



CalTrout's mission is to protect and restore wild trout, steelhead, salmon and their waters throughout California.

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Streamkeeper's Log

Drought – where we're at, what we can expect

As California enters its third year of drought, the full brunt of broken water policy comes to bear on our rivers and fish and people. Town wells are going dry, streams are becoming dewatered and fish kills and rescue programs are commonplace. And it's not likely to get better soon.



We can hope for an El Nino year to bail us out – it's certainly possible, but our colleagues at UC Davis say don't count on it. According to their analysis, there is a 71 percent chance next year will be a below normal – or drier – water year and only a 29 percent chance of an above normal or wet year. Not great odds that our drought will come to a rain-drenching conclusion soon. Given this outlook, we should have all the incentive we need to improve our broken water system.

Drought provides an opportunity to establish long-term solutions by incorporating recent innovation and technology.

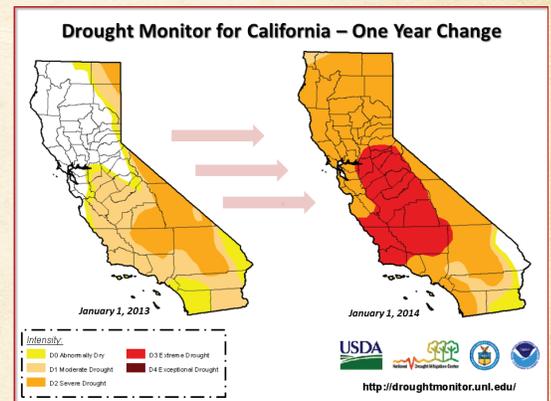
Every year we use 6 million acre feet of water more than our rivers and aquifers can sustainably provide. Yet recent estimates suggest we could save up to 14 million acre feet through agricultural water use efficiency, storm water recapture, urban water use efficiency, and improved groundwater management.

And indeed, we are seeing these ideas for better management of our water translate into legislative action in Sacramento. As expected, the drought has water interest groups scurrying about the Capitol. CalTrout is there promoting bills and shaping legislation.

In this *Streamkeeper's Log*, we summarize some of the issues and legislation we are actively involved with in Sacramento.

We'll keep working on solutions... for fish and for people.

Jeff Thompson
Executive Director, CalTrout



Drought Monitor Map from the National Drought Mitigation Center



The CalTrout team

Drought Legislation, Fish & Fishing



Current Bill Overview

Water Bond

There is nothing like a big water spending bill during a time of drought to rile up all water interest groups in Sacramento. The water bond was punted in 2010 and negotiations are back now with the governor and legislators proposing alternatives ranging from a \$6 billion to \$10 billion bond. As we write this newsletter the scope and size of the bond changes almost hourly. For CalTrout we are very supportive of funding for watershed restoration, groundwater storage, Integrated Regional Water Management and water use efficiency measures. We are concerned about funding for water storage, in particular, how much funding and for what purposes does it include groundwater storage.

Past water bond funding has been important to implementing many CalTrout projects. For example, the past water bond (the \$5.4 billion Prop. 84, passed in 2006 by 53.9% of the voters) funded important habitat restoration, fish passage and water management work. Specific examples of CalTrout projects supported by past bond bills include those on Hat Creek, in the Eastern Sierra, Shasta River, and on the Eel River.

Proposed water bonds will provide funding for Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) – it's a clunky term, but this is the new way of water management in California. Water must be managed locally and in a watershed context taking into account multiples uses. IRWM's programs bring multiple parties together to develop management plans to coordinate water use, funding for water infrastructure needs, and watershed restoration projects. It's the way California's water will be managed in the future. And CalTrout is there, leading the IRWM program in Inyo and Mono counties and actively involved in the Upper Sac/McCloud IRWM and the North Coast IRWM.

Fish need water and CalTrout's local involvement through our regional offices ensures trout are a priority.

Any potential water bond needs to provide funding for California's portion of Klamath River Agreements. California is obligated to spend up to \$250 million for Klamath dam removal in 2020. This water bond is California's best chance to fulfill that commitment towards restoring the embattled Klamath River. CalTrout has been a leader in negotiations for the Klamath Agreements and improving river conditions, fish production and community sustainability in the Klamath Basin – historically California's second largest salmon producer – remains one of our highest priorities.

