

GAVIOTA STATE PARK WATER DIVERSION CHALLENGED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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- On June 24, Coastal Ranches Conservancy filed a petition with the State Water Resources Control Board seeking an end to State Parks illegal diversion of water from Gaviota Creek—critical Southern California Steelhead habitat.
- Gaviota State Park is illegally diverting more than 4 million gallons of water each year from Gaviota Creek to supply the Caltrans roadside rest areas and the State Park.
- The Park was notified in 1988 that a water right permit is required, but has never obtained one.
- Coastal Ranches Conservancy discovered the lack of a permit while engaged in restoration activities in the Gaviota Creek watershed.

The illegal diversion of water from Gaviota Creek began in 1988, according to State Parks documents. Regulators told Parks staff at that time that a diversion permit and environmental review is required before taking any water—but they failed to comply. As part of its ongoing restoration efforts in Gaviota Creek, Coastal Ranches Conservancy discovered that no permit had been issued, and no review of impacts to fish and wildlife conducted.

Gaviota Creek is home to a number of sensitive species that rely on a surface flow of stream water such as the endangered Southern Steelhead, the Southwestern Pond Turtle, and the endangered Red-Legged Frog. Many other sensitive species also depend on stream flows, especially for refuge in the summer, when the water diversion rates are at their highest levels.

Kim Kimbell, President of the Coastal Ranches Conservancy, says “Gaviota Creek is critical habitat for a number of species and the State Park sets a poor example by neglecting to get the permits that would be required of any neighboring rancher or farmer. We hope they will take prompt steps to remedy this situation.”

Coastal Ranches Conservancy is a 501c3 non-profit organization with the mission of supporting nature conservation, restoration, and education on the Gaviota Coast. You can view the Gaviota Creek Watershed Restoration Plan at <http://coastalranchesconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/DRAFT-gaviota-watershed-plan-update-2.5.pdf>

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