



April 2021 Newsletter

Save the Dragon Special Edition – April 25, 2021

Water Release Update

NRWMAC'S LAST NEWSLETTER brought you up to speed on our lawsuit against Monterey County to improve Lake Nacimiento water levels. This update provides information on a separate, parallel process to improve water levels that is in addition to our current lawsuit.

Starting with its 2019, water release report to the California State Water Board, Monterey changed the accounting method it has used for releases in previous years. We believe this change was in response to documentation NRWMAC submitted in court to prove that Monterey violated the maximum limit of water release, as specified in its state permit.

Monterey reported that approximately 9,500 acre-feet of its water release was actually natural bypass flow, and therefore was not to be counted against its permit limit. Regardless of the label Monterey has attached to this 9,500 acre-feet of water, it is still being released down the Salinas River and into the Pacific Ocean; or, into Monterey's diversion facility from which it sells the water.

We believe that this new accounting method was created to pave the way for an increased limit to water release at Lake Nacimiento, in order to support the future operation of the proposed Interlake tunnel.

Additionally, we believe the bypass flow stated in Monterey's report constitutes "unappropriated water," making it available for appropriation by entities other than Monterey. With that in mind, NRWMAC has come to an understanding of action with the Shandon-San Juan Water District in San Luis Obispo County, which comprises mostly farmland in a portion of the Paso Basin. The district is interested in having a permit to divert the water for agricultural use in its portion of the Paso Basin. (No Lake Nacimiento water or any other supplemental supply currently flows to the Paso Basin.) The district has filed an application for the water and, importantly, its application requested that the state of California authorize leaving the water in the lake until *after* the recreation season concludes. NRWMAC has no financial obligation related to this application. If approved, the district's efforts will benefit Lake Nacimiento users for recreation, safety and aesthetics, and will support the agricultural activities in the district.

This effort by NRWMAC and the district will go a long way to benefit both Paso Robles and Monterey farmers, it's good for our local economy, and it helps maintain water levels at Lake Nacimiento. This new appropriation of water would in no way impact San Luis Obispo County's annual allocation of 17,500 acre-feet of water from Lake Nacimiento.

NRWMAC believes that Shandon-San Juan Water District's application, if approved, would be a win-win situation for San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles and Monterey agriculture, and Lake Nacimiento.