Any water bond negotiation comes with a big call for water storage. The question is how much money will be allocated to this line item and for what uses would the money be restricted? Do we really need more surface storage? Making reservoirs bigger does not mean they will fill more often. For each million acre feet of storage added only 10% of that water is realized as additional yield for downstream uses.

For CalTrout, when we think storage opportunities we think replenishing groundwater aquifers and restoring Sierra meadows streams to capture snowmelt runoff for slow release during summer months. And if our focus is water yield, we can achieve a lot through water use efficiency, conservation and facility upgrades.

Groundwater Bills

California remains the only state in the union without statewide regulation of groundwater. Lack of regulation creates an unsustainable 'tragedy of the commons' use of groundwater, especially during dry years. California's severe drought and full consequences of increased groundwater pumping – including dry wells, rivers drying up, and land subsidence – have prompted the legislature into action.

AB 1739 (Dickinson) and SB 1168 (Paveley) are two groundwater bills in which CalTrout has been actively involved. The Assembly and Senate bills are similar and are in the process of being reconciled. Groundwater is a wonky topic, but important to fish because it often sustains river flows during drought, not to mention the heavy reliance of agriculture and municipalities on groundwater during dry times. Both bills require local agencies to develop sustainable groundwater management plans and require monitoring and reporting of groundwater levels. Sustainable management includes maintaining groundwater levels at 2015 levels by replenishing groundwater aquifers during wet years for use during dry years.

Other Bills We Actively Support

SB 1319 (Paveley) – Crude Oil Transportation by Rail

Updating Spill Preparation and Response. The Upper Sacramento metam sodium spill in 1991 is still fresh in CalTrout's mind as derailments continue to happen on the winding canyon of the Upper Sac. Fortunately, derailments have, to date, only resulted in lumber, cement, beer and other relative non-toxics from entering the river. However, the mode of transportation for crude oil into California is expected to shift dramatically, from marine boats to rail, as domestic oil drilling increases. By 2016, 25% of all the crude oil refined by CA is expected to be transported by rail. This bill will provide added protection against spills for railway corridors and improved response training in the event of a spill.

Bills We Supported That Didn't Make It Through Legislature

AB 1914 (Chesbro) – Trinity River Water Rights

CalTrout was supportive of AB 1914 which would have required the State Water Resource Control Board to update the Bureau of Reclamation's Trinity River water right to reflect the federal Record of Decision for flows in the Trinity. To us this only makes sense – state water rights should match federal requirements for temperature objectives, stream flows and minimum cold-water carryover storage. This bill died due to cost concerns by the State Water Board. We will work to address this concern next year and pass this priority legislation.

AB 504 (Chesbro) – Transgenic Salmon

CalTrout was supportive of AB 504 to prohibit transgenic (genetically modified) fish production and stocking in California. Transgenic salmon would directly threaten California wild salmon stocks. This bill died because of intense lobbying pressure from the biomedical industry. We will try again next year.

Implementation of Past Legislation

AB 1961 (Huffman) passed in 2012 and developed the Coho HELP Act through the Department of Fish and Wildlife to expedite restoration projects in the range of coho salmon. In short, the Act makes it easier to implement streambank restoration, fish passage culvert removal and to place large woody debris in coho salmon streams. Passing legislation is one thing, implementing is another. One of the challenges of this Act is getting a new program up and running within DFW. DFW has done a good job in establishing website and permitting processes for Coho HELP projects. However, early wrinkles in pushing projects through the process have caused delays and caused some potential applicants to balk at submitting projects through the Act. Our concern is the Act fades before it has a chance to get going. CalTrout and partners joined a salmon hearing hosted by now Congressman Huffman (who sponsored the original bill while in the CA Assembly) to vet issues with the bill. We are hopeful that continued work with DFW and project proponents will result in more coho projects being implemented more efficiently.

