



## WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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Web Page: [www.westernstateswater.org](http://www.westernstateswater.org)

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Mr. Grant Davis, General Manager  
Sonoma Water  
404 Aviation Boulard  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Mr. Cary Talbot, FIRO Program National Lead  
U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center  
3909 Halls Ferry Rd  
Vicksburg, MS 39180

Dear Mr. Davis and Mr. Talbot:

The Western States Water Council (WSWC) expresses its congratulations for successful completion of the groundbreaking Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) pilot project to update Lake Mendocino Water Control Manual (WCM). U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) WCMs for most Western dams were adopted at a time when weather forecasts were not sufficiently reliable to be used for operating reservoirs for flood risk reduction. The pilot project has culminated in a WCM update allowing discretionary encroachment into the reservoir's flood control space based on 5-day National Weather Service forecasts, and storage of additional water above the previously permissible amount during the flood season.

Sonoma Water's willingness to support re-evaluation of Lake Mendocino's WCM following the impacts of severe sustained drought on water supplies for urban, agricultural, and environmental water needs was the foundation for this effort, while USACE's willingness to implement a collaborative research program for a FIRO pilot project was the pathway to its success. The pilot project was carried out in collaboration with multiple partners, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of California San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and leveraged research funding provided by the California Department of Water Resources to Scripps.

The FIRO effort is growing exponentially from its initial implementation at Lake Mendocino. Subsequent FIRO pilot projects are underway in California and Washington; a FIRO viability assessment is in planning for Oregon dams. USACE recently completed its initial stage of a nationwide screening process for USACE-owned and regulated (Section 7) dams, including an assessment of nationwide precipitation forecasting skill needed for FIRO implementation. The Water Resources Development Act of 2024 has directed USACE to incorporate use of FIRO in its WCM updates.

The WSWC looks forward to encouraging use of FIRO in member states where feasible, to foster improved water supply resiliency and flood risk reduction, recognizing that lack of precipitation forecasting skill is presently a limiting factor in many of our states. We appreciate that the Engineer Research and Development Center has taken a leadership role within USACE to foster this tool for more efficient reservoir management.

Sincerely,

J.D. Strong  
Executive Director