



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 5/13/2025

To: Board of Directors Sonoma County Water Agency

Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency

Staff Name and Phone Number: Gregg Horton 707-547-1907

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): All

Title:

Salmonid Monitoring in the Russian River Watershed

Recommended Action:

- A) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in a form approved by County Counsel, to receive up to \$2,259,000 to conduct salmonid population monitoring in the Russian River watershed; term of agreement is July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2028.
- B) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to amend the agreement to extend the term, make modifications to the scope of work, accept additional funds, or terminate the agreement with approval of County Counsel.
- C) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement with University of California San Diego, Scripps Institution of Oceanography - California Sea Grant, in an amount not to exceed \$280,000, for assistance with salmonid population monitoring in the Russian River watershed; term of agreement is July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2028.
- D) Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to amend the agreement to extend the term, make modifications to the scope of work, and increase costs provided such amendments do not cumulatively increase the total cost to Sonoma County Water Agency beyond \$50,000.

Executive Summary:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, through a direct contract with Sonoma Water, will provide up to \$2,259,000 over three years to continue a fish monitoring program aimed at aiding in the recovery of endangered or threatened salmon and steelhead in the Russian River watershed. The data collected through monitoring salmonids in the Russian River watershed will contribute to the California Monitoring Plan for Salmon and Steelhead that monitors salmon and steelhead in coastal California rivers. Sonoma Water has been collecting data on fish populations in the Russian River basin since 1999, and has a long history of developing, funding, and implementing fisheries habitat enhancement and fish population monitoring programs in the Russian River watershed.

Discussion:

HISTORY OF ITEM/BACKGROUND

Sonoma Water has been collecting data on fish populations in the Russian River basin since 1999, and has a

long history of developing, funding, and implementing fisheries habitat enhancement and fish population monitoring programs in the Russian River watershed. Through a three-year direct contract in 2022, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provided funding to Sonoma Water to collect salmonid population monitoring data from the Russian River watershed. That contract will end on June 30, 2025, and CDFW would like to fund these activities for another three years.

Central California Coast Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), California Coastal Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and Central California Coast steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are all listed as either threatened or endangered under Federal and/or State Endangered Species Acts. Recovery plans call for long-term population assessment and monitoring that address viable salmonid population indicators of abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity. Delisting will depend on whether distinct population segments have reached abundance thresholds, thus spawner escapement is a primary measure of recovery. The California Monitoring Plan for Salmon and Steelhead (CMP) methodology provides population level estimates of salmonids and monitors status and trends at evolutionarily significant regional scales.

The purpose of the agreement between CDFW and Sonoma Water is to continue collecting salmonid population data from the Russian River watershed for a second three-year terms (July 2025 through June 2028). Activities will include conducting Coho Salmon and steelhead spawning ground surveys, snorkel surveys, and life cycle monitoring to provide estimates of adult and juvenile salmonid abundance, redd abundance, and juvenile occupancy rates.

SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

Sonoma Water will provide monitoring coordination, planning, and reporting. This work includes overall project coordination, oversight of field activities, data QA/QC procedures, spatial and tabular database management, data accessibility, refinement of the Russian River sample frame, map preparation, reporting, responding to data requests, coordination with existing monitoring efforts in the watershed, and participation in technical advisory meetings. The term of the agreement with CDFW will be July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2028, for a total amount of \$2,259,000.

The following tasks will be performed:

Life Cycle Monitoring for Steelhead. Project personnel shall maintain close coordination with the existing Coho Salmon monitoring program to estimate population metrics for steelhead. When stream flow and related environmental conditions allow, life cycle monitoring to estimate the number of juvenile steelhead emigrants, the number of adult steelhead returns, and the number of steelhead redds will occur in Mill Creek, Green Valley Creek, Dutch Bill Creek, and Willow Creek.

Basin wide Spawning Ground Surveys and Snorkel Surveys in Coho Salmon Habitat. This task will consist of annual adult spawner surveys and juvenile snorkel surveys to generate annual estimates of Coho Salmon and steelhead redds in the Coho Salmon sample stratum and to evaluate the spatial structure of juvenile Coho Salmon in the Coho Salmon stratum of the Russian River watershed. Project personnel will survey a spatially balanced random sample of Coho Salmon reaches drawn from the current Russian River sample frame each year (pending landowner access approval).

In order to perform this work, landowner access to conduct field monitoring must be secured. This entails individual landowner access requests, coordination with other agencies, accessing the streams for similar

purposes and maintaining a landowner communication database. There are nearly 3,400 unique landowners adjacent to streams in the CMP Russian River sample frame, and access requests to approximately 900 landowners will be needed on an annual basis to conduct surveys for Coho Salmon basin wide monitoring. In addition, appropriate regional, state, and federal permits to conduct all monitoring tasks must be secured.

