
State Water Resources Control Board

PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON PROPOSED DROUGHT EMERGENCY REGULATION FOR THE RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED

As California heads into a third consecutive dry year, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Division of Water Rights (Division) is considering the readoption of an emergency regulation to curtail water rights in the Russian River watershed. After evaluating the 2021 Emergency Regulation, the Division is proposing changes for 2022 that provide clarity, improve implementation, and address stakeholder feedback the Division received over the past year. The revised emergency regulation features four primary changes: (1) a refined water availability methodology for the Russian River Watershed; (2) protect water for fish habitat in Lower Russian River tributaries; (3) support for a voluntary conservation program that would work in parallel with curtailments; and (4) improved administration of curtailments and exceptions across watersheds. Additionally, the final draft regulation will include incidental updates to regulation sections pertaining to other watersheds resulting from proposed renumbering.

State Water Board staff will hold a public workshop to provide information and answer questions related to the proposed emergency regulation. The workshop will be offered as both an in person meeting as well as a virtual meeting. Details of the public workshop are as follows:

**Thursday, April 14, 2022
1:30 p.m.**

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
David C. Joseph Room
5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Zoom Broadcast (pre-registration required)

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_N0Mg3XkAT4SFiq9uI9Z9EA

Background

On April 21, 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a drought emergency proclamation in Mendocino and Sonoma counties due to drought conditions in the Russian River watershed. The April 2021 Proclamation directed the State Water Board to consider adoption of an emergency regulation to ensure adequate minimum water supplies and to curtail water diversions when water is not available. On March 28, 2022, Governor Newsom issued an executive order confirming the need for such emergency regulation following the driest January to March in California's recorded history.

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | EILEEN SOBECK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Under California’s priority-based water rights system, if there is insufficient water to support all water rights, junior water right holders are ordered to limit or stop their water diversions first, based on their water right priority, to satisfy the rights of those more senior to them. On June 15, 2021, the State Water Board adopted the emergency regulation, allowing the Board to determine when water is unavailable for diversion at water users’ priority of right and authorizing the Deputy Director to issue curtailment orders requiring recipients to cease diversions. California’s Office of Administrative Law approved the emergency regulation, putting it into effect on July 12, 2021. Curtailment orders were issued to water users in early August as the watershed’s drought conditions worsened and storage levels in Lake Mendocino continued to decline.

The current emergency regulation is set to expire in July 2022. However, due to ongoing drought conditions, the Division is proposing to extend the emergency regulation an additional year. The Division plans to revise and readopt the emergency regulation in early May to guarantee that it is in place before the 2022 dry season begins.

Additional Information

Please visit the State Water Board’s [Russian River Drought Response webpage](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river) (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river) for additional information on drought related activities. This website will be updated with draft materials available for public comment and additional drought-related information as available.

How to Receive Updates

If you would like to receive email updates about the Russian River drought effort, please [sign up](#) for the State Water Board’s “Russian River Drought” email subscription list under Water Rights at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/

Questions and Comments

Please email questions regarding this notice and related efforts, and comments on the draft regulation to: RussianRiverDrought@waterboards.ca.gov. The deadline for comment submittal is April 18, 2022 by 12 noon.

April 6, 2022
Date



Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board