

# CDFW and NOAA Fisheries Introduce Voluntary Drought Initiative to Protect Salmon and Steelhead

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<http://cdfgnews.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/noaa-cdfw-logosd.jpg>

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries announced a Voluntary Drought Initiative today designed to protect populations of salmon and steelhead from the effects of the current unprecedented drought.

“This is one of many measures we’re attempting to get us through this extreme drought and keep enough water in the state’s rivers and streams to protect our fish resources,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. “I am thankful that water users and landowners came to our agencies with ideas about working together in northern California, which allowed us to take this immediate, voluntary action during this important spawning time and improve regulatory certainty for rural communities.”

The initiative provides a framework for water users to enter into individual agreements with the two agencies in an effort to maintain enough water for fish spawning in specific high priority streams, and implement other collaborative actions like fish rescue, relocation, monitoring and habitat restoration. The geographic focus includes some Sacramento River tributaries (Antelope, Deer and Mill creeks) and the Russian, Shasta and Scott rivers. In return, landowners and water users will benefit from greater regulatory certainty under the federal and state endangered species laws, and may receive incidental take authorizations for California Endangered Species Act (CESA)-listed fish in case a participant unintentionally takes listed fish species while withdrawing water.

Archie “Red” Emmerson, owner of Sierra Pacific Industries and the largest private landowner in California, was among the first to participate in the voluntary program. “This is one of the toughest water years in recent memory for people, cattle and fish,” Emmerson said. “We have learned a great deal about salmon spawning and rearing on our properties. This year we are volunteering to keep additional cold water in the creek to help salmon. We hope working with the fish agencies will give the salmon a better chance to survive this difficult drought.”

This is a temporary, voluntary initiative that is only being implemented during federal and state drought declarations or designations, with the goal of supporting agricultural activities while protecting the survival and recovery of federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and CESA-listed salmon and steelhead during this crucial time in their life cycle.

“This initiative is a great example of how to we can respond, in a meaningful way, to the ill effects of a drought” said NOAA Fisheries West Coast Regional Administrator William Stelle, Jr. “Instead of fighting over scarce water supplies and possible regulatory violations, we are building partnerships with landowners and water users who value the salmon resources of California. The voluntary salmon protections coming out of these partnerships are significant.”

NOAA Fisheries and CDFW are aware that the State Water Resources Control Board is currently considering curtailing water rights to respond to current drought conditions. This Voluntary Drought Initiative, under the ESA and CESA, is limited to those authorities and responsibilities of NOAA Fisheries and CDFW. However NOAA Fisheries and CDFW are coordinating closely with the State Water Board. While this initiative is separate from the Board’s authorities and independent actions that it may pursue related to the drought, including emergency curtailments, NOAA Fisheries and CDFW intend to support any local cooperative solution formalized through an executed voluntary agreement before the State Water Board as an alternative to mandatory curtailments.

A description of the fish agencies’ Voluntary Drought Initiative can be found at [www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/voluntary\\_drought\\_initiative.htm](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/voluntary_drought_initiative.htm) ([http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/voluntary\\_drought\\_initia](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/voluntary_drought_initia)

Today, NOAA Fisheries and CDFW are also announcing the execution of the first set of voluntary agreements with key landowners in the Scott and Shasta river watersheds covering land access for fish rescue and providing critical flows to maintain suitable habitat. For copies of those agreements, please continue to check

[www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/voluntary\\_drought\\_initiative.htm](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/voluntary_drought_initiative.htm) ([http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/voluntary\\_drought\\_initia](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/voluntary_drought_initia) which will be updated as agreements are available.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to reduce their water use by 20 percent and prevent water waste – visit [saveourH2O.org](http://www.saveourh2o.org) (<http://www.saveourh2o.org/>) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit [drought.ca.gov](http://ca.gov/drought/) (<http://ca.gov/drought/>) to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.

MOUs:

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Shasta River and Parks Creek MOU \(Emmerson\)](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/drought_201)  
([http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/protected\\_species/salmon\\_steelhead/drought\\_201](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/drought_201)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Antelope Creek MOU \(Edwards Ranch\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86319)  
(<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86319>)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Antelope Creek MOU \(Los Molinos Mutual Water Company\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86322)  
(<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86322>)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Mill Creek MOU \(Los Molinos Mutual Water Company\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86324)  
(<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86324>)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Mill Creek MOU \(Nobmann Cattle LLC\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86325)  
(<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86325>)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Mill Creek MOU \(Peyton Pacific Properties\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86326)  
(<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86326>)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Mill Creek MOU \(The Nature Conservancy\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86327)  
(<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86327>)

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU \(Murphy Family Trust\)](#)

- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86318>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Michigan Cal)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86328>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Barnes)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86329>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Gazzarino)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86330>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (J. Fowle)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86331>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (J. Spencer)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86332>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Morris)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86333>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Scott River Ranch)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86334>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Tobias Ranch)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86336>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (K. Whipple)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86337>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Scott River MOU (Stapleton)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86672>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Deer Creek MOU (Deer Creek Irrigation District)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86338>  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Deer Creek MOU (Grant Leininger)
- <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=86323>

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