



# Media Release

## State Water Board Renews and Revises Emergency Regulations for Russian River Tributaries

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The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) today updated and readopted emergency regulations to protect threatened fish species on four Russian River tributaries.

The emergency regulations, first adopted last summer, included two components, which were scheduled to expire on April 1 of this year. The 2015 emergency regulations included: (1) enhanced conservation measures to help provide minimal flows for coho salmon and steelhead trout in the Dutch Bill Creek, Green Valley Creek, Mark West Creek and Mill Creek watersheds; and (2) informational order authority to request information from water users and water suppliers in the four watersheds so the State Water Board can better understand water diversion uses and sources for future short and long term decisions to protect the fish.

The update renews the State Water Board's authority to continue collecting information from water users in the watershed, including follow up with and enforcement of those who have not complied with the order.

"Having accurate information on how much water is being used in the watersheds and where is essential for making thoughtful decisions on how to protect endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead runs in the watersheds in a time of dire need," said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. "The drought has forced us to take emergency action, but the water use data will also help us in the long run in maintaining healthy stream flows and fish populations in balance with other water user needs."

The updated 2016 regulation does not include the enhanced conservation measures at this time, because of the improved rainfall so far this winter. If conditions turn dry again in the coming months, the enhanced conservation measures may be reinstated. Volunteer conservation efforts from agricultural and residential water users are encouraged in the four watersheds.

The informational order was sent to about 10,100 parties in August, covering approximately 12,325 parcels or water suppliers, requiring landowners and water suppliers to provide information on their sources and uses of water. The State Water Board has received full or partial information for more than 90 percent of the parcels, and is seeking information for the remaining properties as well as from those that submitted incomplete data.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

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Collection of a more complete and accurate data set in the four watersheds will help to better inform future actions in the short term, if the drought continues, as well as in the long term as part of the California Water Action Plan instream flow effort.

The dataset will allow the State Water Board to consider a broader range of options, including more tailored options, in response to ongoing or future drought conditions. Such information and data could provide the State Water Board with the ability to better understand the effects of curtailments of certain uses; identify outliers to assess whether requiring changes would provide the benefits sought; and better understand how the various uses such as domestic and agriculture impact stream flow. It will allow more focused management decisions that will allow for more effective actions that would affect fewer water users.

With dry conditions across much of California during this historic drought, many of the State's key fisheries are at record low numbers and several species are in danger of extinction. Central California Coast (CCC) coho salmon and CCC steelhead in the Russian River tributaries are listed as endangered or threatened by federal or state agencies and face a particularly perilous situation, affecting their survival.

The Russian River tributaries are prime spawning ground for these fish, and low flows, already a problem before the drought, have been made worse by the extremely dry conditions. Increased pumping of surface and groundwater results in disconnected stream systems with low flows, isolated pools with low oxygen levels, and elevated temperatures that kill fish and threaten coho salmon with extinction. The State Water Board adopted emergency regulations in 2015 to help provide the small amount of water necessary to maintain pools to support summer rearing and migration of coho salmon and steelhead during this critical period, as well as gain a better understanding of water use and source information in the four tributary watersheds.

The renewed emergency regulation will be in effect for 270 days from the date the regulation is approved by the Office of Administrative Law. For more information, visit [this website](#).

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