How the Drought is Impacting Fish

It's a tough year for fish. Many rivers are running at historic lows. In response, fish rescue and cooperative programs have been established. Here are just a couple of examples of how the drought has necessitated creative solutions.

Juveniles trucked in without homing ability

In the Central Valley over 30 million juvenile fall-run Chinook salmon were trucked from hatcheries to the Delta to avoid unfavorable river conditions in an effort to salvage a 2016 commercial fishing season. CalTrout understands the need for this from a commercial fishing perspective, but there is a risk that these returning adults will not have imprinted on the hatcheries and, therefore, will not have the homing ability to return to their hatchery of origin. Instead, these hatchery fish will stray throughout the Central Valley spreading hatchery genes to the small remaining pockets of wild, fall-run Chinook, further compromising their offspring's genetic fitness.

Drought Response Initiative

In the Scott River, tributary to the Klamath, an exceptional run of over 2,000 adult coho salmon returned in November and December of 2013 and could not reach traditional headwater rearing areas due to lack of water. Instead, they spawned in the valley mainstem where the river goes dry each summer due to historical dredge mining, channel straightening and current water diversions. In response, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and NOAA-Fisheries developed a drought response initiative, in cooperation with Scott River landowners, that exchanges fish rescue and protection cooperation in exchange for best management practices. CalTrout is supportive of such cooperative efforts during these extreme conditions.

What the Drought Means for Fishing

An Interview with Mike Wier and Craig Ballenger, CalTrout's Fly Fishing Ambassadors

How is the drought affecting fish?

Craig: During mid-May, I spent a week with CalTrout supporters on Hot Creek. The river was already very low in many places. When I went to check on Mammoth and Rock Creeks, they were bubbling along more like mid-summer flows, as are west side Sierra streams. Guides in the area are clearly concerned. Given fairly similar conditions last year, many spent their summer fishing their groups on Crowley Lake.

On the McCloud River, massive springs comprise most of the flow, with roughly three-quarters of the river diverted to the Pit River. Water for the lower river, though, comes off the bottom of the McCloud reservoir. The water remains quite cold, but warms as it drops toward Shasta Reservoir. Flows, like last year, are lower (based on the gauge at Ah Di Na campground), due to the diversion flows and a decrease in tributary inflow. Fishing here seems much as it was last season, though based on similar conditions last year, by autumn the lower end of the river will be somewhat slow. The Upper Sacramento River is something of a hybrid river, with flow split by runoff (snowmelt) tributaries in the Klamath Mountains and aquifer springs from Mount Shasta. Fishing on the Upper Sac has been quite normal, though with no runoff, there has been no spring flush so algae is at August blooms.

Mike: I've fished the American, Truckee, Little Truckee, West Carson, East Carson, Mokelumne, McCloud, some small streams in the Tahoe area, and a few high country lakes.

Most of the tail water rivers on the west slope haven't gotten those high spring scouring flows in a few seasons now, so moss and slime have built up making it tougher to fish and wade, as well as, choking out habitat for the insects. Flows are also down to the very minimum on many of the tail waters, which reduces habitat ever further. Freestone rivers like the East Carson are lower and warmer too soon in the season to support healthy populations of trout by mid- to late-summer. From what I've seen, the East Carson has been one of the hardest hit. The population of wild trout is down and the fishing has been really slow compared to years past. The rivers that are still cold and have decent flows, like the Truckee and McCloud, are getting a lot more fishing pressure, making it harder to find solitude and happy fish.

I'm finding that many hatches I like to fish are happening, on average, a month earlier. I expect those spots to turn off sooner, leaving little good river fishing for July and August. I've been trying to focus more on lake fishing through the summer. There can still be some great dry fly action on the higher elevation lakes that stay cold, and fishing deep with sinking lines and heavy flies from a boat or canoe can produce large fish in the lower elevation lakes that have a warmer top thermocline.

What advice would you give to anglers when fishing during the drought?

