



Sonoma County Drought Town Hall

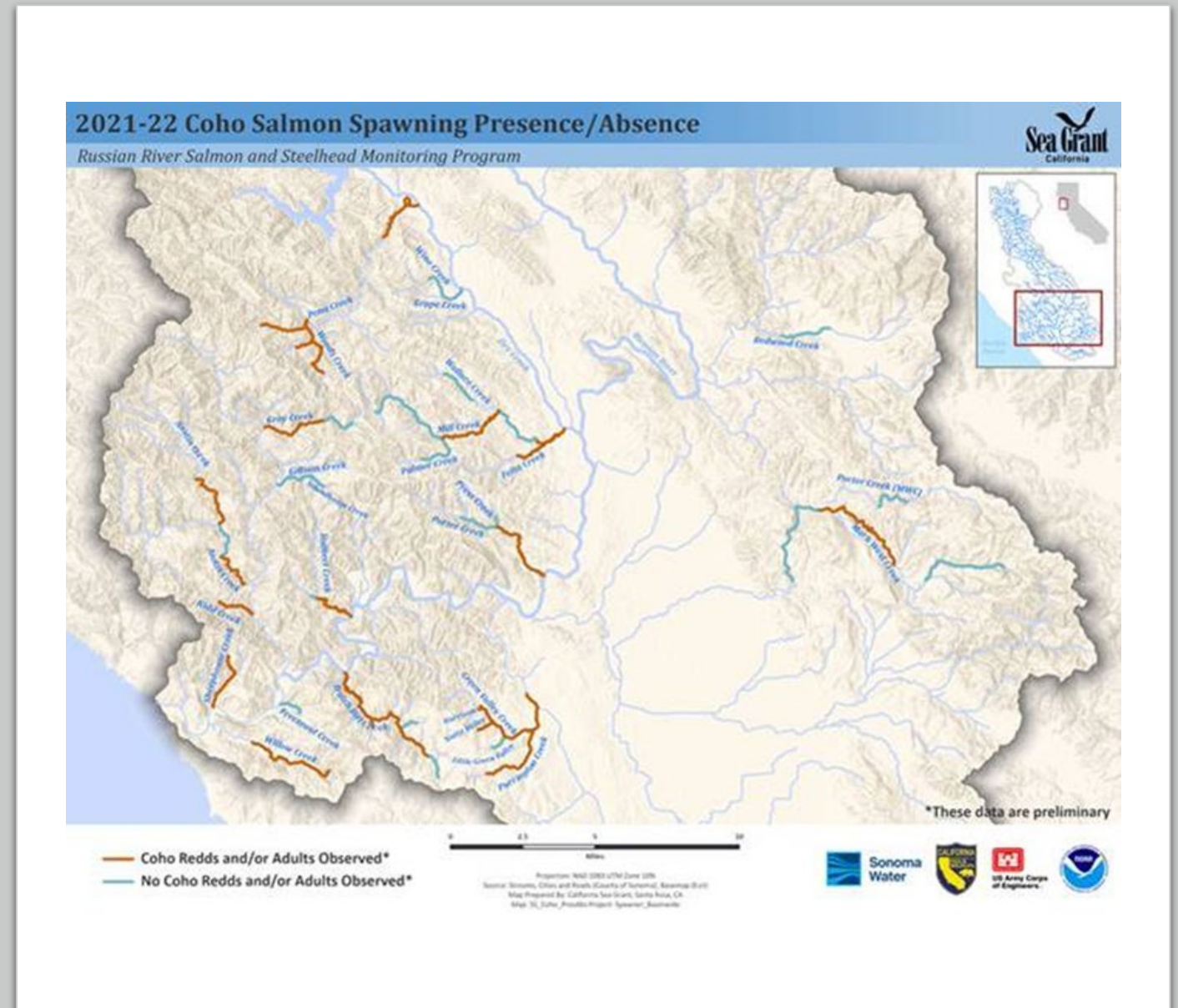
March 10, 2022

Dan Wilson, Operations and Policy Branch Chief.
California Coastal Office

Town Hall Meeting

Salmon and Steelhead Concerns

- Observations from Marin and Sonoma counties suggest adult coho salmon are returned in record numbers
 - Maintaining strong brood year is critical for species survival and recovery
- Observations at both Warm Springs Hatchery and Coyote Valley Hatchery report low numbers of returning steelhead
- Low streamflow this spring could prevent smolts from getting to the ocean and fry will be at risk to stranding.
- Summer streamflow conditions likely to be very stressful to summer-rearing juvenile salmon and steelhead without conservation efforts



