

## P R E S S R E L E A S E

### **Karuk Tribe • Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations • Institute for Fisheries Resources • Environmental Law Foundation**

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### **WATER BOARD ADVANCES REQUEST FROM TRIBE AND FISHERMEN TO PROTECT SCOTT AND SHASTA RIVERS** *The Karuk Tribe, PCFFA, and ELF Pleased with Waterboard Response to Rule Making Petition*

*Happy Camp, California* – In May, the Karuk Tribe, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA), and Environmental Law Foundation filed a joint petition with the California Water Control Board asking it to set and enforce a minimum streamflow standard for the Scott River. The Scott River, a tributary to the Klamath, is home to several species of salmon and steelhead trout. Notably, the Scott supports most of the remaining ESA listed Southern Oregon-Northern California Coho left in the world.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife later wrote the Board urging similar action for the Shasta River, a watershed adjacent to the Scott that is one of the most important spawning and rearing area for Chinook salmon in Northern California.

On August 15, the State Water Board held a hearing on the petition. The large number of interested parties and individuals speaking on the item drove the meeting near the midnight hour.

In the end, Board directed staff to action in the immediate and the long term to protect flows in these two rivers that are critically important for imperiled salmon runs. First, staff was directed to develop a timeline for reinstating the recently expired emergency regulations for both the Shasta and Scott Rivers, and also to begin work on a permanent regulation for flows in the Shasta and the Scott Rivers.

“We are very pleased that the Water Board heard our concerns and is taking decisive action,” said Karuk Tribal Chairman Russell ‘Buster’ Attebery. “I feel like the voice of Tribal People is finally being heard.”

“Even in wet years like this one, summer flows in the Scott are much lower today than they were in the driest of summers before the expansion of groundwater pumping began in the 1980s,” noted PCFFA Director Glenn Spain. “Dewatering streams like the Scott is a key factor in the decline of California’s salmon fisheries and it has cost commercial salmon fishing families thousands of jobs.”

Since 1980, a dramatic increase in unregulated groundwater pumping has left the Scott River bone dry in long stretches in most summers, creating a crisis for salmon and the communities that depend on them for culture, subsistence, and jobs. The water is used almost exclusively to grow alfalfa. In the Shasta, cold springs are diverted to flood irrigation cow pasture, leaving fish high and dry.

“By taking this action, the State Board is stepping up to protect the public trust values inherent in the Scott River,” said Nathaniel Kane, Executive Director of ELF. “We are looking to working with the Board over the next weeks and months to ensure that this action turns into actual, wet water in the river for summers to come.”

“We simply want water use to regulated fairly. For far too long, the irrigators have taken all the water they need while disregarding the needs of fish or the people who depend on them. It’s time to balance the scales so we can all survive in a changing climate,” concluded Attebery

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## **EDITORS NOTES**

Link to [petition](#)

Link to [pictures](#) courtesy Karuk Tribe

This Petition is brought under the Petition Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and article I, section 3 of the California Constitution, both of which permit citizens to petition the government for redress of grievances. If adopted, this would be the first permanent year-round stream flow regulation has been established in this manner.