

# Welcome!

Russian River Drought Response Webinar  
Thursday, June 10, 2021 | 5:30pm – 7:00pm

Daniel Schultz  
Samuel Boland-Brien  
Samuel Cole  
Philip Dutton  
Division of Water Rights

CALIFORNIA  
**Water Boards**  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS

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## Housekeeping

- The webinar will last approximately 1 hour
- Keep your video off (to save bandwidth)
- Everyone is muted (to prevent participants from talking over each other)
- Submit questions by chat to the attendee titled “Submit Questions Here” or by email: [RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov)


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# Overview

- Drought Conditions in the Russian River Watershed
- Water Supply and Demand
- Notices of Water Unavailability
- Emergency Regulation
- Contact Information
- Questions




Image Source: Kent Porter, Press Democrat 2021

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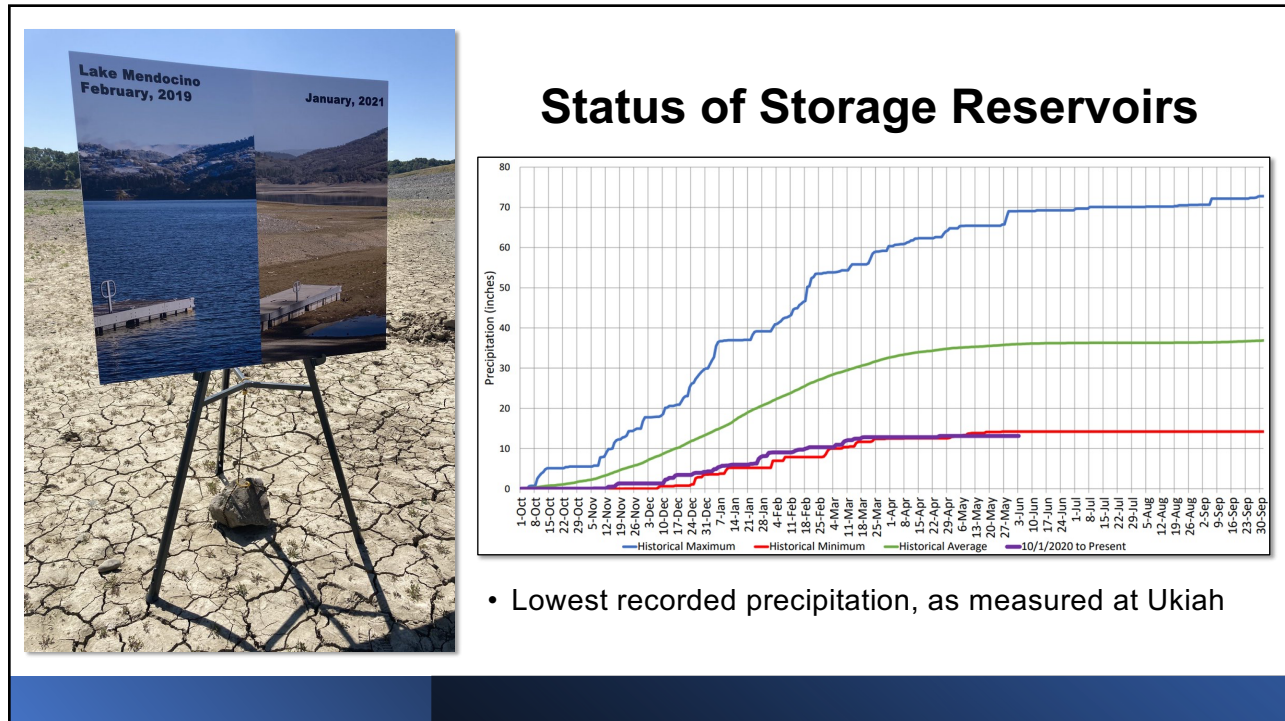
## Drought Conditions in the Russian River Watershed



