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FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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Dam Release Cut Will Help Ease Flood Flow

UNPRECEDENTED ACTION WILL BE TAKEN TONIGHT at Pine Flat Dam to reduce at least some of the flood potential that will occur in the Kings River's valley reaches during the about-to-begin tropically-spawned warm rain event. The Kings River Water Association and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have agreed to make an extraordinary temporary reduction tonight in a major flood release already under way from the dam in the Fresno County foothills near Piedra.

Kings River Watermaster Steve Haugen said this afternoon (March 8) that the dam's current release of 5,190 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.) (including a flood release of 3,000 c.f.s.) that is now occurring—will be reduced at midnight tonight to 1,100 c.f.s.

"This cooperative action will temporarily reduce the amount of water passing through the Kings River channel in order to better accommodate very high unregulated storm runoff flows from Mill Creek and other smaller streams that discharge into the river below the dam," said Haugen.

The action is being taken in response to a prediction that Mill Creek flows, which have been only between 200-400 c.f.s. the past few days, will peak as a result of the looming atmospheric river rainfall at a massive level of about 18,800 c.f.s. about 2 p.m. Friday. Mill Creek flows are now forecast to be near or above 17,000 c.f.s. for 12 hours, until about 7 p.m. Friday.

Haugen said the KRWA-Corps plan calls for total Pine Flat Dam releases to be back up to 3,000 c.f.s. by 10 p.m. Thursday. However, as Mill Creek flows climb toward and fall from their peak level, the Corps of Engineers will suspend all Pine Flat releases into the river except 50 c.f.s. of fish-flow water.

Even though the temporary release reductions are expected to cause fairly abrupt short-term declines in the Kings River's downstream flow amounts, water levels will quickly build back up, possibly to considerably higher levels, as the high water from Mill Creek and other lower foothill streams enter the river, and as releases are resumed from Pine Flat Dam.

Even with these unusual arrangements, Haugen said, Kings River water levels will be dangerously high with local flooding likely. Everyone living or having property near the river of any stream needs to be on alert to these emergency conditions, he added. Emergency services agencies in Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties are working closely with Kings River interests to be ready to meet needs.

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