

**A Call by Leading Scientists to Increase Protections for
Endangered Central Coast California Coho Salmon in Marin
County, CA
August, 2007**

Wild coho salmon populations have undergone a ninety-percent decline in California since the 1940's¹. The causes of this decline such as urbanization, dams, and logging operations are well known and documented. Central California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit (CCC ESU) coho salmon were listed by the US government as threatened in 1997 and up-listed to endangered status in 2005. The State of California listed the population as endangered in 1995.

As scientists concerned with the health and recovery of salmonid populations throughout California, **we support increased habitat protections for the largest remaining wild population of CCC ESU coho salmon, located in the Lagunitas Creek Watershed**, west Marin County. This population makes up 10-20% of the total ESU.

Lands in the lower reaches of the Lagunitas Creek watershed are relatively well protected (they include State Parks, National Parks and Recreation Areas, and County and Water District property) and maintain habitat values important to coho and other native species. But, thirty-one percent of spawning in the Lagunitas Creek Watershed occurs in the un-dammed headwaters of the Lagunitas Watershed, in the San Geronimo Valley. And the first year of out-migration research in 2006² documented that approximately 1/3 of Lagunitas Creek coho rear in these headwater reaches.

The San Geronimo Valley supports a growing human population whose lands are governed by elements in the Marin County General Plan and by the County Board of Supervisors. Increased erosion and sedimentation and stormwater runoff as a result of increasing impervious surfaces, loss of riparian areas and floodplains to development and invasive species, and leaking septic systems pose significant threats to the survival of coho salmon.

We, the undersigned, call on Marin County Supervisors to:

¹ **Status of Coho Salmon in California. Report to the National Marine Fisheries Service**
July 1991. By: Larry R. Brown
And Peter B. Moyle, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Biology
University of California, Davis, CA 95616

² Stillwater Sciences 2007. Lagunitas Limiting Factors Analysis. Prepared for Marin Resource Conservation District. Final draft in Progress.

1. Adopt a moratorium on any new construction in the County's 100-foot Stream Conservation Area (SCA) until such time as a **Cumulative Impact Analysis**, as required under CEQA law, has been completed that can inform the County on degradation thresholds and the limits of development that coho can withstand;
2. Enact a **Native Riparian Forest Management Policy and Ordinance** that prohibits removal of streamside native vegetation. Right now, there is NO special protection for streamside trees and landowners are permitted to remove five trees/year without a permit;
3. Implement **strict enforcement of violations and illegal development** in the 100-foot Stream Conservation Area;
4. Require any new development in coho watersheds to meet a **zero net increase in storm-water run-off**;
5. **Close loopholes in the SCA ordinance.** Modify the draft County-wide Plan to eliminate provisions that allow new construction in the SCA and that increase NOT decrease protections for coho salmon and creek-side habitats;
6. Marin County Supervisors should work with non-governmental organizations and other agencies to begin a process to **identify and acquire undeveloped land parcels** before they are compromised by impervious surfaces, lost or degraded riparian habitats, declines in water quality, and other urban impacts.

In recognizing that measures which protect coho salmon in their freshwater habitat will also benefit a wide range of species including threatened steelhead trout and chinook salmon, and over 225 birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians depend on California's riparian habitat,³ we urge the County of Marin to take urgent actions to implement the highest standards of protections for the San Geronimo Valley headwaters region. Sincerely,

Signatures as of _____, 2007. (*Affiliations for identification purposes only)

Name	Affiliation
Dr. Peter Moyle	Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology and

³ RHJV (Riparian Habitat Joint Venture). 2004. The riparian bird conservation plan: a strategy for reversing the decline of riparian associated birds in California. California Partners in Flight. <http://www.prbo.org/calpif/riparian.v-2.pdf>

	Center for Watershed Sciences, University of California, Davis.
Dr. Christina Swanson,	Senior Scientist, The Bay Institute.
John E. McCosker	Senior Scientist and Chair of Aquatic Biology, California Academy of Sciences
Dr. Pete Raimondi	Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. University of California. Center for Ocean Health, Long Marine Lab.
Dr. David G. Hankin	Professor and Chair, Dept. of Fisheries Biology Humboldt State University. Member, Technical Recovery Team, Central California Coast ESUs (coho, Chinook, steelhead).
Joseph J. Cech, Jr	Professor Emeritus of Fisheries Biology, University of California, Davis
Josh Israel, PhD.	Department of Animal Science, University of California, Davis
Dr. R. Bruce MacFarlane	National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Fisheries Ecology Division
Sarah Puckett	Senior Restoration Ecologist, Natural Heritage Institute
F. Jeremy Wheeler	Executive Director, Mattole Restoration Council
Jeff Miller	Director, Alameda Creek Alliance
Reuven (Ronald) Walder, MSc	Director, Seaweb
Dr. F. Agudelo - Silva	Professor, College of Marin
Dave Kajtaniak	Fisheries Biologist, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Jonathan Rosenfield, Ph.D.	Sole Proprietor, Aquatic Restoration Consulting
Morgan Bond, B.S., M.A.	Staff Research Associate, University of California, Santa Cruz.
John Durand	Graduate Student Researcher. Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation University of California, Davis.
Melissa Pitkin	MS Environmental Education, Southern Oregon University BS Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology, UC Davis
Nate Miller	President – Cal Fishing Club, Graduate Student, University of California - Berkeley