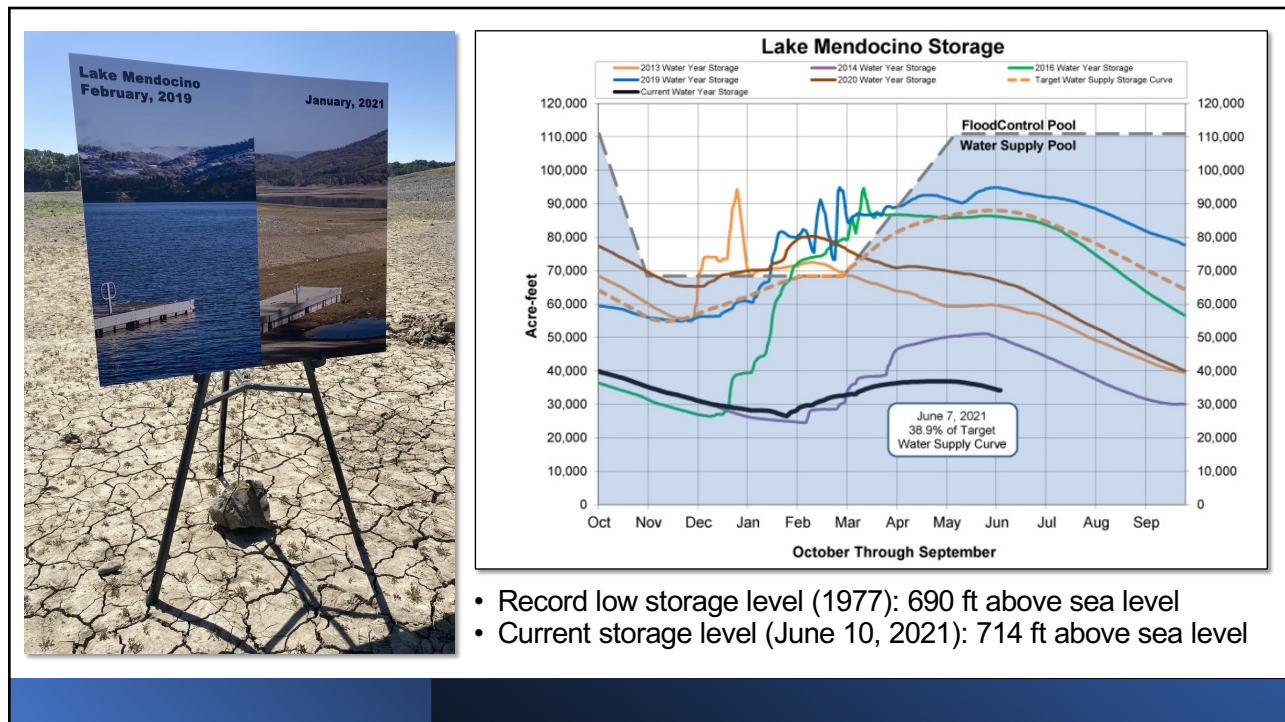
- After an unseasonably dry winter and spring, Lake Mendocino is well below historic storage levels. The lake is at risk of draining completely by the end of the year unless urgent action is taken to reduce diversions in the watershed
- By July 1, it is likely that all reaches of the Upper Russian River will be losing reaches (more water is flowing into the upstream end than out of the downstream end). This means significantly more than 25 cfs will need to be released to ensure 25 cfs of flow continues past Healdsburg

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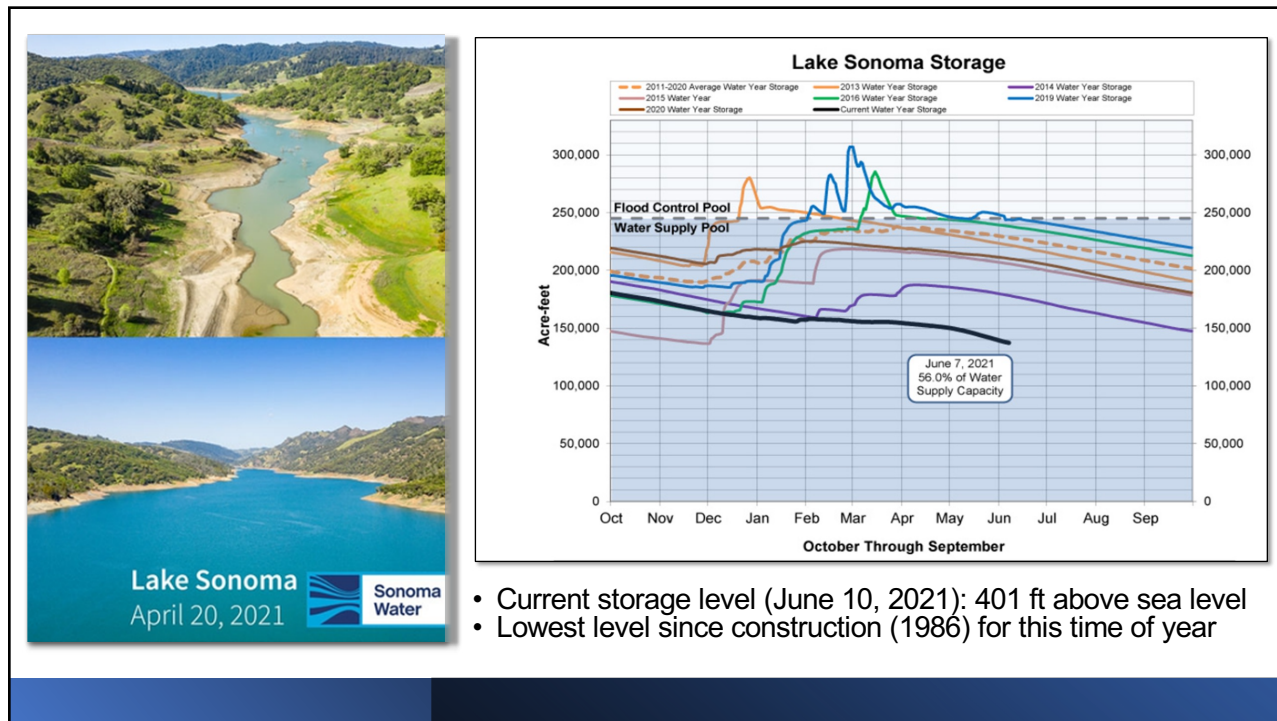




