



## *NEWS RELEASE*

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### **Critical Victory in Santa Barbara Channelkeeper's Lawsuit to Restore Flows in the Ventura River**

April 27, 2015 (Santa Barbara, California) – At a hearing in California Superior Court in San Francisco this past Thursday (April 23, 2015), Santa Barbara Channelkeeper won a critical victory in its lawsuit to restore flows in the Ventura River.

The City of Ventura pumps hundreds of millions of gallons of water from the Ventura River each year, even though the river uses has been designated by the State of California as impaired by excessive pumping and diversions. This consistent over-pumping has put the health of the river—and the life it sustains—in serious jeopardy.

The California Constitution, the Water Code, and the Public Trust Doctrine mandate that the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) must prevent the waste and unreasonable use of the state's waters, and protect those waters as public trust resources. Unfortunately, the Board has failed to fulfill these mandatory duties in the case of the Ventura River, so Channelkeeper filed suit last September in attempt to compel the SWRCB to conduct a "Reasonable Use Analysis" of the City of Ventura's use of the Ventura River. Channelkeeper's hope is that the Reasonable Use Analysis will require the City to better balance 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.

At the hearing on Thursday, the Court overruled the SWRCB's objections to Channelkeeper's lawsuit and affirmed that the SWRCB does indeed have a mandatory duty to prevent unreasonable use of California's water and that Channelkeeper can seek to compel them to analyze the City of Ventura's use of the Ventura River. The SWRCB is required to respond to Channelkeeper's lawsuit within 21 days.

The severe drought has dramatically reduced the amount of available water, yet over-pumping has been an ongoing problem in the Ventura River for many decades. Some stretches of the river known to flow year-round have gone dry. Meanwhile, flow in other stretches have been reduced so much that water quality is being severely degraded by algae blooms and rising temperatures. At the same time, those who pump water from the river, in particular the City of Ventura, continue to do so at an unreasonable and unsustainable rate. This situation is at a crisis point,

especially as the City discusses plans for significant growth, which could only further exacerbate the problem.

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 the SWRCB has done nothing, jeopardizing the health of the river.

"Channelkeeper is thrilled with this first and important win in our lawsuit to protect the Ventura River," 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."

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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](http://www.sbck.org)