

***Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control
& Water Conservation Improvement District***

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item 10: Water Supply Conditions

Monday, September 14, 2026

The Strategic Plan relevant priorities are: **Water Supply Security** by ensuring reliable, resilient, and available sources of water through improved river and reservoir operations; and **Advocacy and Engagement** in support of improved public awareness and understanding of water issues.

Lake Mendocino and the Mainstem Upper Russian River

Storage level was 66,584 acre feet as of August 31, 2026, down from 73,811 acre feet on July 27, 2026. See last page of this report for graphs. In May, the State Water Resources Control Board issued an Order approving Sonoma Water's Temporary Urgency Change Petition authorizing continued use of the alternative hydrologic index based on Lake Mendocino storage values and, under Normal water supply condition, reduces the minimum instream flow requirements in the upper and lower reaches of the Russian River. This Order remains in effect through November 17, 2026.

This temporary change is to ensure that the water supply condition for the Russian River is determined by an index that is reflective of watershed conditions. The urgent need to implement the changes is due to the significant reduction of Eel River water imports through PG&E's Potter Valley Project as ordered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), effective May 15, 2026 – much sooner than in 2025.

The influence of Eel River imports on downstream hydrologic conditions in the Russian River has been, and will continue to be greatly diminished, and thus use of the Eel River hydrologic index is not a reliable metric for Russian River water supply conditions.

More information on the District's website: <https://rrfc.specialdistrict.org/current-russian-river-and-lake-mendocino-operations> or Sonoma Water's TUCP webpage: www.sonomawater.org/tucp.)

Operations of the Trans-Basin Diversion Through PG&E Owned "Potter Valley Project"

On May 14, 2026, FERC issued the order approving the 2026 temporary flow variance for the Potter Valley Project flows from the Eel to the Russian River.

Starting May 15th, flows to the Russian River were reduced based on Lake Pillsbury storage forecasts and water temperature data. PG&E will utilize a flexible flow release approach to reservoir releases to provide adequate flows and cooler water temperatures in the Eel River. PG&E states that the variance is necessary due to the reduced water capacity in Lake Pillsbury as a result of its seismic-risk-related storage restriction, which has reduced the available water stores by approximately 18,200 acre-feet. PG&E has an objective of maintaining 25,000 acre-feet in Lake Pillsbury on October 1, 2026, which it calculates will allow it to meet its dam safety obligations and to preserve the cold water pool to ensure cooler water release temperatures. The initial minimum flow release into the East Branch Russian River will remain at 25 cfs. PG&E will then adjust releases to the East Branch Russian River between 5 and 25 cfs based on Lake Pillsbury storage forecasts using available hydrologic forecasting tools and runoff forecasts, historical water temperature data and water temperature modeling, and other flexible water management criteria. Adjustments made to the East Branch Russian River releases will be made in consultation with the PG&E Drought Working Group (DWG), of which the District is a member.

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At the August DWG meeting, PG&E shared it does not propose dropping flows below 25 cfs at this time and will reassess conditions at the next DWG meeting. Reports are posted on the District website when made available: <https://rrfc.specialdistrict.org/current-pg-e-potter-valley-project-operations>

If Lake Pillsbury storage is below the 36,000 acre-feet after September 30, releases to the East Branch Russian River will be limited to 5 cfs. When Lake Pillsbury storage gets above 36,000 acre-feet after September 30, the variance will end and PG&E will release flows as required under its license.

More information on the District website: <https://rrfc.specialdistrict.org/future-of-the-eel-river-to-russian-river-trans-basin-diversion-potter-valley-project>

