

Left: A dried out stock pond on a Siskiyou County ranch on Aug. 29, 2022.

cattle were at risk without more water. Costs from hauling water and buying hay were climbing, and the ranchers faced the prospect of selling off cattle.

"We could have kept going for \$500 a day," said Rick Lemos, a fifth generation rancher and board member of the Shasta River Water Association.

Had the Assembly bill been in force then, the ranchers could have faced daily fines between \$1,500 and \$10,000, plus \$2,500 for every acre-foot of water diverted, which could reach more than \$1,000,000.

Lemos said if fines had reached \$10,000 per day, "we definitely could have had to rethink it. That's for damn sure." Yet, he also added, "I'm not so sure we wouldn't have done it again. When you got cattle out of water and you have no other options, what are you gonna do?"

"If you've got 5,000 head of cattle that are worth \$1,200 apiece, and they're starting to die. I mean, how much can you spend for eight or 10 days to remedy the problem?" he said.

Arron "Troy" Hockaday, a council member of the Karuk tribe, beside the Klamath River in Happy Camp on Aug. 29, 2022.

The law would target landowners, water agencies and districts that take water from rivers and streams, not individual consumers who turn on their taps.

Sponsored by conservation groups—California Trout, the Planning and Conservation League and Trout Unlimited—the bill is also supported by the Karuk and Yurok Tribes.

"The fine doesn't fit the crime," Karuk Tribal Council Member Arron "Troy" Hockaday said. "What's gonna stop them from doing it again this year, or next year? Or anytime they want? I mean, you got 80 farmers only paying \$50 apiece. They're gonna keep doing it."

But water providers, builders and agricultural groups oppose the bill, saying it is so broad that even those diverting water legally could be ensnared in the expanded water board powers.

"If [the bill] did nothing else but raise penalties, that would stop what went on on the Shasta," said Kristopher Anderson, the Association of California Water Agencies' legislative advocate. But he said, by expanding other authorities, "this bill systematically stacks the deck against water right holders in favor of the water board."

One new authority would be issuing interim relief orders to stop diversions or address potential harms. In urgent cases, these

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