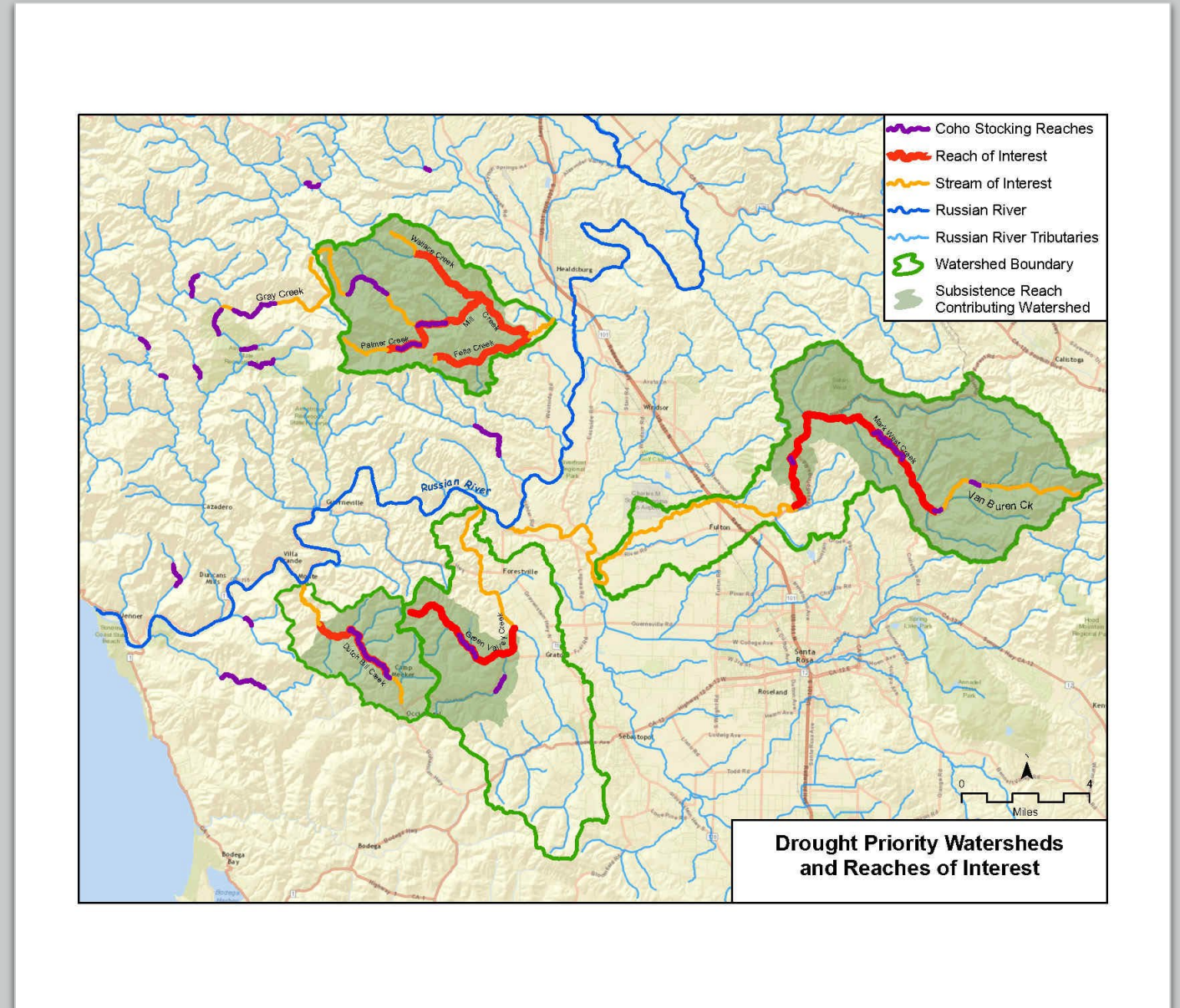
Voluntary Drought Initiative Program



- Joint initiative declaring the agencies' intent "to work with Landowners or Water Users in watersheds throughout the State to reduce the negative effects of the drought on salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act or the California Endangered Species Act."
 - December 12, 2021 NOAA Fisheries and CDFW sent 285 letters to landowners in the 4 priority watersheds.
 - Electronic letters were distributed through email lists at the Sonoma Resource Conservation District, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, Sonoma Farm Bureau, and SWRCB's Lyris.
