State Water Resources Control Board

NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AND VIRTUAL MEETING

Draft Range of Baseline Minimum Flows for the Shasta River Watershed for Evaluation in Scientific Basis Report and Economic Analysis

As the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or Board) directed in Resolution No. 2024-0036, Board staff are working on the following items to inform future efforts in the Scott River and Shasta River watersheds:

(1) Scientific Basis Reports – reports evaluating the scientific basis for and anticipated fishery-related impacts associated with establishing baseline minimum flows; and
(2) Economic Impacts Analysis – an analysis of potential economic impacts associated with establishing baseline minimum flows in the watersheds.

The Board must identify a range of flow options that can be analyzed as part of the scientific basis report, economic analyses, and future peer review by independent third parties. The Board is soliciting public input on what that range of flows should be, and whether additional locations should be considered. **The scientific basis reports and economic analysis are informational documents and do not independently establish flows. Rather, the scientific basis reports and economic analysis will provide technical analysis of a limited range of potential baseline minimum flow regimes.** The scientific basis reports and economic analysis will be circulated for public review once developed. Information in the scientific basis reports and economic analysis may be used to inform voluntary or regulatory actions by the State Water Board or other parties.

Board staff are soliciting comments on the Shasta River watershed draft range of flows that will be used for further scientific and economic analysis. Comments on the draft range of flows provided below are due by Monday, April 20, 2026. A meeting will be held on Thursday, April 9, 2026, as noted below. Additional information on how to submit comments and the virtual Zoom meeting are provided later in this notice.

BASELINE MINIMUM FLOWS DESCRIPTION FOR SCOTT RIVER AND SHASTA RIVER WATERSHEDS

To help inform the development of the scientific basis reports and improve communication with interested parties, the following description was developed to better characterize long-term baseline minimum flows for the Scott River and Shasta River watersheds. Baseline flows could mean different things for different watersheds. This description is meant to inform further scientific and economic analysis in the Scott River and Shasta River watersheds and may not apply in different watersheds or for different purposes.

Baseline or minimum fishery-protection flows for these watersheds are the amount of water that is presumptively unreasonable to divert in any water year (except for human health and safety or other needs of highest priority). In these watersheds baseline flows represent the minimum-level fishery conditions needed for spawning, egg incubation, rearing, migration, and summer survival of anadromous fish that needs to be present in all water years, including critically dry years, to prevent the depletion of the fishery resource.

Baseline flows include flows in the mainstem—and potentially in key tributaries—needed throughout the year to:

- Allow anadromous salmonids to access suitable habitat;
- Maintain viability and genetic diversity, life history traits, and geographic distribution;
- Help buffer population impacts from catastrophic events like disease outbreaks and severe drought; and
- Support population increases for depressed populations, including but not limited to avoiding extirpation of the species from these watersheds.

Baseline flows also need to provide suitable water quality conditions, including maintaining temperature, dissolved oxygen, and riparian habitat and food production levels that support instream survival of anadromous salmonids. In addition, baseline flow conditions may require maintaining groundwater levels sufficient to sustain cold groundwater inputs into streams during the summer and fall when surface water flows are lower and warmer, and to support earlier streamflow connection in the fall for salmonid passage and access to spawning grounds. Temperature may also be evaluated as a key water quality component linked to flows.

SHASTA RIVER WATERSHED DRAFT RANGE OF FLOWS FOR FURTHER SCIENTIFIC AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Table 1 below provides the draft range of flows proposed for further scientific and economic analysis and includes key reaches, tributaries, and springs in the Shasta River watershed as well as temperature ranges for analysis in the scientific basis report and economic analysis of baseline minimum flows. The initial range of flows for the Shasta River watershed was developed based on a review of available scientific information. Evaluation of flows and temperatures at various locations as part of a scientific basis report will provide information that may be used to inform potential future actions by the Board and/or other interested parties and does not mean that any or all such locations would have established flow or temperature requirements if the Board pursued a flow setting process.

