



# NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**BUILDING STRONG.**

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## **Corps to increase water flow into Russian River starting Oct. 8** ***Public Safety, Environmental Stewardship key***

**UKIAH, Calif., --** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – San Francisco District will increase the flow of water from Lake Mendocino’s Coyote Valley Dam into the Russian River to reduce the amount of water behind the dam while improving river conditions for migrating Chinook salmon.

In collaboration with the Sonoma County Water Agency, Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the California Department of Fish and Game, the Corps will increase the water flow from Coyote Valley Dam to mimic a natural rain event on the river system to help the Chinook salmon migration. This will increase the current water flow from Coyote Valley Dam gradually from 180 cubic feet per second (cfs) beginning Oct. 8, rising to 1,000 cfs on Oct. 12, then dropping down to 325 cfs by Oct. 17.

Increasing the flow of water from Coyote Valley Dam improves public safety by reducing the risk of flooding while increasing the Chinook salmon’s survivability during its Russian River migration.

The decision to release water is based on several factors, for the first time in the history of this dam; the amount of water stored behind the dam is much higher than ever before (approximately 91,000 acre feet). Reducing Lake Mendocino’s water level behind the dam reduces the impact of potential flooding to downstream communities during winter storms. Normally, by Nov. 1, the amount of water stored behind the dam would be 68,400 acre feet or lower. If the Corps waits to release water, the volume released could be harmful to the Chinook salmon migration.

To best take advantage of this excess water to help the Chinook salmon fall migration, all five agencies have collaboratively decided to increase the amount of water flowing from the Coyote Valley Dam. The scheduled release will have no impact on Warm Springs Dam or Lake Sonoma.

“We have to balance flood risk caused by future rains with the Chinook salmon migrating up the Russian River to spawn from mid-October to the end of November,” said Mike Dillabough, chief of the operations and maintenance division for the Corps’ San Francisco District. “The increase flow will mimic a naturally occurring rainfall within the watershed, raising the river level approximately two feet in the process for a 24-hour period, and then returning to near previous flow.

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**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT**

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Corps to increase water flow into Russian River 2-2-2-2-2

"This will be the first year since the dam was built that we are sending a water surge down the Russian River in October for this purpose," Dillabough said. "The public, who have become accustomed to the stable Russian River water flows, need to relocate any equipment or boats near the shoreline in order to prevent its loss. We ask that neighbors check on their colleagues to ensure they also have received the message."

Biologists from the organizations concur that if a heavy and sustained water flow was necessary, it could potentially harm the endangered salmon by effectively washing the Chinook back toward the ocean. An increase in water discharge could wash away boats, irrigation equipment or other items stored near the river's bank.

Lake Mendocino, formed with the construction of the Coyote Valley Dam in 1958, is the largest reservoir in Mendocino County with an average of 500,000 visitors annually. Lake Mendocino is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide flood risk reduction, water resource management and recreational opportunities to improve the quality of life for the public.

For more information or to request an interview, call J.D. Hardesty at 415 503-6801 or 415 412-8856.

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Established in 1866, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District, employees approximately 350 people, who are responsible for 40,000 square miles extending 600 miles from the Oregon border to San Luis Obispo County. The district's programs and projects support approximately 1,000 permanent, higher-wage jobs that contribute to more than \$100 million to the regional economy.

The district helps build the nation's long-term economic strength in an environmentally sustainable way through water-supply management and flood-damage reduction, shore and coastal protection, ecosystem restoration, and wildlife protection. The district works in partnership with local, state and federal agencies. District staff respond with emergency operations for natural disasters, regulate development that affects waterways and wetlands, and keeps navigation channels, harbors and ports open for the more than 100 million tons of cargo shipped to area deep-water ports.

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