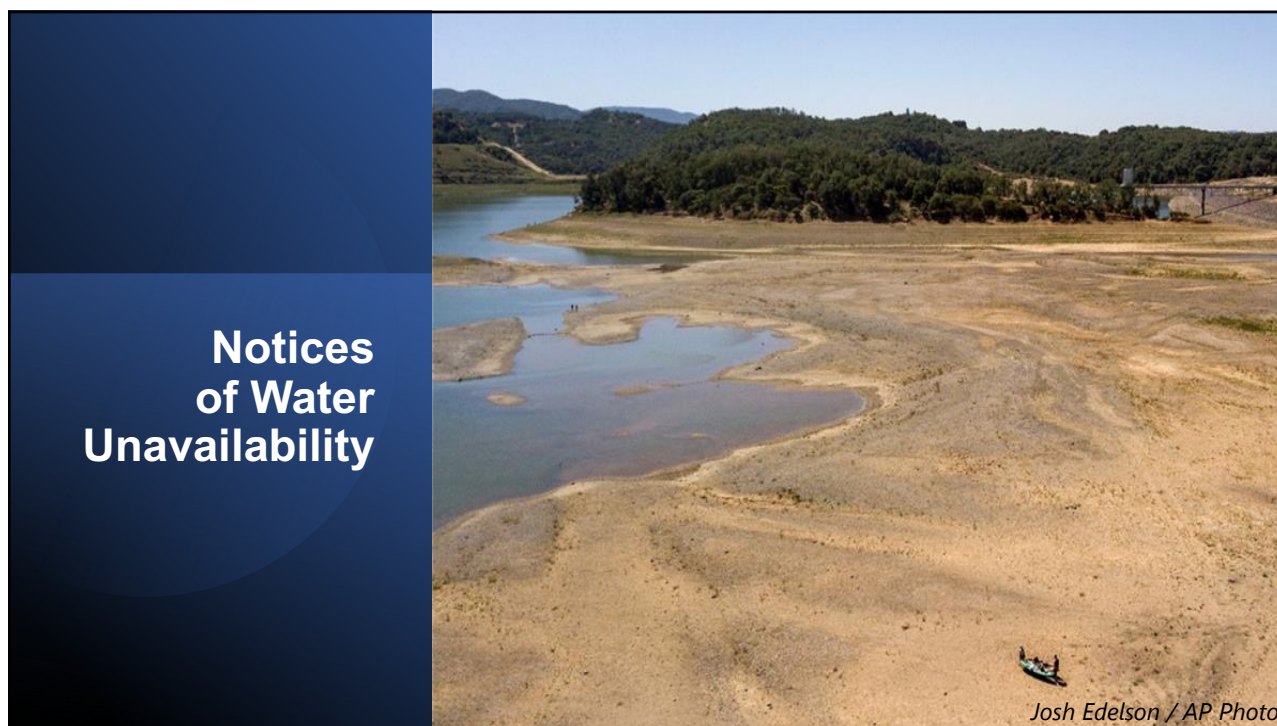
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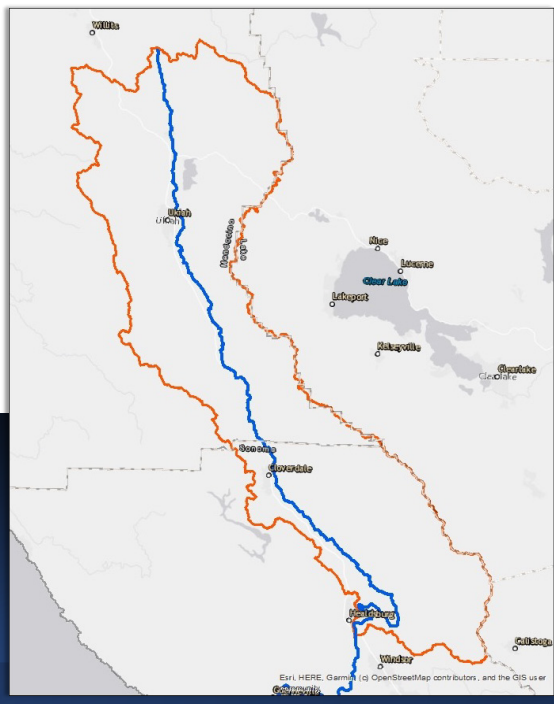


