

Santa Ynez River

WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

JANUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

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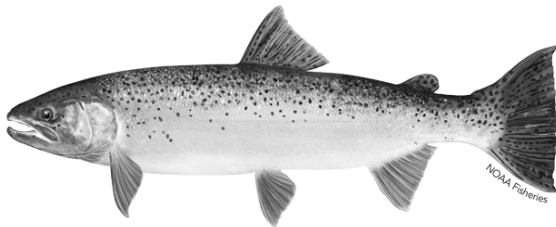
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New Water Rights Order - Cachuma Project

On September 17th of 2019 the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) issued a new Water Rights Order for the Cachuma Reservoir. The State Water Board has jurisdiction and regulates the use of the surface waters in California. This recent action follows nearly 20 years of legal efforts to protect water rights holders and address long-term declines in native fish population in the Santa Ynez River.

The new Water Rights Order makes changes to the previous permits which allow for the export of significant quantities of water out of the Santa Ynez Valley to the South Coast area of Goleta, Santa Barbara, Montecito, and Carpinteria. The new Order requires more water to be released downstream to promote recovery of the endangered sea-going rainbow trout, known as steelhead.

While it may seem that such releases would result in more water for downstream users, in actuality that is not the case. The additional flows will be made at the wrong time of the year and at the wrong rates to be beneficial to all users. In fact, there is some controversy whether the additional releases will be beneficial to the steelhead. The current flow regime appears to have resulted in a proliferation of beaver dams, which are an impediment to migrating steelhead and provide habitat to non-native predators.



Endangered Steelhead Biological Assessment

Steelhead are born in fresh water, migrate to the sea as juveniles, and return to their freshwater natal streams as adults to spawn. For purposes of the Federal Endangered Species Act, they are considered to be marine fish and are under the protection of the United States National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The last Biological Assessment of the Steelhead species was completed in 2013. A new Biological Assessment is expected to be released in 2020. The SYRWCD is actively participating in this Biological Assessment.



**Santa Ynez River
Water Conservation
District**

**Established
October 23, 1939**

Water Rights Releases

A Downstream Water Rights Release was not necessary in the Summer of 2019. Winter 2018 and Spring 2019 rainfall contributed significant inflow to Cachuma Reservoir, which is now about 70% of capacity. Cachuma Reservoir last spilled in 2011. Historically, drought periods have been defined as the interval between Cachuma Reservoir spill events. During spill years, aquifers along the Santa Ynez River naturally recharge. The groundwater basins need more time to recover from drought.

During dry periods, such as the 9-years since that last spill, SYRWCD may make Water-Rights Releases of stored water from the reservoir that are earmarked for water users below Bradbury Dam. Water-Rights Releases have occurred six times since 2011 totaling over 64K acre-feet of water to downstream users. Summer Water-Rights Releases depend upon the prior winter rainfall amounts.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

The purpose of SGMA is to assure the "management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results." Governments and water agencies of medium priority basins such as ours, are required to bring groundwater basins into balanced levels of pumping and recharge.

For the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin (basin), there is an ongoing four-year, \$3 million effort to prepare Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) one for each of the three management areas in the basin. These plans will be implemented by 2022 to comply with SGMA requirements that the basin achieve sustainability by the 2042 deadline. Funding for the Plans have come from a \$1 million State of California Prop. 1 Grant, a \$1 million contribution from the County of Santa Barbara, and shared contributions from Cities of Lompoc, Buellton, and Solvang, both SYRWCD and ID No. 1, and the Mission Hills and Vandenberg Village Community Services Districts. SYRWCD has assumed the primary coordinating role for this endeavor.

Based on the hydrology and geology of the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys, the basin has been divided into three Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs). Known as the Eastern Management Area, Central Management Area, and Western Management Area GSAs, they approximately correspond to the Los Olivos/Santa Ynez/Solvang area (Eastern), the Buellton area (Central), and the Lompoc area (Western). The primary purpose of each GSA is to develop and implement a GSP in their respective areas to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability.

SGMA requires comprehensive stakeholder and interested party involvement in the development and implementation of the GSPs. With the planning effort well underway, each of the three GSAs has formed Citizen Advisory Groups (CAGs). If you are interested in learning more about SGMA efforts in the Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin or the CAGs, please contact Bill Buelow at 805-693-1156 or go to www.SantaYnezWater.org.

Groundwater Pump Charge Rates

As described in previous newsletters, there are no changes to the Groundwater Pump Charge Rates for the 2019-20 fiscal year. All rates in all zones will remain the same as they were during the 2018-19 fiscal year:

Agricultural Water:	\$ 7.15 / Acre-Foot
Special Irrigation:	\$14.30 / Acre-Foot
Other Water:	\$25.00 / Acre-Foot

Protecting Your Water Rights

In 1939, the SYRWCD was formed by residents of the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys in response to a third large dam to be constructed on the Santa Ynez River designed to store and divert river-flow out of the

watershed to the communities of the South Coast. At that time, residents were concerned about preserving and protecting water-rights and the future uses of water within the Santa Ynez watershed.