 - Presentations were given to Sonoma Farm Bureau, Russian River Confluence, and Sonoma County Water Coalition
- Five actions for drought impact minimization:
 - Targeted flow augmentation
 - Securing instream flows
 - Monitoring
 - Fish rescue (property access only; does not cover capture or relocation)
 - Winter floodplain inundation and groundwater recharge (new action added)

Drought Priority Watersheds in Sonoma County

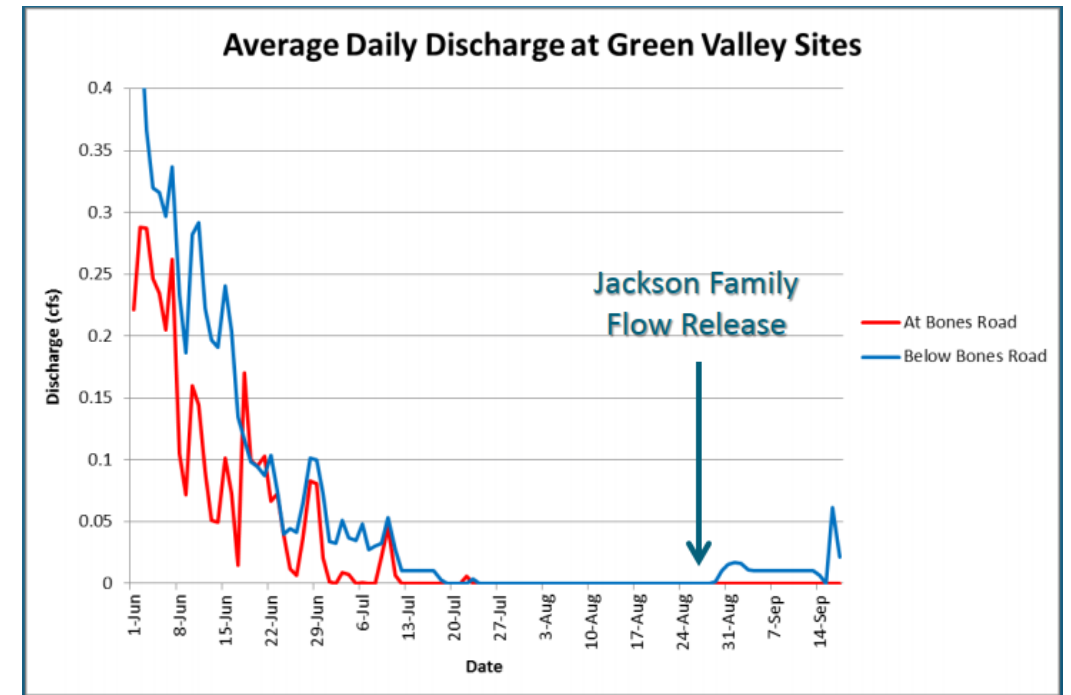
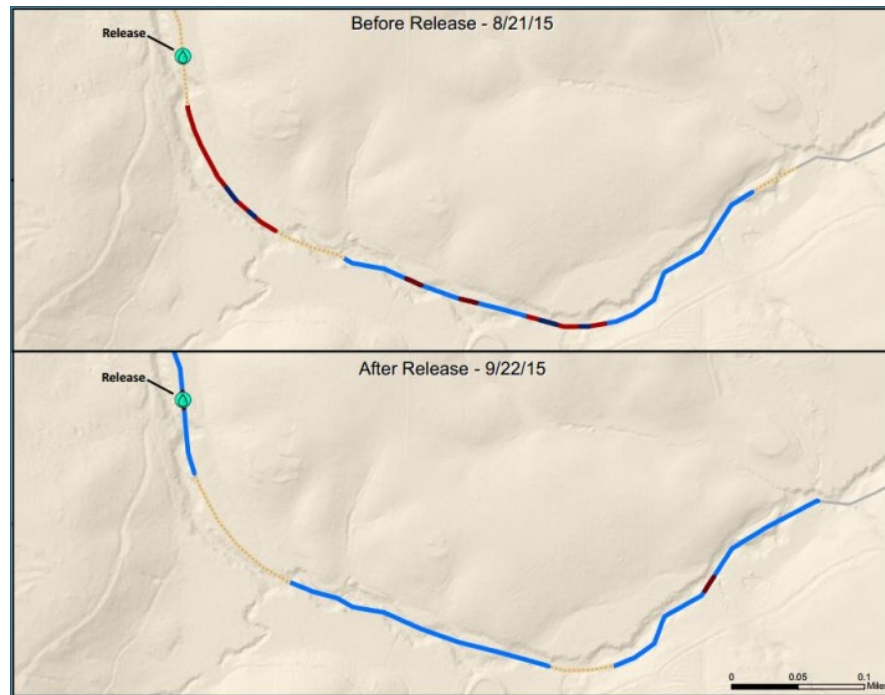
- Priority Russian River tributary watersheds critical for salmon and steelhead recovery
 - Mill Creek
 - Dutch Bill Creek
 - Green Valley Creek
 - Mark West Creek



