



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Barbara Channelkeeper Files Lawsuit to Keep Ventura River Flowing

Lawsuit would compel State Water Board to analyze City of Ventura's use of the river

September 22, 2014 (VENTURA, CA) — Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, a nonprofit organization that works to protect and restore the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds, filed a lawsuit Friday against the State Water Resources Control Board to protect the Ventura River and the people, animals and plants that depend on it. Even though the State of California has designated the river as impaired because of excessive pumping and diversions, the City of Ventura has for decades pumped and diverted hundreds of millions of gallons of water from the river each year with little regard for the consequences. This consistent over-pumping and diversion has put the health of the river—and the life it sustains—in serious jeopardy.

The California Constitution and the Water Code mandate the State Water Board to prevent the waste and unreasonable use of the state's waters, and to protect those waters as public trust resources. Unfortunately, the Board has failed to fulfill this mandatory duty for the Ventura River. Channelkeeper's lawsuit seeks to compel the State Water Board to conduct a "Reasonable Use Analysis" of the City of Ventura's use of the Ventura River. Channelkeeper hopes that a Reasonable Use Analysis would guide the City in better balancing the various demands for the river's water with the health and vitality of the river and lead to more sustainable and integrated ways to meet and manage the community's water needs.

"For 16 years, the State Water Board has recognized the Ventura River as impaired by pumping and diversion of water, yet has never conducted a Reasonable Use Analysis of the City's pumping," said Ben Pitterle, Channelkeeper's Watershed and Marine Program Director. "The recent drought has brought water supply concerns to the forefront, but this unreasonable use has been occurring for decades. We feel the river can't wait any longer."

Some stretches of the river that once flowed year-round now frequently go dry for months at a time, and surface flows in other stretches have been reduced to the point that water quality is severely degraded. Where flow is insufficient, water temperatures rise, algae proliferate and suck oxygen out of the river, and fish and other aquatic species that depend on a clean, flowing river suffer. At the same time, those who pump water from the river, particularly the City of



Ventura, continue to do so at an unreasonable and unsustainable rate. This situation is heading toward a crisis, especially as the City discusses plans for significant growth, which would exacerbate the problem.

“This is an issue that really needs to be resolved by the City developing a truly integrated water management system to ensure that our limited resources are not wasted and to ensure the future sustainability of the community,” said Paul Jenkin, Environmental Director with Surfrider Foundation, Ventura chapter, and longtime river advocate.

Studies commissioned by the City of Ventura have concluded that the City’s pumping has a significant negative impact on the river and endangered species such as steelhead trout. Despite being aware of this problem, the City has continued to pump and divert and the State Water Board has done nothing, jeopardizing the health of the river.

“When it comes to the Ventura River, time and water are running out,” said Kira Redmond, Channelkeeper’s Executive Director. “By compelling the State Water Board to act, we hope to protect this public resource and keep the river flowing so it can continue to sustain both wildlife and people for generations to come.”

To review the lawsuit and supporting documentation, visit:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1s8drjma7dq01d0/AACG4EaBkc6MX1EAnxBQuzc3a?dl=0>.

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Santa Barbara Channelkeeper’s mission is to protect and restore the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds through science-based advocacy, education, field work and enforcement. To learn more about Channelkeeper, visit www.sbck.org