



PRESS RELEASE

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Wishtoyo and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program Call on Ventura County Water Agencies to Enact Mandatory Urban and Agricultural Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Reclamation Measures

Governor Brown declares drought state of Emergency

Ventura County, CA – Following 2013, which was California’s driest year in 119 years on record, today Governor Brown declared an official drought designation for California. The Governor’s proclamation of a state of emergency for California’s drought conditions is based on the following conditions:

- State water supplies have dipped to alarming levels, indicated by: snowpack in California’s mountains is approximately 20 percent of the normal average for this date; California’s largest water reservoirs have very low water levels for this time of year; California’s major river systems, including the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, have significantly reduced surface water flows; and groundwater levels throughout the state have dropped significantly; and
- Dry conditions and lack of precipitation present urgent problems: drinking water supplies are at risk in many California communities; fewer crops can be cultivated and farmers’ long-term investments are put at risk; low-income communities heavily dependent on agricultural employment will suffer heightened unemployment and economic hardship; animals and plants that rely on California’s rivers, including many species in danger of extinction, will be threatened; and the risk of wildfires across the state is greatly increased; and
- Extremely dry conditions have persisted since 2012 and may continue beyond this year and more regularly into the future, based on scientific projections regarding the impact of climate change on California’s snowpack; and
- The magnitude of the severe drought conditions presents threats beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of any single local government and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to combat; and

While Sacramento and other northern California cities have already imposed mandatory water restrictions to conserve shrinking supplies, Ventura County cities and water agencies, such as Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency and United Water

Conservation have yet to enact measures that ensure their agricultural and municipal end users, implement feasible and effective enough water efficiency and conservation measures.

[Wishtoyo and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program](#), which protects Ventura County's inland and coastal waters for a variety of purposes, including for urban and agricultural uses, recreation, fishing, swimming, surfing, drinking, and for Native American cultural use, calls on the County, its cities, and its water agencies to be responsible water agents for the county's residents, species, and visitors.

“The County, its municipalities, and its water agencies have a duty to their agricultural and municipal end users, and to the County's residents and visitors whose wellbeing depends on healthy environment with healthy and flowing river systems,” said Jason Weiner, Staff Attorney and Associate Director for Wishtoyo's Ventura Coastkeeper Program. “Water conservation, efficiency, and reclamation must be the new standard in water supply and management for Ventura County.”

“In addition, responsible agencies must implement long overdue feasible solutions to divert, store, and infiltrate water from our streams during high flow conditions, when more than enough water exists for consumptive and in-stream flow needs to exist side by side. Implementation of such feasible solutions at the Vern Freeman Dam on the Santa Clara River for instance, should allow sufficient flows for the Santa Clara River, its species, its cultural resources, and its recreational uses during drier periods and during the wet season outside of rain events,” adds Weiner.

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About The Wishtoyo Foundation and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program: Founded in 1997, Wishtoyo is a 501(c)(3) non-profit grassroots organization with over 700 members consisting of Ventura County's diverse residents and Chumash Native Americans. Wishtoyo's mission is to preserve and protect Chumash culture, the culture of all of Ventura County's diverse communities, and the environment that our current and future generations depend upon. Wishtoyo shares traditional Chumash Native American beliefs, cultural practices, songs, dances, stories, and values with the public in its Chumash Discovery Village and through educational programs in schools to promote environmental awareness and natural resources stewardship. In 2000, Wishtoyo founded its Ventura Coastkeeper Program (“VCK”). VCK's mission is to protect, preserve, and restore the ecological integrity and water quality of Ventura County's inland and coastal waterbodies for all beings in the County's diverse community through outreach and education, restoration projects, advocacy, litigation, and community organizing and empowerment. **For more information about Wishtoyo Foundation and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program Visit: www.wishtoyo.org.**