

Shasta River Dangerously Low On Water: Conservation Group

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The drought in Northern California, combined with agricultural water use, is shrinking the Shasta River, according to a conservation group in Siskiyou County.

During normal summers an unobstructed, spring-fed Shasta River flows at 150-200 cubic feet per second, according to Bruce Shoemaker with Friends of the Shasta River. But in recent weeks, he says, it's been reduced to just three cubic feet per second.

"It's just been virtually, completely captured," says Shoemaker who is a local property owner and member of the conservation group's board.

Friends of the Shasta River, a grassroots group of citizens in the Shasta River Basin, is worried that diversions for agriculture could cause the river to go dry this summer. The Shasta provides critical rearing habitat for Chinook salmon in the Klamath River system, as well as habitat for steelhead and threatened coho salmon.

Now, the group is calling on government water managers to set a minimum water level needed for fish to survive.

"Friends of the Shasta River is calling on the State Water Resources Control Board, National Marine Fisheries Service and California's Department of Fish and Wildlife to use their regulatory authority to reduce water use to protect these fish," the group wrote in a press release about the Shasta River's current water levels.

"We're not trying to destroy agriculture," Shoemaker says. "There's a long, really important tradition of agriculture in Siskiyou County, and we're very supportive of that continuing. But what we've been saying is it's time to share."

In early June, diversions from the nearby Scott River were [restricted for some property owners](#) with junior water rights in light of extremely low flows that were threatening endangered species in that river.

A spokesperson with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife did not respond to a request for comment.