

Assembly member Chris Rogers Introduces Bill to Restore and Protect Klamath River Fisheries

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Recently, Assembly member Chris Rogers (D-Santa Rosa) introduced his first bill as a member of the California State Assembly. AB 263 is an important measure to protect salmon populations in the Klamath River watershed and provide local agricultural operations with more certainty on river flows. This measure was introduced in partnership with the Karuk and Yurok Tribes, as well as the California Coastkeeper Alliance.

“I’m proud to stand with the fishermen and Tribes of the North Coast to protect California’s fisheries,” said Assembly member Rogers. “We have made tremendous strides to restore the salmon runs in the Klamath River but more must be done further upstream to ensure salmon populations can grow and flourish. This legislation will protect some of the most critical salmon habitat in California and will complement the restoration efforts associated with Klamath dam removal.”

Assembly Bill 263 would maintain river flows for at-risk salmon runs on two critical Klamath River tributaries – the Scott and Shasta Rivers. Flow minimums were set by the State Water Board during the drought emergency declared by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2021 and, under this legislation, would stay in place until the Board promulgates long term flow rules—which could take several years.

Most of the wild Chinook salmon in the Klamath River, which powers the state’s commercial and sport fishing industries, are born in the Shasta River. The majority of the Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho salmon left in the wild spend part of their lifecycle in the Scott River. Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho are on state and federal Endangered Species Lists. The habitat offered by the Scott and Shasta rivers are an essential component of the Klamath River salmon runs that North Coast tribes and local economies rely on.

“For many Tribes in Northern California, this is an issue of equity. The Karuk Tribe’s fishery depends on salmon born and reared in these two streams. With mainstream dams removed, we must now focus on the critical spawning and rearing habitat in the Scott and Shasta Rivers,” said Karuk Chairman Russell ‘Buster’ Attebery. “It’s time to work towards restoring balance so we can all survive in a changing climate.”

“We need to make sure that whenever the emergency drought flows expire, likely early next year, we have flow protections in place while the Water Board develops a permanent flow regulation. If we don’t, there may not be any salmon in these rivers left to save,” said Cody Phillips, staff attorney with the California Coastkeeper Alliance.

Chris Rogers was elected to the state Assembly in 2024. As the Assemblymember for the Second Assembly District, he represents Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity counties. Learn more about Assemblymember Rogers at <https://a02.asmdc.org/>.