Craig: The result of lower flows is warmer water of course. And warmer water stresses trout. Landing a fish is the second most stressful thing that can occur for a trout. In the past, as anglers, we have collectively decided not to fish some reaches in late summer for just this reason. Take a thermometer along, and if the water is too warm, fish somewhere else. Heavier tippets during lower flows may sound counter intuitive, but allow a margin of safety for the fish by allowing it to be landed and released more quickly. Forgo any photo of a trout held out of the water. Larger fish require more time to recuperate. Don't be like the guy I spoke with yesterday, so proud of landing a steelhead hen on the South Fork of the Trinity on a trout rod with 5x tippet. It took him 40 minutes. When I asked him if it was released unharmed, he shrugged his shoulders and said he doubted it.

Mike: I would tell people if they are set on fishing the rivers to be very cognizant about the temperatures. Try to fish early and late on rivers where the temperature can reach over the mid 60's during the hot hours of the day. Use stronger tippets where you can get away with it to bring the fish in quicker and then take extra precautions to keep them in the water and release them as quick as possible. Also, think about resting some of the rivers and focus some attention on stillwater fishing. The drought is affecting the lakes slightly less than the rivers and many of the high country lakes still have plenty of cold water and happy fish.

While the drought is clearly affecting the fishing around the state, there are still many places to fish. Respect the resource, understand the impact of warm water temperatures, and use some common sense. But, you can still get out and fish and enjoy it.



Mike Wier



Craig Ballenger

CalTrout's Growing Commitment in the North Coast Region

CalTrout has long been dedicated to protecting salmon and steelhead and their waters throughout the north coast region. That dedication is as strong today as it ever was. Our role in this region has had to grow and adapt, and acknowledge that it will take time and diverse efforts to fix problems that have been 150 years in the making.

The coastal watersheds of CalTrout's North Coast Region – the Smith, Redwood Creek, Trinity and Klamath, Humboldt Bay and the Eel – are California's best hope for recovering and sustaining salmon and steelhead. As the dry summer fast approaches in one of the California's worst droughts in its history, this assertion may not seem so evident. And make no mistake, things are about to get real grim.

But it is true. Because, despite the legacy of degradation that remains from many decades of poor land use, the ecological impairments in the region are reversible. The landscape is still resilient. It's not too late.

Take, for instance, industrial timber. There are certainly a few fires still smoldering from decades of timber wars. A mere 14 years have passed since Julia Butterfly Hill climbed down out of Luna after her 738-day stint sitting in the tree. Only 6 years have passed since The Pacific Lumber Company dissolved in bankruptcy. Full recovery from the effects of overharvest are decades away, but the timber war is largely over. New forestry practice rules are in effect to better protect salmonids, and logging companies are quickly becoming our allies in salmon and steelhead recovery. Timberland holdings, such as Mendocino Redwood Company's Hollow Tree Creek in the South Fork Eel, now contain some of the best remaining cold-water habitat and fish populations in the region. That problem was solvable.

Water is the next battle-ground. But this problem, too, is solvable. The north coast region is rich in water. Hundreds of thousands of acre-feet fall every year, an abundance of water far beyond the current human population demand. The problem is that about 98.5% of it comes between November and June. Storing water during the rainy season for summertime use may offer a viable solution.

The Mattole River Sanctuary Forest folks are trying this approach, installing 50,000 gallon water storage tanks for residential and summer gardening use. They then instruct the watershed residents when it's appropriate to divert water from streams into storage and when it's necessary to halt stream diversions and shift to using their stored water (which may last 3-6 months).

CalTrout's South Fork Eel Water Conservation Program is looking to export the Mattole River approach, work out the legal, policy, and scientific kinks, and apply throughout the region.

Solving the water crisis also will require solving the illegal marijuana growing issue that is destabilizing conservation efforts throughout our region.

