

PRESS RELEASE for July 5, 2023

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Day of Action for Water Justice & Salmon **Restore Our Rivers for Tribes, Communities, and the Environment**

Sacramento, CA – California tribes, fishing, conservation, and environmental justice organizations rallied at the State Capitol today for everyone who depends on healthy rivers and estuaries as a public trust resource.

This daylong event included a press conference and rally on the steps of the State Capitol in Sacramento calling for healthy rivers and a healthy estuary, and lobbying in support of current legislation that puts California on the path to a sustainable water future. The coalition asked Governor Newsom to reform California's water rights system and set instream flows to save salmon and the communities who depend on them.

DAY OF ACTION PARTICIPATING TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, Winnemem Wintu Tribe, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Karuk Tribe, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Pit River Tribe, Mechoopda Indian Tribe, Sogorea Te' Land Trust, Restore the Delta, Save California Salmon, Golden State Salmon Association, Sacred Places Institute, California Indian Environmental Alliance, Little Manila Rising, Indigenous Justice, San Francisco Baykeeper, North Coast Native Protectors, Sierra Club California, Friends of the River, Tuolumne River Trust.

This diverse coalition was brought together by common concerns including:

- Closure of Tribal Subsistence Fishing, Commercial, and Recreational Fishing
- Delay in the Completion of the Bay-Delta Plan
- Harmful Algal Blooms and other water quality concerns
- Inadequate Instream Flows and Surface Water Temperature Requirements
- Antiquated Water Rights System
- Regular waiver of water quality standards through Temporary Urgency Change Orders

What They Want - Actionable Proposals ([Details here](#))

- Regional Water Boards should designate Tribal Beneficial Uses through meaningful Tribal consultation and engagement and the State Water Board should do so for the Bay-Delta Plan.
- The State Water Board should prioritize the completion of the Bay-Delta Plan and protection of in-stream flows given the rising threat to public and ecosystem health, notably the recent closure of fisheries.
- The Bay-Delta Plan must be updated prior to considering a change in point-of-diversion for the Delta Conveyance Project or new water right for the Sites Reservoir. Its water quality standards must set minimum instream flow, surface water temperature, and other criteria that protect beneficial uses.
- The Plan needs protective standards for fish and wildlife, informed by sound science and including adequate flows and surface water temperatures supportive of salmon in all life stages.
- Tribes and impacted communities should be at the center of water governance because they bear disproportionate burdens from the Bay-Delta and Klamath crises.
- The State should prioritize salmon restoration by providing water for fish and dam removal.
- The state and federal government should work together to create post Trump-era water plans and Biological Opinions that recover both ESA listed and Tribal trust species in the Bay Delta and on the Trinity River.

In 2023, [1,366,362 acres of California](#) are dedicated to irrigated almond orchards, a majority of whose production is exported internationally. During the last drought, reduced flows through California rivers and Bay-Delta created water quality impacts borne by Tribes and underserved communities in the San Francisco Bay-Delta. These impacts include the spread of harmful algal blooms in the Delta, the continuing decline of native fish species like Chinook salmon and the Delta smelt (considered an indicator species for Bay-Delta ecological health), and financial and social impacts on caused by the 2023 closure of tribal subsistence fishing and commercial fishing.

Quotes from Coalition Organizations

Malissa Tayaba, Vice Chair, Shingle Spring Band of Miwok Indians

Shingle Springs stands in solidarity with our coalition partners, the numerous organizations and that have been silenced for too long. We have a responsibility to protect our waterways and the many natural resources, as well as cultural resources that rely on a healthy river system. The Sacramento Bay-Delta is the heart of my Tribal community and holds vital resources that have sustained the many indigenous communities that are touched by its influence. Poor water quality now affects the plant and animal resources of the Delta region, as well as the Tribe's cultural practices and ability to carry on our cultural traditions.

Ivan Sobeck, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is the heart of California. The rivers flow from the tips of the mountains to the waves of the ocean. This place is an integral part of Native Californians and all guests to this land. The health of the state of California is tied to the health of the Delta. We support groundwater recharge, water recycling, and regional management plans that save water and let rivers flow naturally. The health of all plants and animals like salmon depends on flow regimes that match natural processes. Backward thinking projects that continue to pipe the state are counterproductive to the shared goal of a bountiful California that cares for all its people. Tribal memory and stories about the Delta tell of its important relationship to people. Nature-based solutions are water stewardship that protects people upstream and downstream.

Gary Mulcahy, Government Liaison, Winnemem Wintu

We are gathered here on the steps of the State Capitol, Tribes, disadvantaged communities, environmental groups, fishing groups, and everyday Californians to say: Governor Newsom, stop killing our fish, stop killing our environment, stop catering to big ag and corporate California, stop tying the hands of the State Water Board. It's time to change the outdated and unjust water rights system in California.

