



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – May 5, 2025

Sonoma Water is continually planning and implementing the Russian River Biological Opinion requirements. Below is a brief synopsis of the current work. For more detailed information, please visit [SonomaWater.org](https://www.sonomawater.org).

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project

Habitat Monitoring and Maintenance

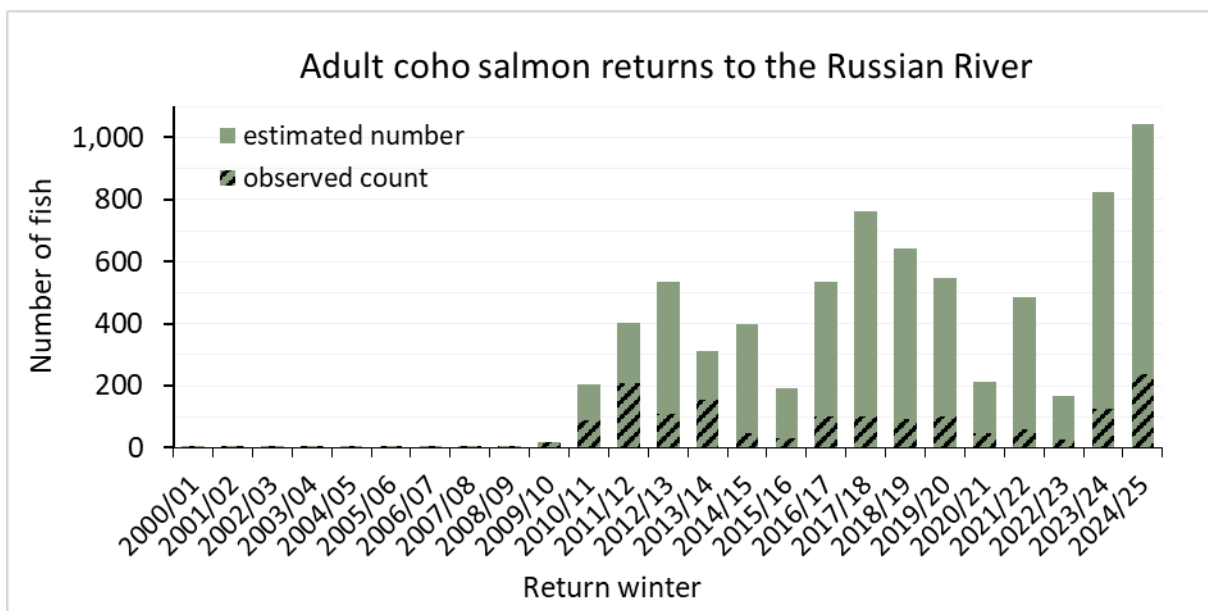
Sonoma Water Environmental Resources staff are preparing for 2025 monitoring of enhancement reach physical conditions, which occurs annually during the dry season and follows the Dry Creek Adaptive Management Plan. Staff also continue working to obtain long-term programmatic permits covering maintenance work on previously constructed sites. Maintenance in the Reach 8 area, to address sedimentation impacts, is expected to occur during the 2025 work season. Sonoma Water Environmental Resources staff are also finalizing agreement terms and going to the Board of Supervisors in mid to early June 2025 for approval to execute a contract with a construction contractor that will conduct maintenance activities starting in Reach 8. Lastly, Sonoma Water Engineering and Environmental Staff are also working with staff from the Corps to finalize the Operations and Maintenance Manual for the projects constructed by the Corps during 2022 - 2024.

Public Outreach

The annual meeting on the Russian River Biological Opinion will be held after a new Biological Opinion is issued.

Fish Monitoring

Sonoma Water has nearly completed surveys for the 2024/25 adult salmon and steelhead spawner season. This season marked a modern-day record for the number of adult Coho Salmon returning to the watershed with over 1,000 individuals recorded! The high numbers are most likely due to good conditions for freshwater and ocean survival that allowed a high number of juveniles to survive to the smolt stage and return as adults.



A figure representing the number of adult coho salmon winter returns to the Russian River.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

The mouth of the Russian River is open as of April 21, 2025. Annual pinniped monitoring volunteer training hosted in collaboration with Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods occurred February 25, 2025, with field orientation training the following week. Pinniped baseline monitoring resumed in mid-March and it is currently harbor seal pupping season. Fisheries and water quality monitoring are scheduled to begin in late spring, depending on weather and river flow conditions. Downstream migrant trapping has begun and water quality monitoring data sondes will be deployed in the next couple of weeks.

Interim Flow Changes

On August 20, 2024, Sonoma Water filed new temporary urgency change petitions with the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) requesting that storage thresholds at Lake Mendocino be used as the hydrologic index for determining minimum instream flow requirements in the Russian River and Dry Creek starting November 1, 2024. Sonoma Water filed similar petitions in October of 2023, which the Division issued an order approving in December 2023. The State Water Board issued the Order approving the temporary urgency change petitions for a 180-day term, which expired on April 29, 2025. Based on the hydrologic index in State Water Board order Decision 1610, the Russian River continues to be in a *Normal* water supply conditions.

On March 10, 2025, Sonoma Water filed new temporary urgency change petitions with the State Water Board requesting: (1) storage thresholds at Lake Mendocino be used as the hydrologic index for determining the minimum instream flow requirements; and (2) summertime minimum instream flow requirements in the Russian River be reduced if the water supply condition is *Normal* per the 2008 Russian River Biological opinion to increase the quality and quantity of rearing habitat for Chinook Salmon and steelhead. The State Water Board noticed the petitions on April 22, 2025.

New Biological Opinion

Sonoma Water and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the next Biological Opinion (BO). Implementation of projects and monitoring required by the 2008 BO will continue until a new BO is issued. A final BO from NMFS is anticipated this spring – perhaps as early as May 2025.