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Organizations Petition the CA Water Board to Set Permanent Instream Flow Requirements for the Shasta River, a Critical Klamath River Tributary

Yreka, CA - As the largest dam removal project in history unfolds on the Klamath River, conservation and social justice organizations filed a legal petition seeking a permanent instream flow requirement for the Shasta River, an important Klamath River tributary.

“The Shasta River was historically the most productive chinook salmon river in the Klamath River Basin, and now it is used mainly to flood irrigate fields,” explained Regina Chichizola from Save California Salmon, a Tribally led environmental justice organization. “The impact of dewatering Klamath River tributaries to Tribal subsistence fishing and the commercial fishing industry can not be overstated.”

The petition filed with the California State Water Resources Control Board (California Water Board) requests a permanent instream flow requirement (a requirement to leave water in the river) that is sufficient to achieve recovery of endangered species and satisfy beneficial uses of the Shasta River, including subsistence fishing and recreation.

“Without water diversions, the Shasta River would be contributing more than 150 cubic feet per second of cold spring water to the imperiled Klamath River throughout the summer months, even the driest years” said David Webb with Friends of the Shasta River. “That is over 1100 gallons per second of clean cold spring water. Instead, we often see remaining flows of less than 10 CFS where the Shasta joins the Klamath.”

“All of the known summer rearing habitat for juvenile Coho salmon is created by cold springs,” said Bill Chesney, retired biologist for the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife and board member of Friends of the

Shasta River. “Ensuring that this water remains instream and is accessible to these fish is essential for their survival in the Shasta River.

In all but the wettest years, low flows in the Shasta are far below what the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has determined are necessary for these fish to survive, let alone recover from the brink of extinction. The Shasta River is the closest large tributary to the Klamath River dams, making its water and habitat increasingly important to the river as dam removal moves forward.

“Permanent instream flow requirements are necessary to ensure that California’s salmon, and the people and economies that rely on them, are protected.” says Cody Phillips, from California Coastkeeper Alliance.