

Scott River Water Trust
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – FAQ

1. How do you decide where to lease water?

Our locations are based on priority stream reaches. In the summer, key rearing streams for juvenile coho salmon and steelhead were identified through stream surveys: French Creek, Shackelford Creek, South Fork, East Fork, Sugar Creek, and Patterson Creek. Critical ingredients of a priority reach for these cold-water species include cool water, perennial flow, instream cover, and riparian canopy. In the fall, locations are determined by where the leased water may provide the most gain to the mainstem Scott River's flow at the USGS gage below Scott Valley.

2. When do you lease water and for how long?

The Trust leases water during late summer for juvenile coho and steelhead, and during the fall for upstream migration of adult Chinook salmon and steelhead. We would like a summer lease to begin mid-July and extend through the end of the irrigation season of the decree. In some cases, leases may begin as late as mid-September. We prefer to enter into lease agreements as early in the year as possible for planning and budgeting purposes. Discussions with farmers and ranchers usually begin in May.

Fall leases begin after irrigation season ends and tend to be for one or more weeks until no longer needed, or for a certain amount of water. The fall flow objective is to help reach a sustained flow of about 25 cfs at the USGS gage, or whatever flow is needed to get upstream movement of adult salmon from the canyon into Scott Valley.

3. Who do you lease water from?

We lease only from water rights holders who are active water diverters. No "paper water" leases are allowed. People with higher priority water rights are usually the ones that will have water available through the summer season. If a private diversion has multiple users on it, a lease is developed with each user unless there a ditch owner's association can represent all of the users.

4. How much water are you looking for?

We can lease any amount of flow that can be accurately measured, usually 0.20 cubic foot per second (cfs) or greater. Our leases so far have ranged from 0.2 cfs to 5.0 cfs, but could go higher. The volume of water in any single lease has ranged from 9.0 to 350 acre-feet.

We have no target flows for the tributaries. The flow target for the mainstem Scott River in the fall is 25 cfs, or whatever flow is required to pass upstream migrating salmon.

Some or all of a water right can be leased, depending on circumstances and needs.

[Note: 1 cfs per day = 1.98 acre-feet per day; 1 acre-foot = 326,900 gallons.]

5. How do you determine the price to pay for water?

A report by a water economist in 2007 helped the Water Trust establish an estimated range of water values for some typical water uses in Scott Valley, using several valuation approaches. The income capitalization approach, which determines water's contribution to the net revenue of the water user, was selected by the Water Trust to provide a reasonable starting point. The summer season price reflects irrigation values for growing crops while the fall season price reflects the values of using alternative water sources for livestock use.

Each year a water price is evaluated and recommended by the Trust's Pricing Committee, composed of people on the Advisory Committee and Board who have no financial conflict of

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interest. The offering price is adopted by the Board, based on the Pricing Committee's recommendation, and input from the Advisory Committee.

6. When do I get paid?

We want to pay participants as promptly as possible. An initial payment of 25% of the total estimated lease cost is paid within 30 days of the lease start date. The balance is usually paid within 45 days after the end of the lease. Note that payment start date cannot begin prior to lease start date.

7. How do you know if the leased water is benefiting fish?

A basic assumption is that more water will benefit fish. Only stream reaches and time periods that are known to support salmon and steelhead are selected for the program. The Water Trust has implemented a monitoring program designed to assess benefits to fish. Our monitoring efforts focus on answering four key questions: 1) Was the amount of water paid for provided? 2) Was there an instream effect on stream flow and/or pool volume below the lease site? 3) Was water temperature affected by the leases? 4) Were target species present in reaches affected by summer leases; or did fall leases aid the migration of adult salmon? Monitoring is done before and after each lease begins, including photos. See our annual monitoring reports on the website for the results, which have shown positive responses to these questions.

8. Can I lose my water right if it's leased?

No. The Water Trust wants to ensure that your water right is protected and has consulted water lawyers about its procedures. Appropriative water rights (as opposed to riparian) risk loss by nonuse for 5 consecutive years or more. As a result, this type of water right will not be leased by the Water Trust for 5 consecutive years.

9. Will you lease my groundwater?

No, we only lease surface water.

10. If I lease my stockwater right, how will I water my cows?

Ranchers who lease their stockwatering rights may choose to seek alternative water sources. Groundwater pumping as part of a stockwater system, including watering troughs and pipelines, is a common, cost-effective replacement. Because of ditch seepage loss, the volume of groundwater needing to be pumped is much less than the volume of surface water needing to be diverted through a leaky ditch. This option can be beneficial for fish and practical for ranchers, once the stockwater system is in place and becomes maintained. Some financial assistance for a system may be available.

11. Aren't water rights considered property rights?

According to the State's Division of Water Rights, "*The State's waters cannot be owned by individuals, groups, businesses, or governmental agencies. While water rights are property rights, water right holders do not own the water, but rather possess the right to use it. Water rights laws help provide certainty that a water user will have water available in the future.*" For more information, see: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/>

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12. How does the Water Trust fit in with all the other fish protection programs that are going on?

The Scott River Water Trust Program is just one of many restoration activities going on throughout the Scott River watershed. The Siskiyou Resource Conservation District (RCD) sponsors many water conservation and stream habitat improvement projects for landowners and water users in Scott Valley, for example. For more information, see the links to the websites of our Partners at www.scottwatertrust.org