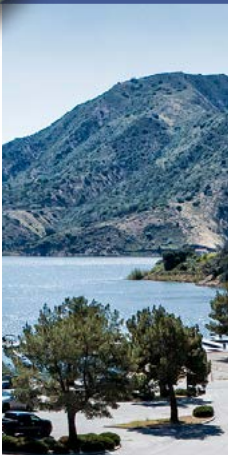




## Federal barriers to Freeman Diversion fish passage jeopardize Ventura County economy



In 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) deemed the fish ladder at Freeman Diversion no longer sufficient for the unimpeded migration of steelhead trout.



- UWCD agreed to develop an alternate fish passage.
- UWCD and NMFS have met multiple times to negotiate options and best practices for this massive project.
- As a result of NMFS's lingering concerns over the accuracy of the size of "historic fish runs" and the actual capacity needed for the passage, **UWCD is at an impasse on how to move forward** with an expensive new fish ladder with no scientific evidence of effectiveness.
- With project costs of \$115 million, UWCD will require additional funding support.
- There is also the potential for repeating the costly lesson of building a fish ladder only to have it deemed insufficient years later, potentially wasting valuable public resources.

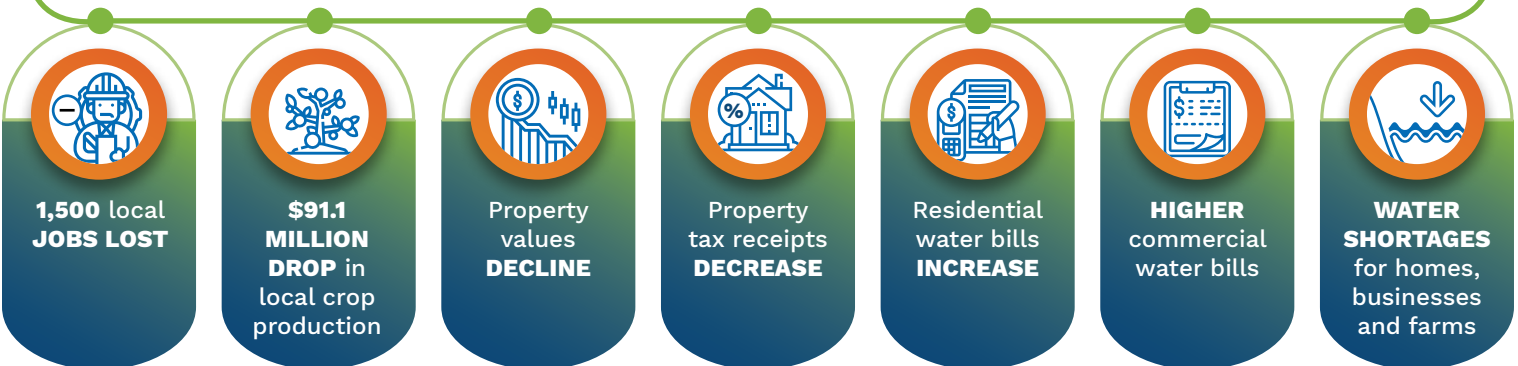


### Why it matters

Without a new fish passage, UWCD is unable to operate the Freeman Diversion at full capacity, forcing a reduction of groundwater recharge for sustainable use. For five months in 2017, requirements by NMFS cut diversions by 50%, enough water for almost 18,000 households for a year. Millions of dollars in crops and thousands of jobs are at stake.

## FREEMAN DIVERSION WATER REDUCTION IMPACTS ON VENTURA COUNTY

Every **10,000 acre-feet** reduction in water from the Freeman Diversion triggers an economic chain reaction:



\* Highland Economics, Inc., 2010

### What's next?

Protect Ventura County's economy by supporting United's quest for a fair, science-supported fish passage based on reclassification of the Southern California and South-Central California Coastal steelhead as a single population under the federal Endangered Species Act.



## Background

Since 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service has repeatedly changed criteria and objectives for establishing a new fish passage at the Freeman Diversion Facility.



The fish of concern is the Southern California steelhead (*O. mykiss*), which was listed as a federally endangered species in 1997.

For more than a decade, UWCD has proposed various design options for the fish passage in conjunction with development of a Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

The District's goal is to modify its facilities and operations under an approved MSHCP, which will comply with the U.S. Endangered Species Act and ensure sufficient water for farms, businesses and **378,000 residents** of Ventura County.

## The science of steelhead

As part of a regular, five-year review under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, UWCD has asked NMFS to consider the best available science related to the Southern California Steelhead. As such, NMFS should reclassify the endangered SoCal Steelhead and the threatened South-Central California Coast as the same species, rather than distinct populations.

By considering the entire breeding population, which includes the steelhead that stay in the upper watershed and those that migrate to the ocean, the recovery plan could be revised, and there would be more options for project proposals that lead to meaningful improvements for the steelhead.

### THE FREEMAN DIVERSION IS VITAL TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY



Sustains **\$1.08 billion** in annual crop production in Ventura County



Supports **16,800 jobs** and **\$994 million** in direct and indirect agriculture income



Provides water for an agriculture industry that contributes about **\$3.5 billion** to Ventura County's economy and employs nearly **43,000 people**

### REDUCING FREEMAN WATER DIVERSIONS WOULD CAUSE:



Higher residential and commercial water bills



Reduced employment and income for Ventura County residents and businesses



Water shortages for municipal and industrial customers



Disproportionate negative impacts on low-income and minority populations



## What is the Freeman Diversion?

UWCD built the Freeman Diversion to redirect water from the Santa Clara River for recharge of local groundwater. The facility is comprised of a concrete dam, a fish ladder, which allows unimpeded migration of steelhead trout upstream, and a screened fish bay, to keep fish out of canals and recharge basins. The facility was built in 1991, at a cost of \$30 million. The fish ladder was added at a cost of \$1.7 million in 1993, prior to the steelhead's endangered species listing.