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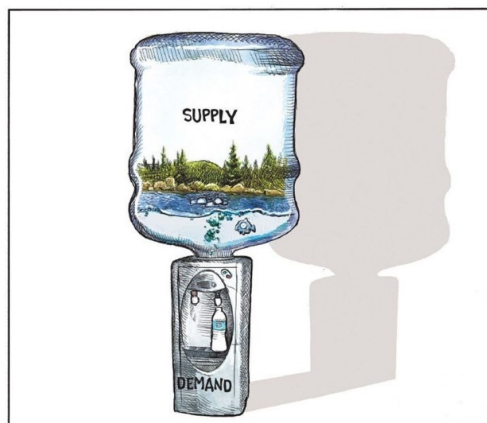
## Upper Russian River Watershed



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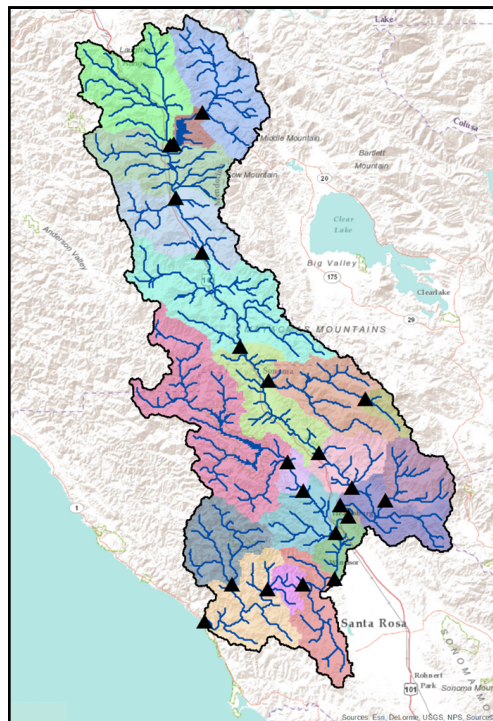
## Estimating Water Demand

- Water right demands are based on water diversion and use data annually reported by water right holders to the State Water Board
- Analysis was limited to reports from calendar years 2017, 2018, and 2019 to reflect the most current and complete information on expected diversions
- To estimate monthly demands, the sum of monthly reported direct diversion and diversion to storage values were averaged over of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 calendar years
- The self-reported data was reviewed for errors related to excessive reported diversions, duplicate reporting, unit conversion errors, and missing water use reports
- Corrected data better represents actual or feasible demand of surface water for use in Water Availability Analysis
  - Copy of the corrected demand dataset is available on our Russian River Drought website



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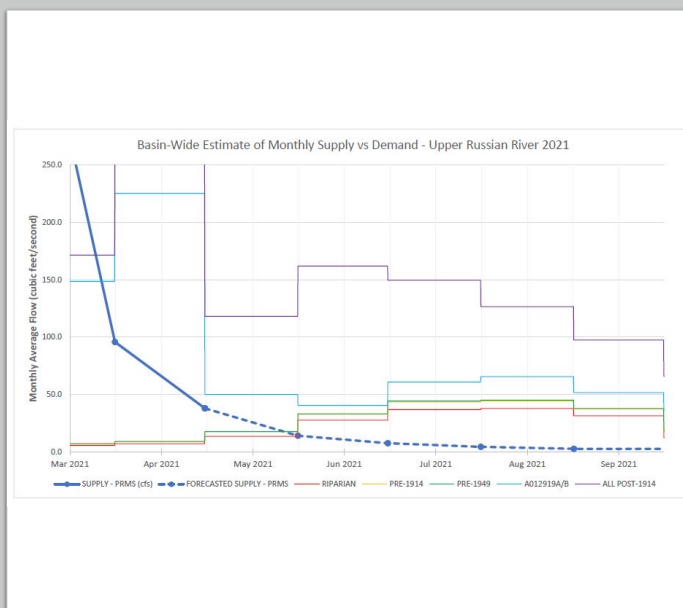
## Estimating Water Supply