Our North Coast Region may have a valuable role in developing ways to adapt to climate change. As a corollary to our Knagg's Ranch program in the Yolo Bypass, which is demonstrating the incredible value of floodplain habitat to growing fish big and strong, the north coast's equivalent is tidal marsh and estuarine habitat. These coastal habitats are among the most productive nursery grounds for juvenile salmonids, and provide an essential growth spurt just before juvenile fish make the perilous transition from freshwater to marine living. ***An interesting anecdote: a 150mm juvenile steelhead has a 0.4% chance of surviving ocean entry and returning as an adult; a 175mm (one inch longer) juvenile has a 2% chance of survival, five times higher.***

Climate change and its consequent sea level rise may simultaneously threaten these estuarine habitats and prompt the need for restoration and enhancement. CalTrout's Eel River Estuary Preserve project in the Eel River Delta is one such opportunity. The Wildlands Conservancy bought this 1,250 acre ranch in 2008 and CalTrout is leading the restoration design process. We're also exploring ways to quantify the carbon sequestration potential in salt marsh habitats, which may open the cap and trade market for carbon offsets as a funding source for investment in estuary restoration.

There is much work to be done in the region; work that CalTrout believes vital for salmon and steelhead, and work for which we're committed to putting in the necessary time, resources and energy.

Current Recovery Activities

The North Coast Region's portfolio now includes a wide-range of recovery activities:

- Stakeholder coalition-building (the Eel River Forum);
- Restoration design and implementation (Woodman and Bridge creek fish passage projects);
- Tidal marsh and estuary enhancement (the Wildlands Conservancy's Eel River Preserve);
- Watershed-wide remediation from legacy timber harvests (Elk River Recovery Assessment);
- Water policy and streamflow improvement (South Fork Eel Water Conservation Program);
- Population monitoring (SF Eel Didson monitoring proposal);
- Conservation Advocacy (Trinity Working Group, Coho Recovery Team, Smith River protection).

Funding New Projects

To help fund these new projects, CalTrout's Annual Gala Fundraiser included a Fund-A-Need appeal to help with the expansion of our North Coast office and the important work being done to protect California's strongest and most resilient populations of wild salmon and steelhead. It was our most successful Fund-A-Need to date, raising \$145,000 for the region.

This funding will be used to:

1. Expand our work in coastal estuaries: leverage our Eel River experience (in helping improve estuary functionality) on the Smith and Mad rivers.
2. Continue building the Eel River Forum's success in meaningful collaboration and on-the-ground project success.
3. Seed a critical fish population monitoring effort on the Eel: drive a joint CalTrout-Humboldt State University program that will bring state of the art technology to population monitoring in the South Fork Eel.

Hat Creek Update

The California Trout Mount Shasta office is hard at work on the Hat Creek Restoration Project, led by Conservation Manager, Andrew Braugh. So far, in 2014, CalTrout has worked with project partners to secure entry agreements, design a viable restoration project, secure all necessary environmental permits, and prepare for on-the-ground work. The manual labor, shovel-in-the-ground work will start in earnest this fall with initial riparian plantings, noxious weed management, and trail maintenance projects. By the end of 2014, CalTrout will have made significant steps towards restoring the legacy of Hat Creek.

This summer California Trout also launched Year 2 of the Hat Creek Youth Initiative, with local students learning the stream ecology of Hat Creek from natural resource experts during guided field tours and classroom lessons. Eight students from the surrounding communities are gaining important conservation job-skills working until mid-August helping to restore Hat Creek. The youth crew is currently focusing on noxious weed removal in preparation for plantings, building living willow walls to restore degrading stream-banks, and completing wild trout snorkel surveys to learn to identify trout during different life cycles. Students are looking forward to their upcoming project with the Bureau of Land Management, where the youth crew will participate in the full circle of restoration by helping to maintain a 30-year-old restoration project at Fitzhugh Creek.



Students preparing willow whips for stream-bank restoration

\$25,000 Goal Achieved for Hat Creek Restoration Project

We're thrilled to announce that we surpassed the goal of \$25,000 for our Hat Creek Restoration Project crowdfunding campaign. Almost \$11,000 was raised through the Indiegogo platform and an additional \$22,500 was donated directly to CalTrout bringing the total amount to \$33,420. The donations secure a matching grant from Orvis and bring the total funding for the 3-year project to \$1.15M.



Sherri Wood

We'd like to recognize and give special thanks to Sherri Wood whose generous donation on behalf of the World of Outdoors Foundation (W.O.O.D. Foundation) put us well above our mark.

