



Media Release

State Water Board approves emergency curtailment regulation for Mill and Deer Creeks

Measures would maintain minimum flows to protect fish

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SACRAMENTO – With climate change-fueled drought reducing precipitation to approximately half of normal levels across the Sacramento River basin, the State Water Resources Control Board today adopted an emergency curtailment regulation for Mill and Deer Creeks in Tehama County. The creeks are tributaries to the Sacramento River and crucial to the survival of multiple fish species while also supplying water for agriculture, fire protection and drinking water, among other uses.

The regulation must be approved by the Office of Administrative Law and filed with the Secretary of State before curtailment orders can be issued. Altogether there are approximately 23 water right holders likely to be impacted by the orders once the regulation takes effect.

The creeks are priority watersheds for sustaining the Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon and California Central Valley Steelhead, and support Central Valley fall-run and late fall-run Chinook salmon, as well as Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon.

“The scale and speed of this drought has made an already precarious situation much worse for threatened and endangered fish species in California,” said Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the State Water Board. “Mill and Deer creeks are precious locations for the spawning and survival of several of the state’s iconic salmon, as well as steelhead trout species, and maintaining minimum flows there can help prevent catastrophic impacts. Importantly, this action doesn’t end the opportunity for cooperative voluntary agreements, and can instead be a foundation for collaboration in these critical watersheds.”

Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon are listed as threatened under the federal and California Endangered Species Acts, and Central Valley Steelhead are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. The Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon is listed as endangered at both the federal and state level.

The board’s action today is part of a widespread response to drought following Gov. Gavin Newsom’s May 10 drought state of emergency for counties of the Klamath River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and Tulare Lake watersheds, which includes the Mill



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Creek and Deer Creek watersheds. The proclamation was expanded July 8 to cover 50 of the state's 58 counties, with the Governor asking all Californians to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 15%.

The governor's proclamation directed the State Water Board, in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, to evaluate appropriate minimum instream flows and other actions to protect salmon, steelhead and other native fish species. The minimum flow requirements for Mill and Deer Creeks in today's regulation are consistent with those established during the prior drought. The State Water Board adopted emergency curtailment regulations in both 2014 and 2015 for these watersheds.

The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.