- The Precipitation Runoff Modeling System (PRMS)
  - Simulates hydrologic processes such as solar radiation, ET, runoff, infiltration, streamflow, etc.
  - Model inputs includes soil properties, vegetation/landcover, impervious area, and climate observation stations for precipitation and temperature
- Modeled stream network, subbasins and outlet points are shown in image
- PRMS model can calculate historic, current, and forecasted streamflow at outlet points by sub-basin
- State Water Board re-calibrated model to better capture the spring recession and summer base flows in April through October

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## Water Supply and Demand in the Upper Russian River

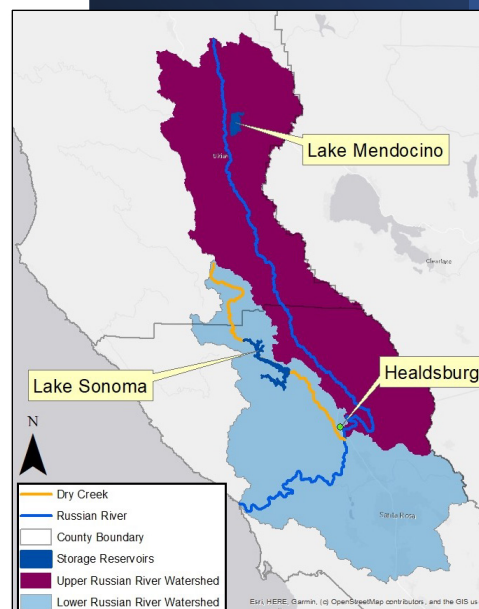
- Data indicates that water supply is currently insufficient to meet the needs of Post-1914 water rights holders
- The supply is continuing to decrease rapidly and further limit the availability of water for pre-1914 appropriative rights and riparian diverters



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## Notices of Water Unavailability

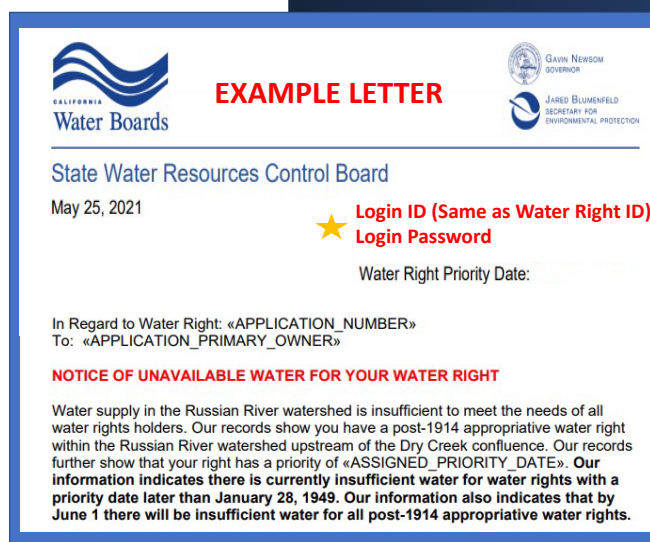
- May 25, 2021 – Notices of Water Unavailability were sent to all Post-1914 water right holders in the Upper Russian River basin, upstream of the Dry Creek confluence near Healdsburg
- Notices of Water Unavailability are letters used to inform diverters that there is insufficient water available to divert under their priority of right
- Water use restrictions generally are determined based on seniority and the type of water right. In times of shortage, those with more junior rights may be required to stop diverting from rivers and streams before restrictions are imposed on more senior water right holders



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## Notices of Water Unavailability (cont.)

1. Review letter
2. Complete Water Unavailability Certification Form using login info identified in letter (★)  
**Link:**  
<https://public.waterboards.ca.gov/WRInfo>
3. **Highly Suggested:**
  - Subscribe to the Russian River Drought email list using link provided in the Notice to receive updates on drought conditions and Board actions



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## Responding to Notice of Water Unavailability

- Right holders who received a Notice of Water Unavailability need to respond through the online form
- The form will request information about whether you will cease diversions, if you have alternative sources of water, and if you need an exception to the notice due to a need to divert water for human health and safety

**Unavailability Certification**

Please select all that apply \*  I will not be diverting any water under junior priority water rights for the 2021 unavailability period

I am continuing diversion of water under this junior priority water right

Explain below. Please note that if you are continuing diversions under a junior priority water right, the following page will ask you to explain whether these diversions are for the purpose of meeting minimum health and safety needs, fire suppression, or addressing air quality issues.