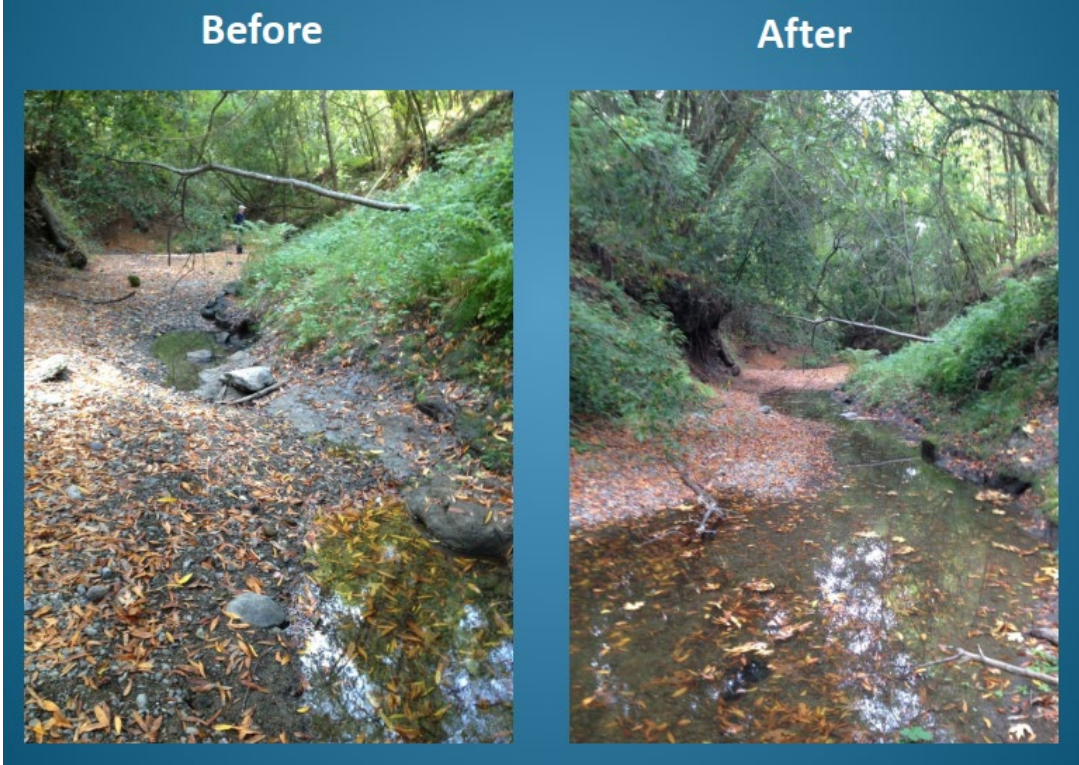
Jackson Family Wines VDI

Green Valley Creek

- Jackson Family Wines committed to releasing water into Green Valley Creek through November 2015 or until flows were restored from rainfall events
- Seeking landowners with off-stream storage or groundwater wells near tributaries to build off repeat of this project in 2022



Jackson Family Wines –VDI



Downstream Reach



Upstream Reach

Camp Meeker VDI *Dutch Bill Creek*



- Camp Meeker Recreation and Parks District volunteered to enhance critically low summer flows by releasing water continuously through November 2015 or until flows were restored from rainfall events
- Approx. 3,400 juvenile coho salmon and steelhead likely would have perished without flow augmentation
- Site utilized as refuge habitat for relocated coho in summer 2021



E & J Gallo Winery VDI *Porter Creek*

- Flow release from an existing water storage reservoir reconnected Porter Creek allowing trapped coho salmon to emigrate from Porter Creek to the Russian River
- Recurring flow release covered under Safe Harbor Agreement with NOAA Fisheries
- Study of past flow augmentation in Porter Creek (Rossi 2020) found that releases significantly improved dissolved oxygen levels from 4.5 mg/L to 7.2 mg/L





What's in it for each party?

- Fish
 - Demonstrated improvements to instream habitat and water quality
- Landowner
 - Improves ecosystem function on landowner's property
 - May support a business model or goal (i.e., "green" or "fish friendly")
 - Potential for financial and technical assistance with infrastructure, permitting, and implementing water saving or flow-enhancing activities