Sonoma Water will require the assistance of a subcontractor and subcontract with the University of California San Diego, Scripps Institution of Oceanography - California Sea Grant (California Sea Grant) to perform these activities. The work will be performed collaboratively, in teams of both Sonoma Water and California Sea Grant employees. The project manager estimates that the cost of subcontractor services will not exceed \$280,000; the term end date is June 30, 2028. Current staffing levels within Sonoma Water are sufficient to support and facilitate this work.

The subcontractor agreement will include two options for Sonoma Water to extend the agreement term for a period of one year each by providing written notice to subconsultant thirty days in advance of the expiration date of the agreement and of the first extension option.

SELECTION PROCESS

A competitive selection process was not completed, and a Single/Sole Source Waiver was obtained from Sonoma Public Infrastructure Department, Purchasing Division.

Sonoma Water requested the sole source waiver for the following reasons. A consultant/subcontractor must be able to obtain the appropriate regional, state, and federal permits to collect data. The permits are 1) Federal Endangered Species Act Section 10 Permit; 2) State of California Scientific Collecting Permit; and 3) California Endangered Species Act MOU (pursuant to CDFW's authority under Section 2081(a) of the Fish and Game Code). Sonoma Water reached out to the permitting agencies to inquire about permit holders and was informed that the only entities holding these permits in the Russian River Watershed are Sonoma Water and California Sea Grant.

NEXT STEPS

CDFW wishes to execute the direct contract with Sonoma Water as soon as possible. Due to the seasonally dependent nature of monitoring activities, this work must begin in the July timeframe. As a result, staff are requesting authority for the General Manager to negotiate and execute the agreements with CDFW and California Sea Grant to accommodate these needs. The term of each agreement will begin on July 1, 2025.

County of Sonoma Strategic Plan:

N/A

Sonoma Water Strategic Plan Alignment

This item directly supports Sonoma Water's Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following goal, strategy, and action item.

Goal: Protect and sustain our watersheds to maintain water resources, ecosystems and communities

By collecting and quantifying related data and contributing it to a larger data collection program, scientists and biologists can find ways to support threatened and endangered fish species in our watershed and beyond.

Goal: 3. Environmental Stewardship - Protect and sustain our watersheds to maintain water resources, ecosystems, and communities.

Strategy: 3.4 Provide regional leadership in salmonid species recovery and improving watershed health through partnerships on technical and policy-related initiatives.

Action Item: 3.4.2 Continue to implement the California Department of Fish & Wildlife's Coastal Monitoring Program in the Russian River Watershed.

Sonoma Water has been collecting data on fish populations in the Russian River basin since 1999, and has a long history of developing, funding, and implementing fisheries habitat enhancement and fish population monitoring programs in the Russian River watershed. The data collected through monitoring salmonids in the Russian River watershed will contribute to the CMP for Salmon and Steelhead that monitors salmon and steelhead in coastal California rivers

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

05/17/2022: Authorize the General Manager to accept up to \$2,355,000 from California Department of Fish and Wildlife to perform salmonid monitoring activities in the Russian River watershed.

04/17/2018: Resolution 18-0146 authorizing the General Manager execute a grant agreement with California Department of Fisheries and Wildlife for \$1,752,222 in support of the California Coastal Monitoring Program in the Russian River Watershed.

05/19/2015: Resolution 15-0210 authorizing the General Manager execute a grant agreement with California Department of Fisheries and Wildlife for \$1,790,861 in support of the California Coastal Monitoring Program in the Russian River Watershed.

05/14/2013: Resolution 13-0196 authorizing the General Manager execute a grant agreement with California Department of Fisheries and Wildlife for \$826,277 in support of the California Coastal Monitoring Program in the Russian River Watershed.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY24-25 Adopted	FY25-26 Projected	FY26-27 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$1,733,250	\$671,303
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$1,733,250	\$671,303
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal		\$1,278,500	\$490,251
Fees/Other		\$454,750	\$181,052
Use of Fund Balance			

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General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$1,733,250	\$671,303

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

There is no impact to the current fiscal year budget. Appropriations for FY 25-26, FY 26-27, and FY 27-28 will be budgeted for those fiscal years. Offsetting revenue will come from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Approved Single/Sole Source Waiver

Attachment 2: Draft Services Agreement with California Sea Grant

Attachment 3: Draft funding agreement with CDFW

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None.