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## Human Health and Safety Needs

- The form asks if the diversion is necessary for minimum human health and safety needs
- Right holders who receive the notices generally can still access water they previously stored in reservoirs. If that option is unavailable, will have to find alternative sources such as groundwater or purchased water

**Fire Suppression, Air Quality, or Human Health and Safety**

The questions below regarding fire suppression, air quality, and human health and safety request information to better understand your specific water supply situation.

**HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY** - I hereby certify that there is no alternative source available to supply basic human health and safety needs and ceasing diversion under this water right would prohibit compliance with state or local health or drinking water regulations.

Yes | No

**FIRE SUPPRESSION** - I hereby certify that there is no alternative source available for fire suppression use as required by CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection or other appropriate authority

Yes | No

### Alternative Source of Water

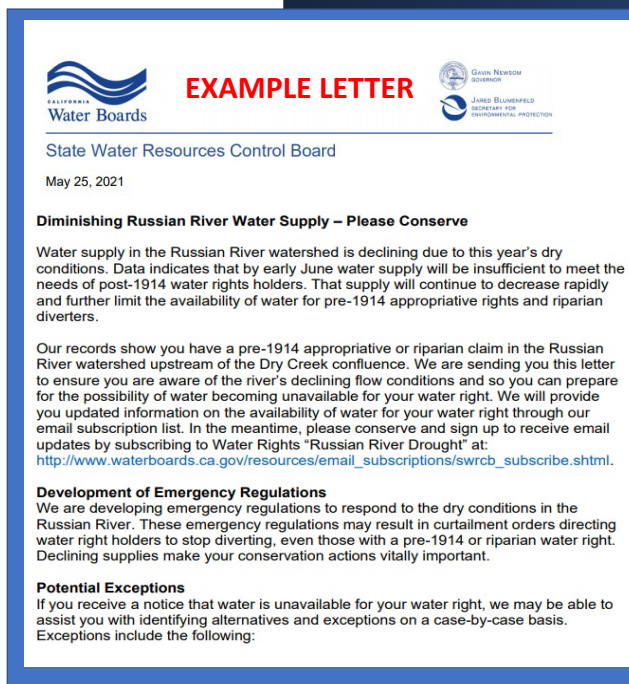
**Do you serve the place of use or a portion or place of use associated with the junior priority water right with an alternative source of water?**

- Yes, with groundwater
- Yes, with a pre-1914 appropriative water right(s)
- Yes, with a riparian water right(s)
- Yes, with purchased/hailed water
- Yes, with contract water
- No

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## Warning Letter: Diminishing Russian River Water Supply

- An additional letter advising diverters of the diminishing Russian River water supply was sent to all Pre-1914 and Riparian water right holders in the upper watershed
- The letter informs the recipients of potential curtailment orders directing water right holders to stop diverting, even those with a pre-1914 or riparian water right
- Recipients of this letter do not need to respond



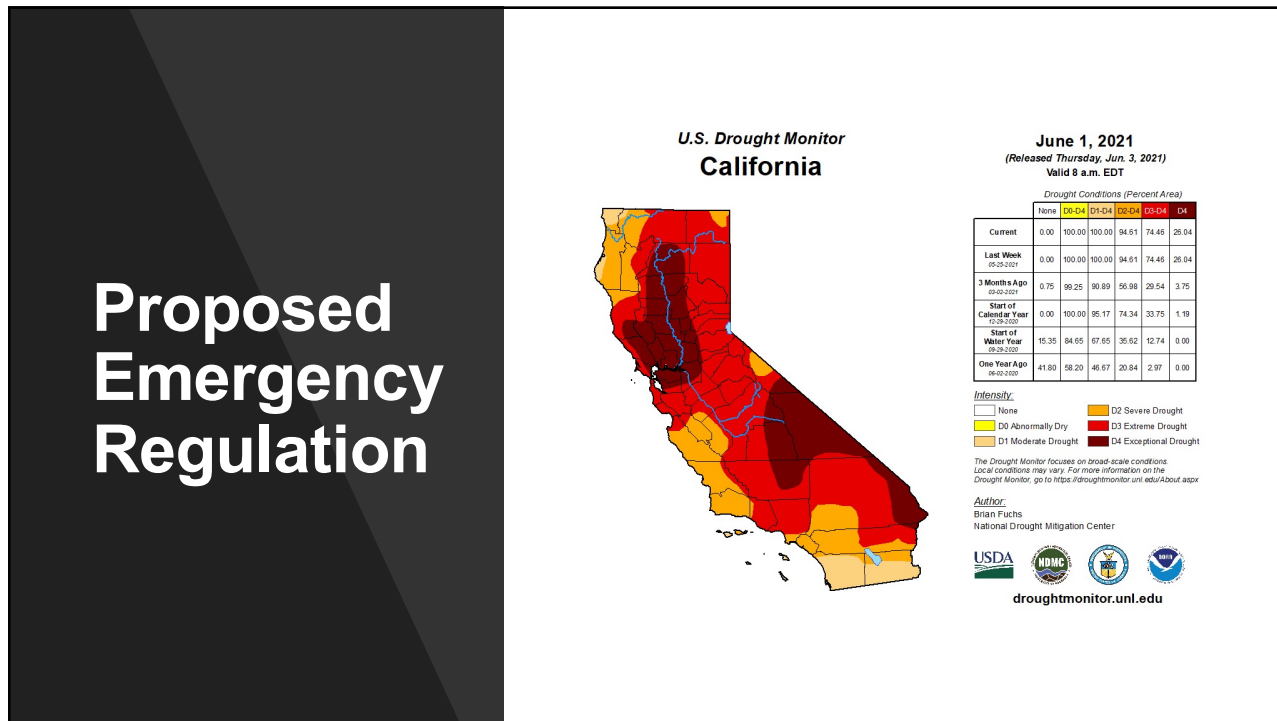
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## Questions?



