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## **Tribes, Fishermen, Conservationists Demand Action to Restore Flows in Klamath Tributaries**

*Native Fish on Brink of Extinction in Scott and Shasta Rivers*

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**Scott River, CA** - Today Save California Salmon, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA), and 12 California environmental organizations joined Klamath River Tribes in asking the California State Water Resources Control Board to establish permanent instream flow requirements for the Scott and Shasta Rivers, two of the Klamath River's largest tributaries. The letters were sent after the multiple Klamath River Tribes sent similar requests to make instream emergency flow requirements permanent.

"The Scott and Shasta Rivers are the last strongholds for wild Coho and Chinook salmon in the Klamath River but they go dry most years due to water diversions and groundwater pumping," said Regina Chichizola from Save California Salmon. "This has had devastating impacts on the west coast fishing industry and Tribal subsistence fishing, but up until now California has turned a blind eye."

Klamath River Coho are listed as threatened under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts (ESA). Klamath Spring Chinook are listed under the California ESA and under consideration for federal listing. Fall Chinook numbers are falling as well.

"In only a few decades, we have watched Scott and Shasta River salmon populations plummet due to excessive water diversions and mismanagement. For millennia, these streams supported a

sizable portion of the Yurok Tribe's subsistence harvest, but in the last six years we have not been able to harvest enough fish to feed our elders, let alone the tribe," said Frankie Myers, the Yurok Tribe's Vice Chairman. "We ask the state water board to restore balance to the management of the Scott and Shasta before it's too late. The board has a legal and ethical obligation to expeditiously establish and enforce a flow schedule that supports the recovery of these critically important salmon runs."

On May 3, 2021, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) transmitted a letter and supporting materials to the California Water Board requesting establishment of a legally enforceable flow standard in the Scott and Shasta Rivers. On September 29, 2021, the Karuk Tribe transmitted an additional letter to the Board supporting the Department's request. Using the authority granted by Governor Newsom's emergency drought declaration, water diversions to alfalfa farms and ranches were curtailed in the Scott and Shasta for the first time in history. Proponents of setting permanent instream flow standards say that the Scott and Shasta Rivers go dry most years due to diversions and that local farmers practice "disaster capitalism" by farming more alfalfa during droughts when other farmers in the state have their diversions cut off.

"Commercial fishing families all up and down the coast rely on Klamath salmon for their livelihoods," commented Glen Spain, NW Regional Director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA), a major west coast commercial fisheries trade group. "Allowing too much water to be taken out of the Scott and Shasta Rivers, which once supported tens of thousands of adult salmon every year, cuts the economic heart out of many coastal communities."

He noted that commercial ocean salmon fisheries throughout Northern California had to be closed again this year, for the second year in a row, to protect the very weak stocks returning to the Klamath basin under what are called "weak stock management" constraints.

In their letter the Karuk Tribe pointed out that "Action is urgently needed to save Coho salmon, which is listed as threatened on the California and federal endangered species lists. Action is not only needed to protect endangered fish, but also dwindling populations of Fall Chinook salmon before they too are listed as endangered. Currently Fall Chinook populations are inadequate to meet the subsistence needs of tribes or support California's commercial salmon fishing industry. Already, Spring Chinook have been extirpated from the Scott and Shasta Rivers."

The letter to the Board is available upon request.

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