

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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HBMWD AWARDED ALMOST \$700,000 TO PROTECT WATER RIGHTS AND FISH

(Eureka, CA, March 28, 2018). The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District has been awarded a \$693,408 Wildlife Conservation Board Grant, which will be used to investigate dedicating a portion of HBMWD's water rights to instream flow for beneficial use. This stream flow dedication is intended to benefit fish and wildlife by increasing habitat for salmonids and special status species in the Mad River.

This award brings State monies into our County, and we would like to thank the following entities who committed in-kind services and support: Blue Lake Rancheria, California Trout, Humboldt County Planning and Building Department, Mad River Alliance, National Marine Fisheries Service, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and Six Rivers National Forest. Local scientists and engineers from GHD, HT Harvey, and Stillwater Sciences assisted in grant preparation.

Funds will be used for scientific and engineering studies and permits that support a "Petition for Change" to the State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights. Under California's "use it or lose it" water laws, HBMWD could possibly lose water rights due to non-use in 2029. This project will support codifying HBMWD's permits and water rights so that up to 25 million gallons per day (MGD) can be released from the R.W. Matthews Dam at flows and times that benefit salmonids and other special status species in the Mad River. Releases would be from the District's Ruth Reservoir, which is located approximately 48 miles southeast of Eureka.

Releasing a maximum of 25 MGD is approximately 30% of the HBMWD's current water rights. During the height of the 2016 drought, unlike most other Californians, HBMWD customers enjoyed a 3-year storage "buffer" even without very stringent water conservation measures.

Dedicating flow for environmental benefit is one of three water use options developed with community input by the HBMWD's Water Resource Planning Advisory Committee. The other two options are local sales and transport outside our watershed, neither of which have yet become economically viable.

The Water Resource Planning process began after the District's two large industrial customers, the pulp mills on the Samoa Peninsula, closed. The mills had provided 60% of the District's revenue and their closing decreased revenues to the District, decreased District water use, and thus affected water rights ("use it or lose it"). Three water use goals were identified: protection of HBMWD's water rights, fiscal sustainability, and environmental sustainability. Dedicating a portion of our water rights to instream flow in the Mad River watershed also supports part of the District's mission: "... to protect the environment of the Mad River watershed to preserve water rights, water supply and water quality interests of the District."

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