Lake Mendocino

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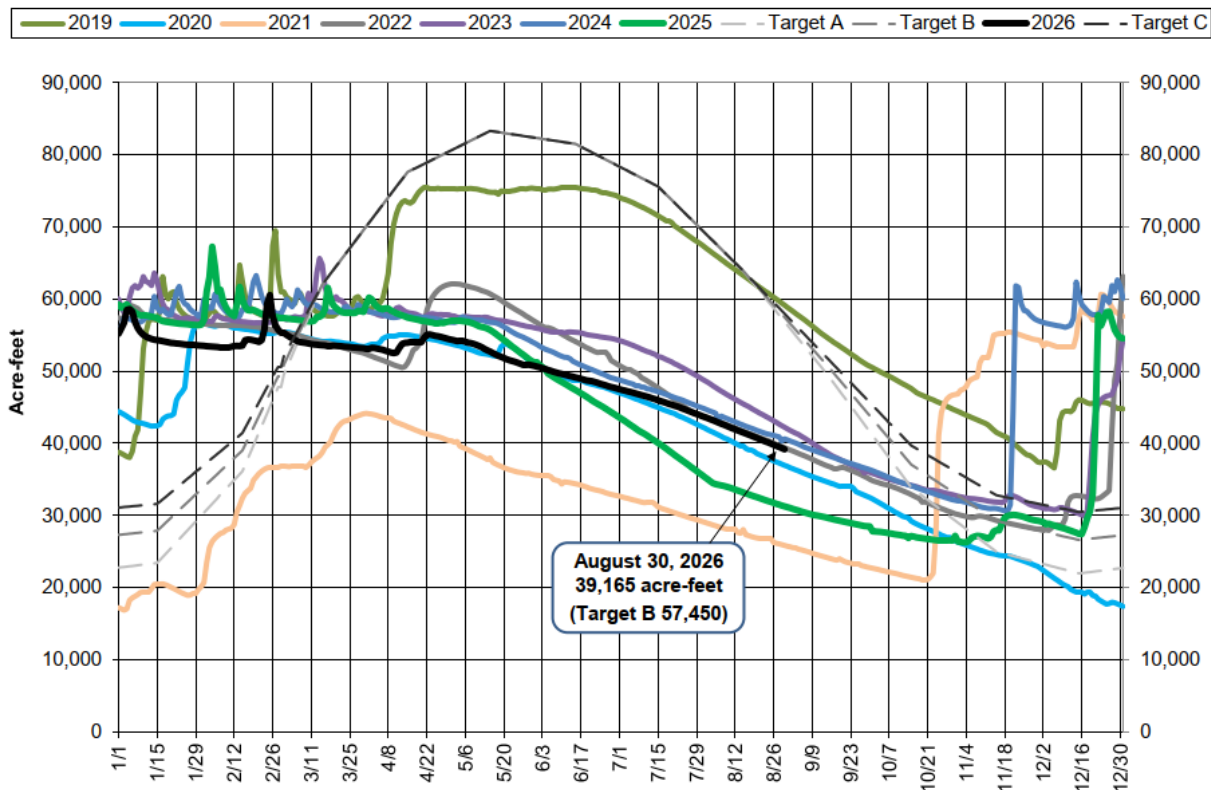
Current Storage (acre-feet)	65,584
FIRO Storage Curve (acre-feet)	111,000
% of FIRO Storage Curve	59.08%
7-day change (acre-feet)	-1,524

Lake Pillsbury

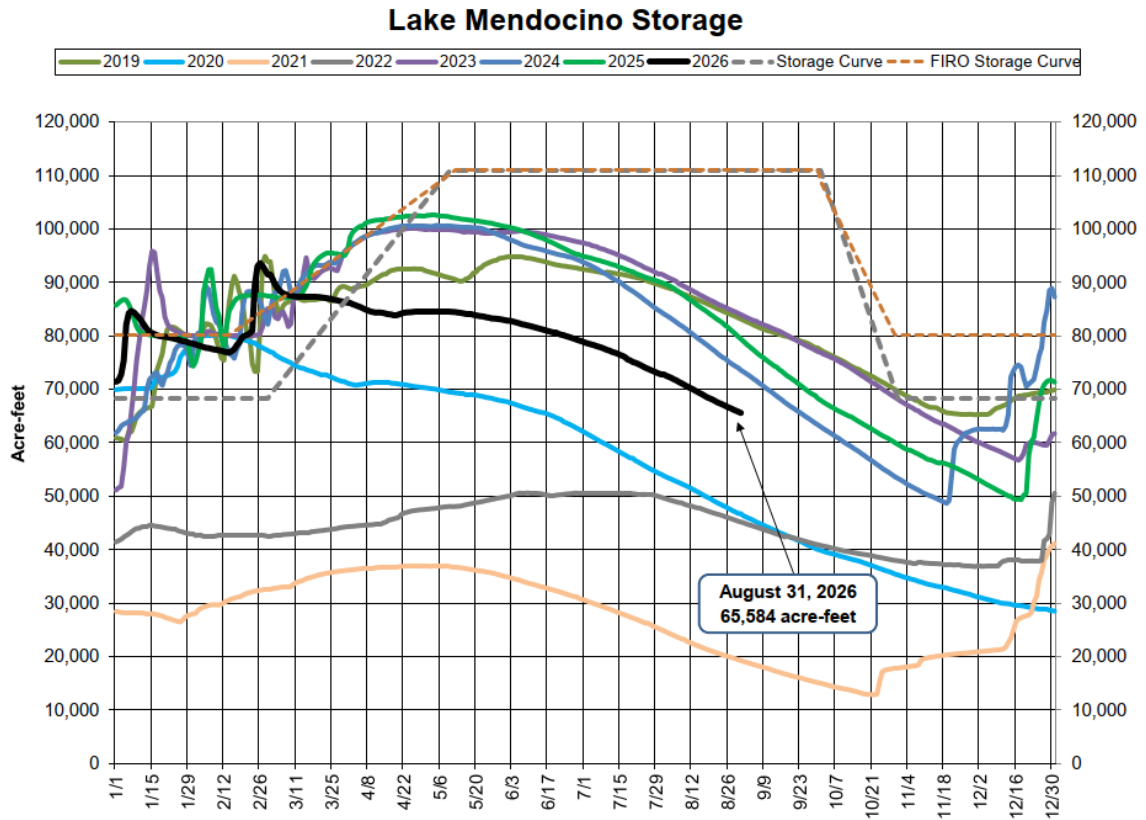
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Current Storage (acre-feet)	39,165
Target Storage Curve (acre-feet)	57,450
7-day change (acre-feet)	-1,097