The \$20,000 donation was made in memory of her husband, David, an avid fly fisherman who loved Hat Creek and would certainly appreciate the work being done to restore a robust, vibrant trout fishery for future generations to experience.

Each and every contribution, large and small, will help to bring Hat Creek back to its glory. We're grateful to the over 100 donors who supported this important project.

Casting Call 2014

On what turned out to be a sweltering day at the State Capitol, California Trout and Trout Unlimited staged our annual Casting Call event. With the goal of raising awareness for salmon, steelhead, trout and their waters throughout the state, much of our focus this year was on the water bond proposals and effective groundwater management.

Now in its fifth year, the event featured a friendly fly casting competition that had three lawmakers casting for hula hoop 'ponds' after their legislature's morning session adjourned. Senate GOP Leader Bob Huff (R-Diamond Bar), Senator Tom Berryhill (R-Twain Harte) and Assemblyman Brian Dahle (R-Bieber) all did an admirable job of casting in the wind and placing their fly in the makeshift targets.

Assemblyman Dahle was ultimately crowned victor, though only after he was given more time since he has the most trout streams in his district.

The north walkway of the Capitol was lined with posters and booths filled with literature on our restoration projects. Complimentary ice cream and 'chinooky cookies' were offered to passers-by who stopped to learn more about the organizations and our work around the state. By day's end, we had achieved our goal of raising awareness of fish and water issues to legislators and their staff.



CalTrout's Conservation Director Curtis Knight, Assemblyman Dahle, Senator Berryhill, Senator Huff, and TU's Sam Davidson.

Did you know?

Hat Creek was the motivation for the formation of California Trout in the early 1970's, thus creating a leading organization dedicated to protecting and restoring CA's wild and native salmonids and our extraordinary cold-water biodiversity. As a spring-fed river, Hat Creek provides a reliable source of cold, clean, water for fish, people, and biodiversity – even during extreme drought conditions. The Hat Creek Restoration Project is critically important to California's cold-water biodiversity and wild trout populations.

California Water Foundation Recognized

CalTrout held its 15th Annual Benefit Gala & Auction on Friday, May 9, 2014 at the Four Seasons Hotel in San Francisco. At the event, we honored our valued partner, the California Water Foundation, who, through their generous funding and support, makes our Knagg's Ranch Project and floodplain work possible.

CalTrout has partnered with the California Water Foundation since its founding in 2011 by a group of visionary philanthropists. The Foundation empowers state leaders and interest groups to develop new approaches, technologies, and policies to meet the needs of California's farms, cities, and environment.

CFW deploys a multitude of approaches to bring about significant changes in water policies and management to result in sustainable 21st century water use in California that, in turn, will influence directions throughout the west and the globe. The vision of the Foundation is a perfect match for CalTrout's work, empowering our approach of scientific research, on-the-ground proof of concept restoration projects, and using this experience to drive water policy reform.

We are pleased to report that this was one of our highest grossing Galas ever. Our Fund-A-Need, *Protecting the Best: Helping to Protect California's Strongest and Most Resilient Populations of Wild Steelhead and Salmon* yielded twice what we normally raise... with unprecedented participation. The mood was festive and the enthusiasm palpable. Thanks to those who attended and supported this important fundraiser!



CFW's Lester Snow (center) and Andrew Fahlund (right) accepting the Golden Trout Award from CalTrout's Executive Director, Jeff Thompson.

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Streamkeeper's Log

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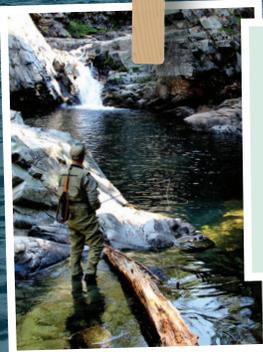
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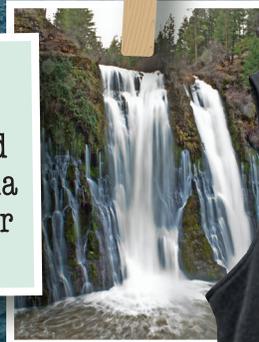
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