

## STATE WATER BOARD TO PROTECT FEDERAL AND STATE-LISTED ANADROMOUS FISH IN RUSSIAN RIVER TRIBUTARIES

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The California State Water Resources Control Board has issued Informational Orders under the Russian River Tributaries Emergency Regulation for the Russian River tributaries. The Online Informational Order Form due dates are as follows: Dutch Bill Creek watershed on October 9, 2015, Green Valley Creek watershed on October 14, 2015, Mark West Creek watershed on October 15, 2015; Mill Creek watershed on October 18, 2015. The Dutch Bill Creek, Green Valley Creek, Mark West Creek, and Mill Creek are tributaries of the Russian River Coho Water Resources Partnership. Current land uses in the watershed areas include vineyards, timberlands, rangeland, rural residential, and recreational and ecologically protected areas.

Landowners and water suppliers in the region will be asked to provide information through an Online Informational Order Form concerning their sources of water, how the supply is used, and the amount used monthly, within 30 days of the Informational Orders.

Businesses and landowners are also required to comply with the enhanced water conservation measures specified in Section 876(d)(1) of the emergency regulation, including the following:

- No irrigation of ornamental turf (except with gray water, untreated rainwater, recycled water, or imported water)
- No outdoor irrigation of landscapes from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm (except with gray water, untreated rainwater, recycled water, or imported water)
- No outdoor irrigation of landscapes more than two days per week (except with gray water, untreated rainwater, recycled water, or imported water)
- No runoff of water when irrigating
- No application of water to sidewalks and driveways  
No washing of motor vehicles except at car wash facilities with a recirculating system (except with gray water, untreated rainwater, recycled water, or imported water)
- No use of water to fill or refill decorative ponds, fountains or other decorative water features (except with gray water, untreated rainwater, recycled water, or imported water)
- Hotels and motels must provide guests with the option of not having towels and linens laundered daily

The enhanced conservation measures apply to all potable and non-potable water sourced from the critical areas of the four watersheds. Water may be used for the above uses to address immediate health and safety needs and where used exclusively for irrigation of commercial agriculture.

Dutch Bill Creek is home to many Sonoma County vineyards in the Russian River Valley. Dutch Bill Creek is a primary focus of salmonid recovery efforts in the Russian River watershed, and is part of the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program. The Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District is constructing instream structures designed to improve rearing and spawning of coho salmon and

steelhead. The stretch of creek where these structures are being placed has been identified as a priority site for coho salmonid recovery. The instream structures, composed of logs, root wads, and boulders, are designed to affect water flow to scour the streambed, creating large, deep pools that juvenile salmon need to survive summers. They also create shelter during high winter flows. Structures can enhance aquatic macroinvertebrate populations, a key food source for juvenile salmon. Structures can also be designed to promote channel aggradation, allowing for the accumulation of the coarse gravel that salmon returning from the ocean need to spawn.

Mill Creek is a tributary to Dry Creek, west of the City of Healdsburg in the Russian River watershed. Other major tributaries within this sub-basin include Felta, Wallace, and Palmer Creeks.

Mill Creek and its tributaries drain a basin of approximately 24 square miles and has a total of 29 miles of USGS blue-line streams with an elevation gradient ranging from 1,400 ft. at the headwaters to approximately 60 ft. at the Dry Creek confluence. The watershed is primarily hardwood, chaparral and conifer forest with land use being mainly timber, rural residential and vineyards.

The Mill Creek watershed is a high priority watershed for coho recovery and has some of the best summer rearing habitat in the Russian River watershed according to the Russian River Biological Opinion (National Marine Fisheries Services, 2008). In addition to coho salmon, the watershed supports habitat for steelhead, sculpin, and Pacific giant salamander. Juvenile coho have been released from the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program into Mill and Palmer Creeks annually since 2004.

Green Valley Creek is a major tributary in the lower Russian River watershed. It contains critical habitat for steelhead trout, remnant populations of coho salmon, and Chinook salmon in its lower reaches. There are approximately 18.7 miles of blue line stream in the Green Valley Creek watershed, including Purrington Creek, which is important for the summer flow to the stream system. Green Valley Creek is the most recent stream in the Russian River drainage where some of the last wild juvenile coho were known to exist. It is currently stocked with juvenile coho each year as part of the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program.

Mark West Creek originates in the Mayacamas Mountains in Sonoma County, flows through the Laguna de Santa Rosa and drains to the Russian River near Forestville. The upper Mark West Creek watershed is an important sub-basin that drains approximately 40 square miles of terrain into the Mark West / Laguna de Santa Rosa system. The watershed ranges from 1800 ft. in elevation at the headwaters of Mark West Creek to 40 ft. at the Russian River confluence. The Mark West Creek watershed supports a number of state and federally protected plant and animal species, including steelhead trout and, recently, coho salmon. It is the only coho habitat in the Russian River east of Healdsburg. The confluence of Mark West Creek and the Russian River is near municipal wells, which supply clean drinking water for over 600,000 people in three counties.

The State Board will use the information collected in the upcoming Informational Order to estimate the total water demand in the watersheds to determine if additional actions will be necessary to protect federal- and state-listed anadromous fish.

Flows in the tributary watersheds naturally decrease during the summer months and not all uses of water are prohibited under the emergency regulation. However, due to the severe drought, the Department of Fish and Wildlife has determined the next few weeks will be critical to the survival of coho salmon and steelhead in the tributary watersheds. The emergency regulations are necessary in watersheds and locations where the enhanced conservation measures are coupled with flow enhancement projects. The Green Valley Creek watershed implemented flow enhancement earlier this week with dramatic improvements in water conditions for fish.