



FRIENDS OF THE RIVER

1418 20TH STREET, SUITE 100, SACRAMENTO, CA 95811
916/442-3155 • FAX: 916/442-3396 •
WWW.FRIENDSOFTHERIVER.ORG

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Contacts:

Ron Stork, Senior Policy Advocate, Friends of the River, (916) 442-3155
Eric Wesselman, Executive Director, Friends of the River, (510-775-3797)

Friends of the River Sues to Prevent Illegal Plan to Raise Shasta Dam *Dam Raise Would Flood the Protected McCloud River and Tribal Lands*

Redding, CA – Friends of the River joined in coalition with fishing and conservation groups to file a lawsuit against Westlands Water District for unlawfully cooperating with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to raise Shasta Dam. The California Attorney General, Xavier Becerra, has also filed a separate suit against Westlands. The multibillion-dollar project would flood cultural lands along a reach of the protected McCloud River and harm trout and endangered Chinook salmon along with other rare plants and wildlife.

“Westlands’ actions to support the Shasta Dam raise are illegal,” said Ron Stork of Friends of the River. “It’s time to end Westlands’ disrespect of California’s Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.”

Friends of the River, Golden Gate Salmon Association, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, the Institute for Fisheries Resources, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), represented by Earthjustice, are urging the court to find Fresno-based Westlands in violation of the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. A 1989 amendment to that law protects the McCloud River by prohibiting any agency of the State of California from assisting or cooperating with the planning or construction of any dam that could adversely affect the McCloud River’s free-flowing condition or its wild trout fishery.

“Westlands is violating the law by cooperating with the Trump Administration’s aggressive plan to raise Shasta Dam,” said Stork. “The largest agricultural water district in the country is trying to use taxpayer dollars to gain more water to sell to corporate agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley.”

Efforts to raise Shasta Dam have rumbled for years, but the Obama Administration tabled the project. Now the Trump Administration, with Westlands’ former lobbyist as Secretary of the Interior, has brought it back despite [protests from California leaders](#). The project timeline has been fast-tracked with construction to begin by the end of this year. Westlands is playing a key role in advancing the project by leading and funding an environmental impact review and negotiating to cover part of the more than \$1.4 billion project cost. The irrigation district even purchased 3,000 acres along the McCloud River to clear the way for the project.

The suit claims Westlands’ actions are a blatant violation of law enacted by the Legislature and signed by Governor Deukmejian to protect the McCloud River. The dam raise would also [destroy the sacred lands](#) of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe which already lost 90% of its historic lands when the dam was first built in the 1940s. Details on the proposed project and litigation are [available online](#).

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