

Water Sharing Program  
2022

UPPER RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED

# VOLUNTARY WATER SHARING

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Russian River stakeholders have developed a voluntary Water Sharing Program – a **locally driven approach for managing water demand** to address water shortages.

The goal is for participants to have access to water supply as long as possible in the dry season, avoiding or delaying curtailment.

<p><b>Problem</b></p> <p>Lack of water in the Upper Russian River Watershed leads to curtailment of water rights and significant economic impacts in our community.</p>	<p><b>Solution</b></p> <p>The Water Sharing Program provides an adaptive local alternative to curtailment by managing water demand with limited water supply.</p>
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*Photo Credit: Russian River Confluence Fall 2021  
Cover Photo credit: Erin Watt, Russian River April 2022*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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***Who can participate?*** All water users in the Upper Russian River Watershed (municipal, agriculture, domestic) can commit to reduce diversion of water throughout the dry season. Water right holders on the main stem, East Fork and West Fork as well as tributary creeks north of the river's confluence with Dry Creek are all eligible.

***How much do I have to conserve?*** Conservation is based on the user's historical water use (2017-2019), water right priority, and source of water. The amount of conservation will range between 20-75% depending on water rights priority, water supply conditions, and the number of participants. The amount of water available depends on the participation of senior right holders and the overall number of participants. Once right holders sign up, the final conservation thresholds required each month to allow diversions to continue and avoid curtailments will be calculated and participants notified. Water users will know their supply for the dry season in late June this year (May 1 in future years) in percentage stages for each month of the dry season (e.g., 20% in June, 35% in July, 45% in August). **Participants will use their surface water diversions under participating water rights according to the conservation percentages provided for those rights for each month of the term of the program.**

***Can water be transferred or exchanged?*** Yes, among participating water users. Water users can shift supply among their own water rights. Participants can conserve more water than required and transfer that water to another participant or to another one of their properties.

***Will it be enough?*** The goal of the program would be to avoid or delay full curtailment for participants. However, if water supply conditions are not sufficient to support the demand of some or all of the participants, the State Water Board will update the conservation percentages or, if necessary, curtail water use for program participants. Depending on water rights priority, some participants in the program may still receive water when others are curtailed.

***What happens if I don't participate?*** Participation in the program is voluntary. Those who choose not to participate will be subject to the State Water Board curtailment based on water right priority.

***What about drinking water and human health and safety?*** The Program accounts for water that is necessary for human health and safety. However, individual residents have an important role to play in conserving their own water use – every drop counts!

***If I conserve, will I lose my water right?*** No. Participants will not lose their water rights. Participants are voluntarily working together during this dry season for a defined period of time to be able to allocate a limited water supply amongst the broad participant group. The Agreement will be for July 1 - Oct. 31, 2022.

***Can I leave the Program or join late?*** Participants must sign up by June 8, 2022, to participate this year. Participants can leave the program; however, this is strongly discouraged because each and every Participant is essential to the overall success.

***Will this be an annual Program?*** Stakeholders and the State Water Board intend to learn as they go and improve this program for use in future years. Signing up this year will help inform future water management and stewardship of the Russian River.

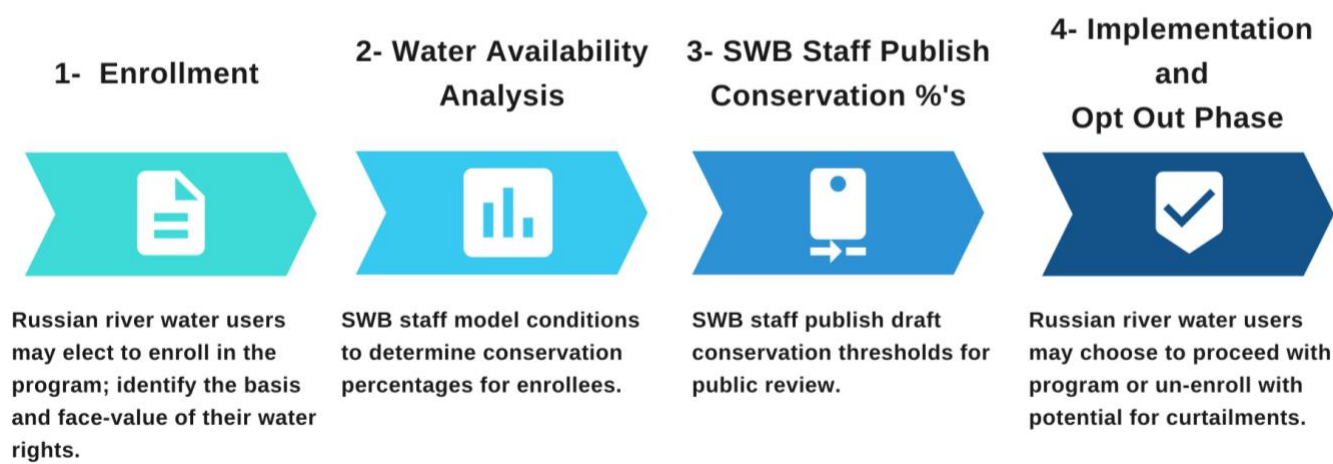
***How do I sign up?*** Participants will complete a Participation Form (check State Board's Russian River Drought page-- the form still needs to be developed). With the information participants provide, the final conservation thresholds will be calculated, and the Forbearance Agreement for the Water Sharing Program will be issued for each participant. (To "forbear" means deliberately not diverting water you are legally entitled to.)

