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Media Contact: Louis Moore, 916-978-5100, wmoore@usbr.gov

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Reclamation Makes Historic Releases of Water from Friant Dam to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Due to Drought

FRESNO, Calif. – Reclamation will begin increasing releases from Friant Dam near Fresno into the San Joaquin River on Thursday to help meet contractual obligations to deliver Central Valley Project water to the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley.

As a result of the current drought, there is not enough water supply from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta alone to fulfill Reclamation's contractual obligations to the Exchange Contractors. In this unique year, these contractual obligations will be satisfied from both Delta and San Joaquin River sources.

This is the first time in the history of the CVP since the Delta-Mendota Canal has been operational, that Reclamation has had to provide water from Millerton Lake, which is the reservoir on the San Joaquin River formed by Friant Dam, to address the contractual obligations that Reclamation has upheld with the Exchange Contractors since 1939.

Current releases of 200 cubic feet per second from Friant Dam will be incrementally increased by about 1,000 cfs, for a total of 1,200 cfs. People recreating in or along the San Joaquin River below Friant Dam should take appropriate safety precautions due to the flow increases.

The [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), a multi-agency federal hydrology report, shows that conditions in the San Joaquin Valley have intensified from "severe" drought in May 2013 to "exceptional" drought in May 2014. "Exceptional" is the worst of the five stages of the [U.S. Drought Monitor Classification](#). Other locations in the United States that are classified "exceptional" are in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Nevada.

The total amount of water delivered to Exchange Contractors from Millerton Reservoir will depend on several hydrological factors including the amount of snowmelt runoff in the upper San Joaquin River Basin and the amount of CVP water pumped south from the Delta.

In the late 1930s, the Exchange Contractors agreed to "exchange" water received under their long-held senior water rights from the San Joaquin and Kings River for water delivered from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta through the Delta-Mendota Canal by Reclamation. The exchange contract generally provides that whenever Reclamation is unable to satisfy the contractual entitlement from the DMC that Reclamation would provide water to the Exchange Contractors from Friant Dam.

The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority serves about 240,000 acres of farmland located east of Interstate-5 and west of the San Joaquin River, reaching from Patterson to Mendota. The Exchange Contractors are comprised of the Central California Irrigation District, the San Luis Canal Company, the Firebaugh Canal Water District and the Columbia Canal Company.

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