For the past 80 years and continuing today, SYRWCD has been an assertive protector of water rights in the Santa Ynez and Lompoc Valleys. **We are your advocate for your water rights.**

District water-users should not confuse this District with the Improvement District No. 1 (ID No. 1) by the same name. ID No. 1 is a separate District formed many years ago to acquire and serve water in the Los Olivos, Ballard, Santa Ynez and Solvang areas.

Newsletter Distribution

This Newsletter is sent semi-annually with the Groundwater Production Statements. Please distribute it within your organization. Understanding the challenges we face in protecting your water rights and supplies is important to everyone.

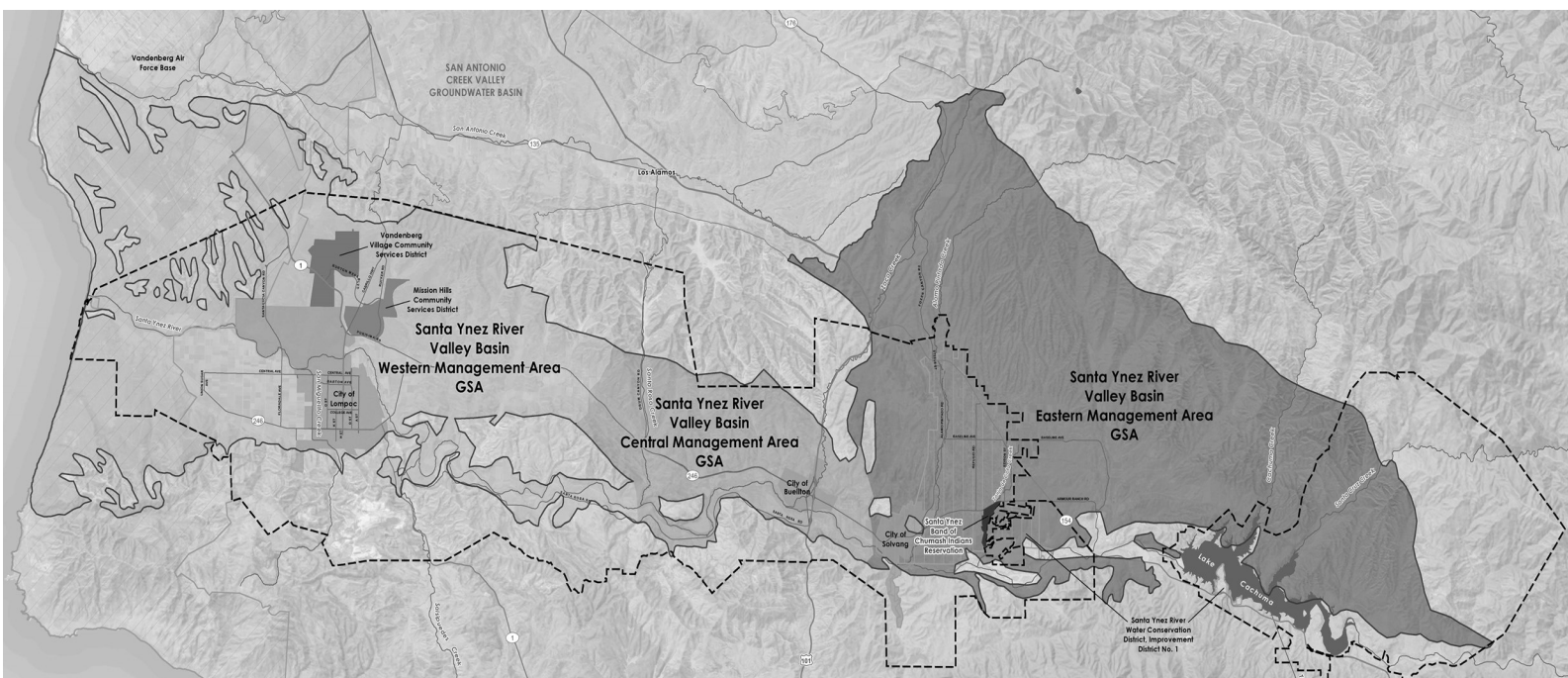
The District has a website!

At the District's website, www.SYRWCD.com, you can find the Semi-Annual Groundwater Production reporting forms, Agendas and Minutes for Board Meetings, Newsletters as well as other news and information.

Office Location

Our office is located at 3669 Sagunto Street, Suite 101, Santa Ynez, CA 93460

We appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have. If you have any questions regarding District activities, please contact Kevin Walsh, General Manager, at 805-693-1156.



Santa Ynez River Valley Groundwater Basin Management Areas