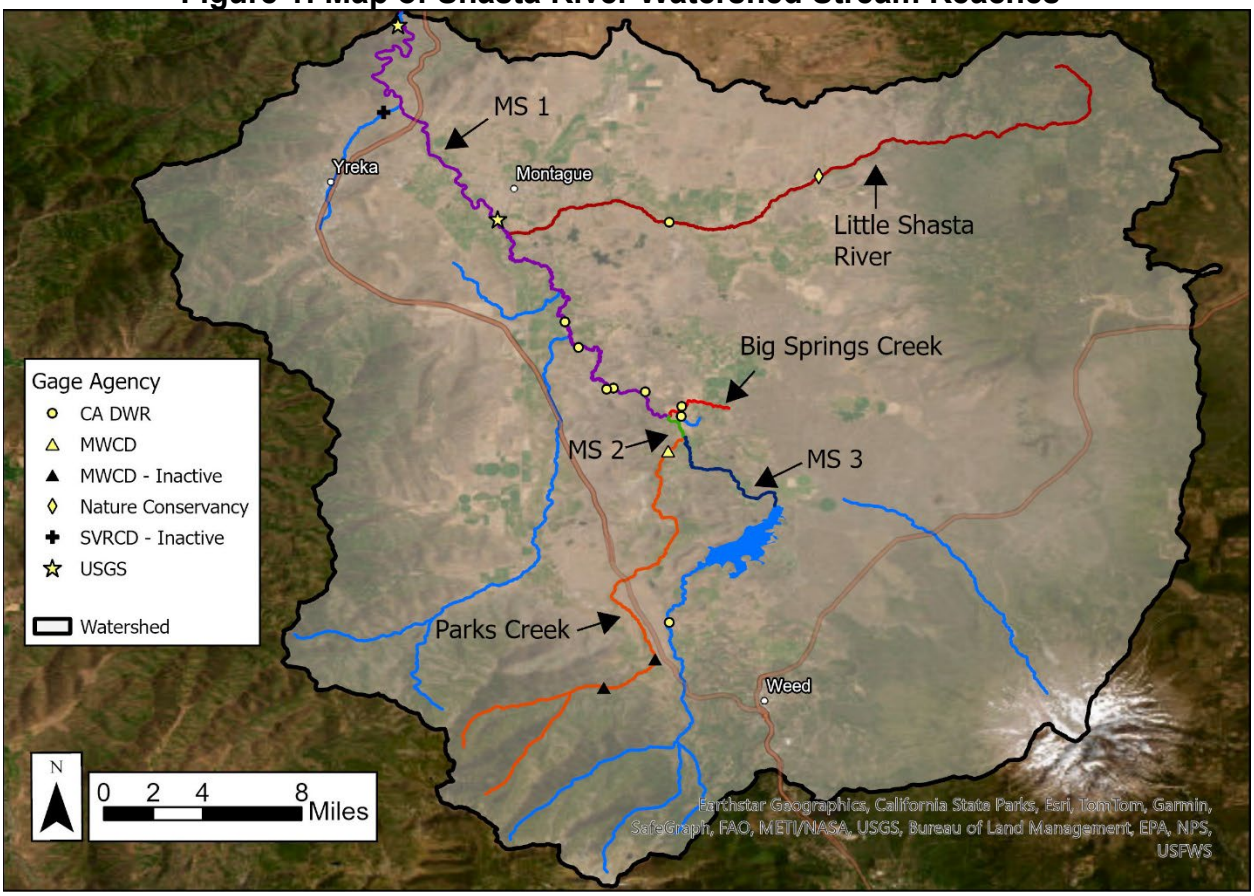
Table 1: Shasta River Watershed Draft Range of Flows for Further Scientific and Economic Analysis
Flows are in cubic feet per second.
(The colors in the table correspond to the map reaches in Figure 1.)

Location	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Mainstem downstream of Big Springs thru Canyon Reach (MS1)	125-135	125-135	125-135	70-170	50-170	50-70	40-70	40-70	40-80	105-125	125-150	125-150
Mainstem upstream of Big Springs to Parks Creek (MS2)	16-20	16-20	16-20	35-60	35-60	13-40	13-20	13-20	13-20	20-40	20-40	20-40
Mainstem upstream of Parks Creek to Dwinnell Reservoir (MS3)	2-10	2-10	4-15	15-30	11-30	9-30	6-10	6-10	3-10	3-13	3-13	3-13
Little Shasta River	10-20	10-20	10-20	20-40	15-40	5-15	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-20	10-20	10-20
Big Springs Creek	50-80	50-80	50-90	50-90	50-90	50-90	40-80	40-80	40-80	50-80	50-80	50-80
Parks Creek	10-22	10-22	10-22	20-25	20-25	3-25	3-20	3-20	3-20	8-22	8-22	8-22

Additional Considerations	**Evaluate maintenance of temperatures in a reach at or below a desired temperature.** Evaluate the range of 16-20ºC for all reaches, except on Big Springs evaluate a range of 14-18ºC.
	Evaluate minimum bypass for mapped cold-water springs (excluding Big Springs Creek which is evaluated separately)[1]. Evaluate a range from the existing condition up to a cumulative minimum bypass of 50% from mapped cold-water springs that currently or would have historically provided cold surface water inputs in the watershed downstream of Dwinnell Dam.

