



CASITAS MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL
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**SUBJECT: CASITAS RESPONDS TO CITY OF VENTURA'S PROPOSED DRAFT
STIPULATED JUDGMENT AND PHYSICAL SOLUTION**

Casitas Municipal Water District (Casitas) provides drinking water directly and indirectly to about 70,000 people and hundreds of agricultural ranches in Western Ventura County, and for decades has been operating its surface water diversions from the Ventura River in a manner that protects the environment.

For nearly 20 years, Casitas has been an active steward of the steelhead in the Ventura River Basin through its Fisheries Program, which is responsible for monitoring and researching the steelhead life history, population status, and environmental conditions.

Under a federal 2003 Biological Opinion, Casitas constructed a state-of-the-art Fish Passage Facility at its Robles Diversion, and has significantly reduced its water supply diversions from the Ventura River into Lake Casitas in order to provide for required instream flows that mimic natural storms, to help the steelhead.

While Casitas has taken these actions, there still remains work to do within the watershed to improve the environment for steelhead.

In 2014, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper sued the City of Ventura (City) for its groundwater pumping from the Ventura River and related potential harm to the endangered Southern California Steelhead. In response, the City initiated a watershed adjudication, involving thousands of residents in the Ventura River watershed. More

information about the case can be found at: <https://www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/adjudication-information>

This September, the City of Ventura along with major groundwater pumpers in the Ventura River released a Draft Stipulated Judgment and Physical Solution, which is a proposed settlement for the City's ongoing watershed adjudication lawsuit.

Casitas is studying the Draft Stipulated Judgment, and continues to defend its water rights on behalf of its customers. Since this is an active lawsuit, some information must remain confidential. At the same time, we would like to share as much as possible with you.

The Draft Stipulated Judgment proposes many non-flow measures, such as removal of invasive Arundo plants and non-native predator species, which are important parts of a successful plan in protecting steelhead. In addition, the proposed Stipulated Judgment proposes a common effort among local stakeholders to help the steelhead, which Casitas supports.

However, Casitas believes the Draft Stipulated Judgment leaves many issues unaddressed regarding the City of Ventura's water rights assertions. The City has reserved its questionable water rights claims which, if fully exercised, would undermine a common cooperative effort. Casitas believes cooperation on the fishery should also involve cooperation on water rights. Thus, either the City should withdraw its unproven water rights claims and close the issue, or the fishery solutions should proceed as a cooperative regional initiative, outside the City's water rights lawsuit.

Casitas is also concerned about the proposed water management structure and cost allocation. In its current form, the cost allocations for the management plan clearly do not acknowledge nor appreciate the historic actions taken by Casitas to adjust surface water diversions to balance the water needs of the steelhead and its customers.

Casitas wants its customers and the broader Ventura Watershed community to know that Casitas will evaluate every fair and reasonable option to reach a resolution that protects the interests of our District, and those who we serve.
