



## State Water Resources Control Board

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Dry Year Forces Reduced Flows In Russian River**

Because of the unusually low rainfall in the watershed and at the request of the local water agency, the State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Water Rights has approved a request to reduce the flow of water in the Russian River. It has also scheduled a June 5 workshop so that residents and interest groups can give Water Board members their feedback on this issue.

The reduced flow will reserve additional water in Lake Mendocino later into the year to enable residents to make it through the dry summer and to conserve water for endangered fish. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Game concur that this action is needed to help protect the Russian River fishery. Environmental groups also support this year's lower flow limits. It is expected that there will be minimal impact on river recreation.

Specifically, the order signed Thursday states that, "instream flow requirements for the Upper Russian River (from its confluence with the East Fork of the Russian River to its confluence with Dry Creek) be reduced from 185 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 75 cfs, and the requirements for the lower Russian River (downstream of its confluence with Dry Creek) be reduced from 125 cfs to 85 cfs." Reductions will begin now and the lower flows will be in place by June 1. The Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) petition, in effect, requests that minimum flows for the Russian River be established based on dry-year criteria rather than normal-year criteria as defined in State Water Board Decision 1610.

The request is made to prevent storage levels in Lake Mendocino from dropping to very low levels by the end of summer. The order continues, "SCWA states such low levels could: (1) severely impact threatened or endangered Russian River fish species, (2) create serious water supply impacts in Mendocino County and in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley, and (3) harm Lake Mendocino and Russian River recreation."

Combined with other water conservation efforts already in place, SCWA believes this order will allow it to get through the dry summer. The State Water

2-2-2-2 Division of Water Rights will accept public comment, continue to monitor the situation in the Russian River watershed and may take additional action as the summer progresses.

In response to water shortages, other government agencies are also taking steps to ensure quality water supply including an announcement yesterday of \$200 million in state grants to local agencies for conservation projects.

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The workshop to accept comments is scheduled for June 5, 2007 more information is available at [www.waterrights.ca.gov/notices](http://www.waterrights.ca.gov/notices).

The Division of Water Rights has established a hotline for comments and questions at (916) 341-5426.