[1] There are approximately 17 mapped springs in the Shasta River watershed downstream of Dwinnell Dam. The evaluation of a minimum bypass for springs does not mean that any or all springs would have established bypass requirements if the Board pursued a flow setting process. Inclusion of springs would provide the Board with information to potentially evaluate different diversion and temperature management scenarios.

Figure 1: Map of Shasta River Watershed Stream Reaches*



* MS (Mainstem) 1 refers to the mainstem downstream of Big Springs Creek confluence through the canyon reach; MS 2 refers to the mainstem upstream of Big Springs Creek confluence to Parks Creek confluence; MS 3 refers to the mainstem upstream of Parks Creek confluence to Dwinnell Reservoir.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Comments in response to this notice are due by **Monday, April 20, 2026**. To the extent comments include recommended changes to the draft range of flows for further scientific and economic analysis, parties should include scientific support for the change. Comments may be submitted via email (preferred) or hard copy as noted below.

Email (preferred) to:
(with subject line of Shasta Range of Flows-Comments)
ScottShastaFlows@waterboards.ca.gov

or

Hard copy to:
State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights
P.O. Box 2000, Sacramento, CA 95812 (mail)
1001 I Street, 14th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 (hand-delivery)

INFORMATION FOR ZOOM SESSION

State Water Board staff will hold a virtual meeting to provide information, answer questions, and solicit input related to the draft range of baseline minimum flows for further scientific and economic analysis for the Shasta River watershed as follows:

Thursday, April 9, 2026
2:00 p.m.

Register for the Zoom meeting using the link below:
https://waterboards.zoom.us/meeting/register/rdLjvD1nQaGYg-edV8Mv4w
Registration is Required

Telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) users may contact the California Relay Service at: (800) 735-2929 or voice line at (800) 735-2922.

Requests for interpretation in another language or sign language services should promptly be made by email to: ScottShastaFlows@waterboards.ca.gov, or by phone call to (916) 327-3113. We will do our best to fulfill requests on short notice.

The State Water Board is committed to accessibility consistent with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.) and to swift resolution of requests for reasonable modifications or accommodations. Persons requiring reasonable modification or accommodation for disabilities should promptly e-mail ScottShastaFlows@waterboards.ca.gov, or call (916) 327-3113 to initiate a request for reasonable modification or accommodation

This is a staff-level meeting to solicit public comments in response to this notice, not a Board meeting. It is possible that one or more State Water Board members may attend the virtual meeting; however, no State Water Board deliberation or action will take place. A quorum of the State Water Board will not be present.

BACKGROUND

California is experiencing increasingly extreme hydrologic conditions, including severe droughts, declining snowpack, and reduced water availability, that are consistent with climate change projections. Hydrologic conditions in the Shasta River watershed reflect these broader trends. Hydrologic data for the Shasta River watershed demonstrate that, prior to the implementation of emergency regulations, summer flows in the Shasta River consistently met or exceeded the minimum flow requirements of the emergency regulation in only two of the last 20 years.

Recognizing the ongoing declining flow trends and continued impacts on fisheries in these watersheds, baseline minimum instream flows are needed to ensure protection of these fisheries in all water years. On October 16, 2024, the State Water Board adopted Resolution No. 2024-0036, directing staff to develop the scientific basis for establishing long-term baseline minimum instream flows in the Scott River and Shasta River watersheds and initiate analysis of the economic impacts of implementing long-term baseline minimum flows, including consideration of impacts on fishing and agriculture and associated indirect impacts.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information regarding the emergency regulation and related efforts, please visit the State Water Board's Scott River and Shasta River Watersheds Emergency Regulation website[2].

HOW TO RECEIVE UPDATES

If you would like to receive email updates related to emergency regulation and related efforts, please sign up[3] under "State Water Resources Control Board" and "Water Rights" for the "Scott-Shasta Drought & Flow Efforts" email subscription list.

QUESTIONS

Please email questions regarding this notice and related efforts to: ScottShastaFlows@waterboards.ca.gov or leave a message at our dedicated Scott River and Shasta River Flow Efforts phone line at: (916) 327-3113.

[2] URL: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/scott_shasta_rivers/
[3] URL: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/