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The City of Ventura and Santa Barbara Channelkeeper Amend Settlement Agreement

Ventura, Calif. - The City of San Buenaventura and Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, a local environmental group, have announced an amendment to their settlement agreement in the lawsuit regarding the pumping and diversion of water from the Ventura River Watershed. Both Channelkeeper and the City remain committed to ensuring the protection of this local water source and the species that rely on it. The ongoing collaboration enables dialogue toward a locally developed solution to continue moving forward.

Under the modified terms, the City will continue the Pilot Program it implemented in 2019 to reduce its pumping and diversion of water from the Ventura River when flows drop during dry times, in order to help protect wildlife that depend on the river. The Pilot Program was originally set to expire in March of 2020, however, the City continues to honor the flow regime set in place. The most notable change with the amendment is that the City will shut down most of its pumping facilities at Foster Park when flows drop below 4 cubic feet per second (CFS), and stop all production when flows drop below 3 CFS instead of 2 CFS. The City will also use its two new gauges at Foster Park to monitor the impacts, if any, its pumping has on flow in the river at these levels.

Additionally, the City and Channelkeeper have agreed to keep a dialogue open to identify additional ways to work collaboratively on other Watershed and habitat-related public relations efforts.

“We are pleased to continue this important dialogue with Channelkeeper, and I believe this amendment strikes a balance of addressing our concerns for the species and habitat while also meeting the needs of serving our customers,” said Susan Rungren, Ventura Water’s General Manager.

“This is a meaningful commitment to preserve river flows until a long-term solution is finalized, and we are glad to have been able to reach it through dialogue with the City,” said Ben Pitterle, Channelkeeper’s Science and Policy Director.

The original agreement and this amendment provide added assurance to Channelkeeper for the better protection of steelhead during the dry season while the City works with other parties to propose a long-term framework that protects the Ventura River for steelhead and other instream uses and for the needs of water users, recreation, and the local economy.

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