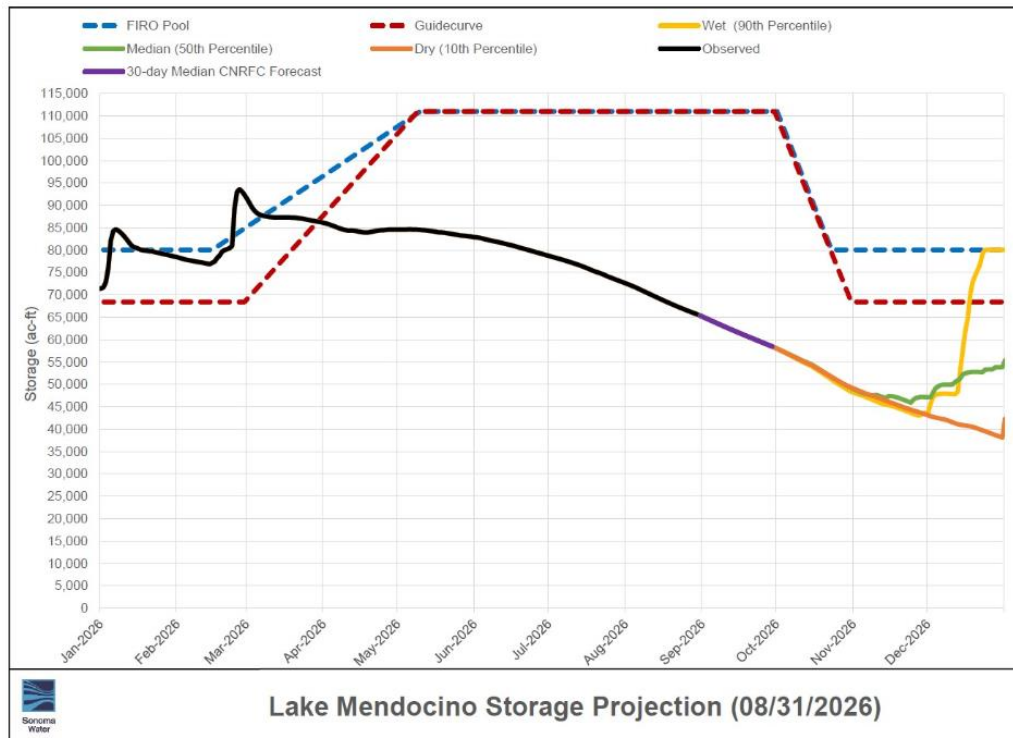
Lake Pillsbury Storage and Target Storage Scenarios



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LAKE MENDOCINO



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Prepared and submitted to the Board of Trustees by: Elizabeth Salomone, General Manager