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News Release

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SEEK INJUNCTION ORDERING STANFORD UNIVERSITY TO PROVIDE LIFELINE TO ENDANGERED STEELHEAD TROUT DURING DROUGHT

Two Bay Area environmental groups are continuing to pressure Stanford University to do more to manage important habitat areas for threatened native species on campus. The groups are asking a federal judge to issue an injunction requiring Stanford to take immediate steps to protect habitat and make water available for the threatened Central California Coast steelhead trout.

The requested measures include allowing bypass flows to support water levels downstream, as required by State and Federal law, which has never been implemented by Stanford.

In past years, Stanford University has degraded fish habitat in San Francisquito Creek and its watershed by diverting significant volumes of water to irrigate its golf course and other campus landscaping. The 125-year old Searsville Dam blocks native salmonids from accessing high-quality habitat upstream in the Portola Valley area, and continues to degrade fish habitat downstream of the dam.

Although Stanford recently recognized that the dam is at the end of its useful life, Stanford officials have not committed to any timeline for any remedial action, nor have they committed to protecting or monitoring habitat areas that they plan to allow highly vulnerable fish to access.

The environmental groups argue that short-term measures are urgently needed to protect steelhead now, particularly juvenile fish in the watershed who are likely to be killed or harmed as drought continues to ravage fish habitat in coastal California. Along with asking the Court to order water releases, the groups seek to have Stanford come into compliance with the Endangered Species Act and secure permits for its activities.

The environmental groups, Our Children's Earth Foundation (OCE) and Ecological Rights Foundation, have vowed to proceed with their court battle against Stanford. "We are in this fight for the long haul," said Annie Beaman of OCE. "Stanford University has done too little, too late for these amazing native fish that have been present in the watershed for millennia."