Submit questions by chat to the attendee titled "Submit Question Here" or by email: [RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov)

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## Proposed Emergency Regulation

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- April 21, 2021 – Governor Newsom declared a regional drought emergency for the Russian River watershed due to the acutely dry conditions within Mendocino and Sonoma Counties
- The drought declaration directed the State Water Board to consider adoption of emergency regulations “to curtail water diversions when water is not available at water right holders’ priority of right or to protect releases of stored water”

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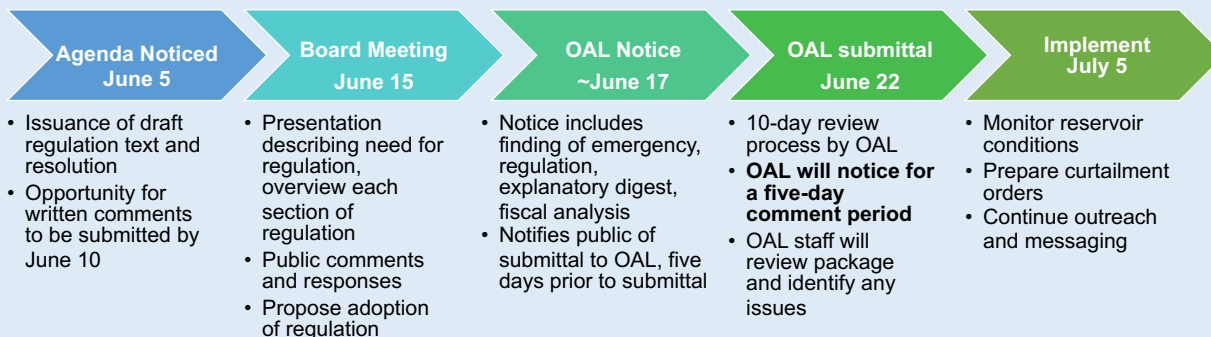
# Proposed Emergency Regulation

- Will implement curtailments in both the Upper and the Lower Russian River watersheds
- Relies on Water Code section 1058.5 and the State Water Board's authorities under California Constitution Article X, § 2
- The proposed approach is highly specific to the circumstances and hydrologic conditions of the Russian River watershed



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## Overview of Regulatory Process



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## Proposed Emergency Regulation Explained (Lower Russian River Basin)

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**Regulation Section 877.2:** Division of Water Rights may issue curtailment orders in the Lower Russian River watershed when flows are insufficient to support all water right priorities

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**Regulation Section 877.2 (c):** Describes information Deputy Director will use when determining issuing curtailments or when rescind curtailment orders

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**Regulation Section 877.2 (d)(e)(f):** Board established email subscription list and website for announcements. Recission of curtailment orders shall be announced using the email distribution list and web page described in subdivision (e)

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## Proposed Emergency Regulation Explained (Upper Russian River Basin)

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**Regulation Section 877.3:** Division of Water Rights may issue curtailment orders in the Upper Russian River watershed when stored water is being released and Lake Mendocino is below storage certain storage thresholds  
Deems diversions other than for minimum human health and safety as unreasonable during these limited circumstances

