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SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT HELPS RESTORE FLOWS TO THE VENTURA RIVER

Ventura, CA— Santa Barbara Channelkeeper’s advocacy for Ventura River reached a critical milestone on August 5th, when the City of Ventura, for the first time in history, curtailed all pumping at its well field at Foster Park, specifically for the purpose of restoring flows to the parched river ecosystem. Within days, the sounds of water, croaking frogs, and children playing were audible as flows rebounded.

The cessation of pumping at Foster Park represents a significant achievement in Santa Barbara Channelkeeper’s ongoing efforts to protect the Ventura River. For many decades unlimited pumping at Foster Park at times resulted in degraded downstream water quality and public trust resources and the destruction of endangered species habitat.

In an attempt to restore flows to the river, Channelkeeper filed a groundbreaking lawsuit in 2015 to challenge the City’s over-pumping. After years of legal proceedings and negotiations, Channelkeeper and the City of Ventura reached a partial settlement agreement that established a minimum river flow threshold that would trigger cessation of pumping. This summer, when flows reached those benchmarked levels, the City ceased all pumping, marking a positive step forward for the health of the river, its ecosystems, and the surrounding community.

Despite this positive step, flow thresholds still fall below recently published recommendations from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and may need to be modified in the future to fully protect the river and endangered species.

Today, as California and the western United States experience record-breaking drought conditions, a secure and sustainable water supply is at the forefront of everyone’s mind. In addition to the ecological value it provides, the Ventura River is a primary source of drinking water, providing all of the water used in the Ojai Basin and the Ventura River valley. The river is also culturally significant, providing access to

nature and recreational opportunities for surrounding communities. When the river goes dry, it indicates that human use is exceeding the capacity of a limited resource in ways that are detrimental and unsustainable. A thriving river means a sustainable water future.

“Our water supplies are severely limited, and unfortunately it does not appear that conditions will improve in the near future,” said Benjamin Pitterle, Channelkeeper’s Science and Policy Director. “It’s critical that we include our precious ecosystems in the final balance of how we manage our water resources.”

Channelkeeper’s legal action against the City is still pending as the City carries out a water adjudication involving all water right holders in the watershed. The adjudication will allocate available water supplies to existing water right holders as well as identify a “physical solution” that should fully and permanently protect flows in the Ventura River. Until the adjudication is finalized, Channelkeeper’s settlement agreement is all that keeps the Ventura River flowing.

About Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper was founded in 1999 as a program of the Environmental Defense Center and became an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 2001. For more than 20 years, the organization has worked to protect water quality, restore aquatic ecosystems, advocate for clean water, enforce environmental laws, and educate and engage citizens in implementing solutions to water pollution and aquatic habitat degradation.

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is a member of [Waterkeeper Alliance](#), a coalition of more than 300 grassroots Waterkeeper groups on six continents collectively patrolling and protecting more than 2.7 million square miles of watersheds and defending their communities’ right to clean water. It is also a member of the [California Coastkeeper Alliance](#), a coalition of California Waterkeepers working to strengthen water quality and marine habitat protections at the state level. To learn more, please visit www.sbck.org