



Media Release

State Water Board readopts emergency regulation for minimum flows in Scott, Shasta River watersheds

Years of dry conditions still impact native fish, ecosystems

Jan. 7, 2025

Contact: [Ailene Voisin](#), information officer

SACRAMENTO – In a continuing effort to protect imperiled fish, ensure adequate water supplies for human health and livestock needs, and support ongoing drought recovery in the Scott and Shasta River watersheds, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted an updated emergency regulation Jan. 7, 2025, that maintains minimum flow requirements and authorizes curtailment orders in the event flows fall below those levels.

The rivers, which are key tributaries in the Klamath watershed, are crucial water sources for Siskiyou County and are important habitat for federally and state-threatened coho salmon, Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. They are also of immense economic, ecological and cultural importance to tribes and the surrounding communities.

While precipitation in the Klamath watershed improved significantly in 2023 and 2024 following drought conditions in 2021-22, flows in both the Scott and Shasta rivers dropped below minimum baseline-protection levels set by the State Water Board in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. Although precipitation this year is trending above average thus far, the water year has yet to reach the halfway point. Conditions could rapidly change, as occurred in 2021.

“Successive years of dry conditions have severely impacted critical fish populations in the Scott and Shasta River watersheds, requiring us to take measures to protect their very existence,” said board Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel. “Continuing the emergency regulation enables us to maintain minimum flows in the Scott and Shasta rivers and to help with the recovery from long-term drought impacts. Updates to the regulation also simplify the reporting and monitoring requirements.”

Located near the Oregon border, each watershed covers approximately 800-square miles and is surrounded by mountains, with large valleys, tributaries and cold-water habitats that facilitate spawning and rearing of juvenile salmon. The hydrology of the two watersheds differs significantly, however. The Scott receives more precipitation and relies heavily on snowpack for its water supply. The Shasta is dominated by volcanic



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • www.waterboards.ca.gov



formations, with high infiltration rates into groundwater aquifers that feed a strong spring system. It also has a reservoir and a watermaster to manage the resources.

With concerns about possible low flows in the Scott and Shasta watersheds persisting given unpredictable conditions, the board at its Oct. 10, 2024, meeting issued a [resolution regarding the flows](#) and immediate and long-term efforts. A public comment period and a virtual public meeting subsequently were held to solicit input on: (1) whether the emergency regulation should be readopted; (2) if so, changes that should be made; and (3) viable alternatives to an emergency regulation, with specific items the board should consider. Staff did not receive any recommended alternatives from the public prior to today's meeting.

More information about the [Scott and Shasta watersheds](#) is available on the board website.

Background: On May 10, 2021, Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a drought emergency in counties throughout California, citing the critical low river flows in numerous locations, including the Klamath Basin. The emergency proclamation authorizes the board to adopt regulations and issue curtailments when water is unavailable. The Governor rescinded many of the order's provisions on Sept. 4, 2024, due to significant precipitation and improved conditions in several watersheds, particularly in the Sierra Nevada range. However, the order specifically found that continued action is needed – including the authority to impose future curtailments – to abate harm to native fish in the Klamath watershed.

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 present and future generations.