## WHY SIGN UP?

- **Some water is better than no water.**
- **Balance supply and demand.**
- **Be part of a locally driven voluntary solution.**
- **Better accounting leads to better decision making.**

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian\\_river/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river/)

# 2022 RUSSIAN RIVER VOLUNTARY [CONSERVATION/WATER SHARING] PROGRAM ENROLLMENT PROCESS



## OTHER DETAILS

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**Multiple Water Rights** – Participants will need to specify all their water rights.

**Alternative Sources** – Participants will identify alternative sources of water (recycled, previously stored, contract water, etc.) or groundwater that would offset their typical water use.

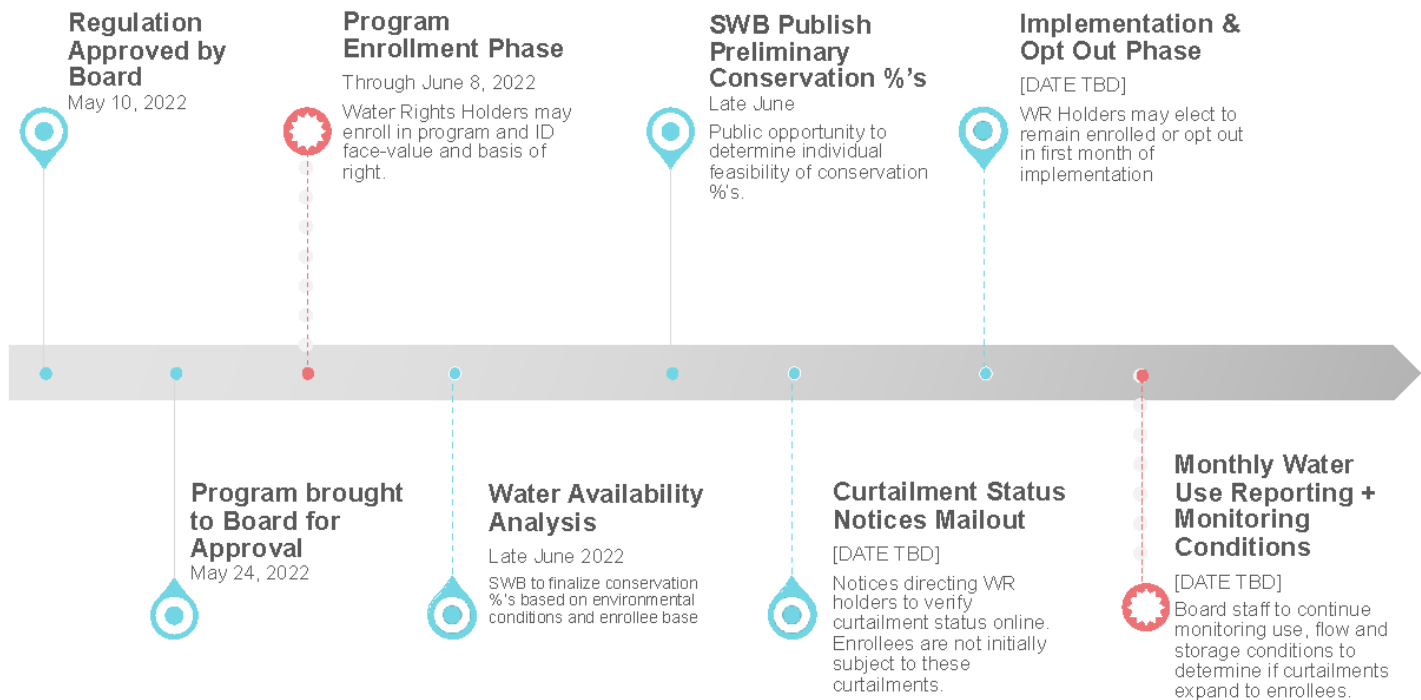
**Monthly Reporting** – Participants will report water use monthly, similar to existing water rights reporting. Reporting will help determine whether participants are complying and if overall use matches or exceeds anticipated reduction. Reporting will also help improve the program for future years.

**Time Commitment** – Participants will commit for the upcoming dry season through October 2022.

### Steering Committee developed Approach

Russian River stakeholders and the State Water Resources Control Board have been working together for more than a year to develop the Water Sharing Program. Steering Committee Participants include Cities of Cloverdale, Healdsburg, & Ukiah; Cal Am Water; Cal Indian Environmental Alliance; Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians; Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo; Fish Friendly Farming; Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria; Hopland Band of Pomo Indians; Jackson Family Wines; Lytton Band of Pomo Indians; Mendocino County & Sonoma County Farm Bureaus; Middletown Rancheria; Pinoleville Pomo Nation; Russian River Confluence; RR Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District; Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians; Sonoma Water; Sonoma Resource Conservation District; State Water Resources Control Board; Willow County Water District (representing 6 water suppliers.)

# Voluntary Program Implementation Timeline



## DATES

May 3-11: Public Feedback on Water Sharing Program

**May 10: State Water Board Meeting** to consider adopting amended emergency regulations for curtailments in the Russian River. The emergency regulation will provide for the Water Sharing Program.

**May 11: Comments Due** on the draft Water Sharing Program. Send to [russianriverdrought@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:russianriverdrought@waterboards.ca.gov)

**May 24: State Water Board Meeting** to consider adopting the Water Sharing Program and its Forbearance Agreement.

**May 25: Participants begin Signing Up**

**June 8: Last day to Sign Up**

**June 24: Conservation Percentages Announced**

**July 1: Agreement in Effect - Participants Conserve and begin Water Sharing**

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian\\_river/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river/)



*Photo credit: Lake Mendocino, Jan 2022, Bobby Cochran Photography*