



FRIENDS OF THE SHASTA RIVER

1299 South Main Street, Suite C #119, Yreka, CA 96097 · (530) 925-1291 · www.shastariver.org

November 30, 2021

Dear Friend of the Shasta River,

One year ago this week, a group of Siskiyou County residents, all with deep connections to—and love for—our river, formed Friends of the Shasta River. Individually, we all had become deeply frustrated with the deteriorating conditions on the Shasta River and realized we had to work together to try to change the situation.

The Shasta River was historically an amazingly productive salmon fishery, fed by the cold-water springs of Mount Shasta. This cold water, and the nutrients it provides, made the Shasta one of the most productive salmon spawning grounds for a river of its size anywhere. Some years the Shasta produced close to half of all the salmon in the whole Klamath River system. In a generally dry area, the Shasta was also a mecca for other wildlife – birds, otters, Pacific lamprey, other fish and aquatic life.

But now the Shasta River was in crisis – dewatered every summer by excessive, and, in many cases, wasteful, irrigation diversions. This dewatering has sent our threatened coho into a tailspin with annual returns plummeting into the single digits. Chinook salmon numbers, the basis of downstream tribal livelihoods and culture, have also declined dramatically from their historic numbers.

We were frustrated to see, despite decades of the promotion of “voluntary” approaches by well-intended agencies, organizations and some ranchers, that the situation on the Shasta was still deteriorating. We didn’t need a complex study to figure this out—the fish numbers spoke for themselves. It was obvious a new approach was needed. Our founding members include resource managers and fish biologists with decades of experience with Shasta River issues as well as community organizers, legal experts and others with long experience in fighting for rivers elsewhere.

“The springs entering the Shasta River are reliably fed by glacial melt and precipitation falling on Mt Shasta. With drought and climate change, springs, and the habitat they create, are more important than ever. Protect the springs, protect the Shasta River, support Friends of the Shasta River!” - **Bill Chesney, retired fish biologist, Cal Dept of Fish and Wildlife.**

Our formation was very timely as we went right into one of the worst drought years in the modern history of this region—we had to hit the ground running!

In just one year, we have already made some solid progress:

We exposed the almost complete dewatering of the river early in the irrigation season, generating widespread concern and attention. Our actions, which including an active outreach campaign, partnerships with tribal entities and other organizations and a series of meetings with state and federal agencies,

played a key role in getting more water back into the river through an unprecedented Emergency Drought Irrigation Curtailment--just in time for Fall Chinook migration.

We also produced a series of briefing papers and technical reports, exposing the flaws in the false solutions for the river's crisis being promoted by some agencies and private interests. We testified at hearings of the State Water Board, Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Wildlife Conservation Board. We began developing a website with info and photos of the river (ShastaRiver.org).

This is a great start, but it's only a start. And the forces wedded to the status-quo on the river are very entrenched. In 2022 we will be working with a coalition of tribes and other groups to transform the 2021 emergency drought curtailments into a permanent flow dedication for fish. We will be resisting the tendency of too many agencies, organizations and private interests to "take the easy way out" and pretend that all-voluntary solutions will be enough to save the Shasta River and its threatened species. We will be doing more research, public records requests and outreach—building up a constituency of concerned citizens who want to see the Shasta River recover and thrive.

To date our all-volunteer effort has had real impact in a short time. But we can't do this alone. In September we were recognized as a 501c3 non-profit, making us eligible for tax-deductible donations. Soon afterwards, we were excited to gain support for 2022 from two funders – Patagonia and the California Wildlands Fund of the Rose Foundation. This was a big vote of confidence in our efforts. But to accomplish our ambitious goals in 2022 and beyond, we also need the support of individual donors—people like you!

We realize there are a lot of worthy organizations out there and many of them are hitting you up this time of year. But if you can help us out with the critically important and timely initiative, we would be very appreciative. And the fish will thank you too!

All the best,



Andrew Marx
President, Board of Directors

To donate online or with a check see:

ShastaRiver.org/donate/



Coho salmon rearing in spring water in the upper Shasta River