 - Opportunity for local communities to develop cooperative solutions to water conservation and potentially offset curtailment actions



Vision of Success

- High levels of participation in VDI Program covering wide range of projects and diversions:
 - Surface and groundwater users
 - Agricultural and residential diverters
 - Seeking opportunities for minimizing water use or water recycling
 - Seeking opportunities to add water to streams (pond and groundwater releases)
- Collaborative efforts for implementing projects in priority watersheds
- Ensure fish survival through the summer (i.e., avoid fish kills caused by disconnected streamflow and resulting poor water quality)

Financial Assistance

CDFW received ~\$20 million towards projects to reduce the impacts of drought on fish and wildlife

- Respond to drought conditions through habitat restoration and through water infrastructure projects
- No formal solicitation process to apply for funds
- Funding opportunities also available through CDFW's Watershed Restoration Grants Branch and Wildlife Conservation Board, more information:
 - <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Organization/WRGB>
 - <https://wcb.ca.gov/Grants>

How to Participate in VDI Program or Contact Program Partners

- If you are interested in participating and for additional information, please contact:
BDRDrought@wildlife.ca.gov
and/or calcoastalvdi.wcr@noaa.gov
- CDFW's Drought Webpage:
<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Drought>
- NOAA Fisheries Drought Webpage:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/climate/drought-west-coast-region>