Joe Davis, Chairman, Hoopa Valley Tribe

The Hoopa Valley Tribe has fought for generations to reduce diversions to the Central Valley. Now, due to Trump era water policy, the fisheries crisis has intensified. We are honored to work alongside like-minded partners. Now is the time to do all that we can to save our salmon, protect our water, and thus preserve our way of life.

Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, Executive Director, Restore the Delta

The science is clear about how California can restore health to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area. More water flowing through the Bay-Delta estuary is necessary. Governor Newsom's proposed Delta Tunnel is a zombie that first died 41 years ago when California voted down the Peripheral Canal in 1982. Since then, it has died a few more times. Even he killed a version. But now, water recycling and stormwater projects in Southern California are showing there are far better ways to invest \$15+ billion for innovative water management and regional resilience.

Artie Valencia, Community Organizer/Government Liaison, Restore the Delta

The voluntary agreements will harm Delta communities as it will allow senior water rights holders majority control over water. We are currently experiencing degradation of our water, air and right to public access of our waterways. Our frontline communities are the ones who will deal with the consequences of water exports at the expense of the health, safety, and quality of life for environmental justice communities.

Morning Star Gali

Vice-Chairperson, Pit River Tribe, Save CA Salmon Tribal water organizer

The governor's office has promised California Native people truth and healing and taken some positive steps. However, he's also made a lot of decisions to favor agriculture over all other interests. We cannot have truth and healing for California Tribes and drive salmon into extinction and dewater our rivers.

Regina Chichizola, Executive Director, Save California Salmon

California made decisions to support Trump era water policies and prioritized agricultural water uses over Tribes, the environment and even cities during the last drought. Due to these decisions communities from the Klamath River to the San Francisco Bay are suffering. Now the Governor is doubling down on decisions to prioritize export crops over communities and the environment. Proposals like the Delta tunnel, privately owned Sites Reservoir, and plans to roll back Tribal rights and co-management on the Trinity River, will increase water diversions from our rivers, reward California's biggest water users for

being wasteful, and subsidize privatization of our most critical resource, water.

Michelle Rivera, Project Assistant, California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA)

We should not move water from watershed to watershed, and we should return land management back to the Tribes. We are at a place where natural resources are being depleted due to agencies' mismanagement of the land. California has apologized for the atrocities that have taken place in the past and yet continue to disregard Tribal knowledge of the land.

Nikole Whipple, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Tribal Marine Collaborative

The Round Valley Indian Tribes and our seven Confederated Tribes have never relinquished the right to our water, nor have we relinquished hunting, fishing, and gathering rights to our ancestral territories. The state is intentionally contradicting restorative justice initiatives owed to tribes. Dams and diversions impact Tribal Rights to Religious Culture and equality to clean water. Our salmon are endangered and our traditional knowledge to save them is being ignored.

Sarah Bates, Commercial Fishermen and Board Member, Golden State Salmon Association

Salmon are a critical component of California's ecosystem and economy. They support my family, as well as 23,000 other Californians and 10,000 Oregonians. Our fishery is closed this year because water policies in California failed to protect us and this critical fishery from powerful industrial agricultural interests.

Gloria Estefani Alonso Cruz, Environmental Justice Advocacy Coordinator, Little Manila Rising

The current Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan has failed to meaningfully reflect the science-based needs to protect human and ecosystem health since 1995. The failure to update this plan is the primary reason that the state can't manage droughts in the Delta without repeatedly waiving water quality standards, sacrificing the health of the Delta and its people to meet unsustainable water export demands.

Jon Rosenfield, Ph.D., science director, San Francisco Baykeeper

Governor Newsom's water policies threaten to make California the global leader in fish extinctions. San Francisco Bay's six endangered fish species demonstrate that the state's water quality rules are woefully inadequate. Repeatedly waiving even inadequate standards has led to the complete closure of California's salmon fishing season. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence that declining fish populations are driven by unsustainable water diversions, the Newsom administration has taken every opportunity to increase water diversions by powerful corporate agribusinesses and urban water brokers. California must align its water demand with what nature provides, or species that have survived here for millennia will not survive the coming decade.

Jann Dorman, Executive Director, Friends of the River

We support many nature-based water storage solutions, solutions that provide drought relief without destroying the environment. The Sites reservoir will destroy a beautiful valley and will only fuel increased demand, worsening dependence on the already strained Delta. This project takes inexpensive taxpayer-subsidized water, puts it in a reservoir, evaporates a lot of it, warms it up, privatizes it, then sells it to the highest bidder.

Brandon Dawson, Director, Sierra Club CA

Real water solutions in California are solutions that are community driven and provide a benefit to the communities they are housed in. They provide resiliency in the face of climate uncertainty, and they enhance communities and ecosystems. The Delta Tunnel is NOT that solution. To be successful, Governor Newsom must be an ally to the conservation, environmental justice, and fishing communities; this means he must start engaging and working with us on the front end to craft creative solutions that prioritize the needs of frontline communities and take action to stop ecosystem decline.