsburg were reduced from 75 cubic feet per second to 50 cfs, meaning more water will remain in the lake.

"That will save about 5,000 acre-feet," said White, explaining that this was the first time such a Temporary Urgency Change of Permit Petition was granted by the State Water Resources Control Board. The district filed a petition in 2009 during a previous drought, but it was not granted.

White said this petition was "the first time the district filed a joint petition with the SCWA," adding that the cooperation between the two agencies "absolutely" helped the request succeed, and hoped the spirit of cooperation would continue.

"The Russian River Flood Control District, as well as the Sonoma County Water Agency, has done a good job of stepping up for the benefit of all of us to ask that the outflow from the lake be reduced, which saves the water that's in there," said Ukiah Public Works Director Tim Eriksen, addressing the Ukiah City Council at its meeting last week. "If the stream flows are backed down, that will be fantastic. It's a little too late, unfortunately, but at least whatever's left is still left."

As of Monday, the lake had 33,774 acre-feet of water. According to the urgency change petition, if the previous releases continued, the lake was expected to fall below 20,000 acre-feet by Nov. 1. Previously, about 150 cfs was being released, now 120 cfs is.

White said keeping more water in the lake not only preserves water for human consumption, but it means more water will be available to release in the fall to aid traveling Chinook salmon.

"It was getting to the point where we wouldn't have been able to make those releases," he said.

White said releasing less water from the dam will also improve the overall quality of the water in the river, since the water being released from behind the dam "dilutes the cool water in the river," degrading conditions for fish.

As is required by the petition's approval, the RRFCD is hosting a public meeting Wednesday, Sept. 3, at 6 p.m. at the Mendocino County Farm Bureau at 303 Talmage Road.

White said the reduced flows will require "a bit more coordination" amongst water diverters, who will need to give the SCWA 72-hours notice before they divert water. That way the agency can release a "buffer" amount of water to ensure the minimum flows are met.

The change in flows will be in effect for 180 days, or until there is enough rain to trigger "a flood-control mode," which White said would be a welcome change.

"I would love for it to expire because of that," he said.

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