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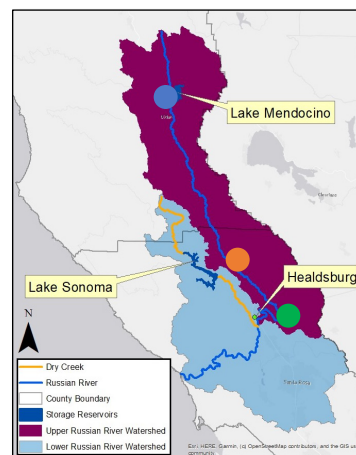
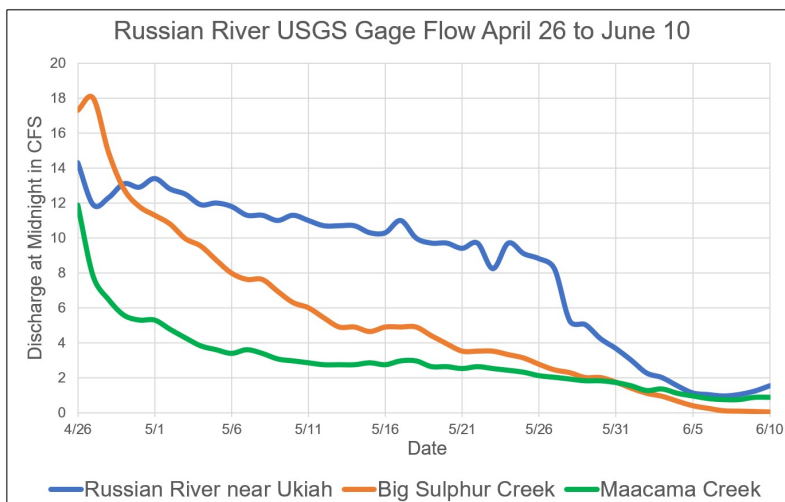
**Regulation Section 877.4:** Establishes biweekly storage level targets for Lake Mendocino. Curtailment orders in the Upper Russian River watershed cannot be issued if storage level targets are met

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**Regulation Section 877.5:** Describes information Deputy Director will use when deciding to lift curtailment orders

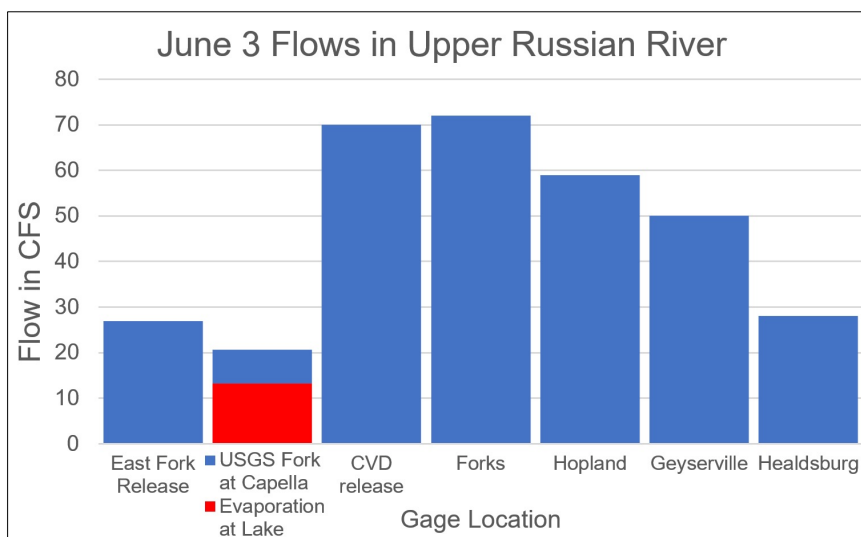
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## Flows in Tributaries are Almost Zero



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## Flows Along Mainstem of River are Losing



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## Proposed Emergency Regulation Explained (Exceptions and Reporting)

**Regulation Section 878:** Certain diversions for non-consumptive uses may continue after the issuance of a curtailment order if certification is provided to the deputy director.

**Regulation Section 878.1:** Certain diversions for minimum human health and safety needs, up to 55 gallons per person per day. If more than 55 gpcd, need to submit petition to Deputy Director

**Regulation Section 879:** Establishes reporting requirements for water right holders issued a curtailment

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## Contact the State Water Board

- Questions regarding the Notices of Water Unavailability and/or the Drought Emergency Regulation can be emailed to:

[RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov)

- You may also leave a message at our Drought hotline: **(916) 341-5318** and State Water Board staff will return your call
- Notice of Water Unavailability FAQs can be found on Drought webpage

Stay informed

### Email Subscription List

Subscribe to the Drought Updates email list to receive notifications and the latest updates.

Email Address: *(required)*


Your Full Name: *(required)*

*(e.g. John Smith)* SUBSCRIBE

Check your email account for a confirmation email to complete your subscription.

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian\\_river/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river/)

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## Questions?

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