

From: "Rivers Edge" <info@riversedgekayakandcanoe.com>
To: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov
Date: Fri, Apr 24, 2009 4:46 PM
Subject: Low Flow Concerns

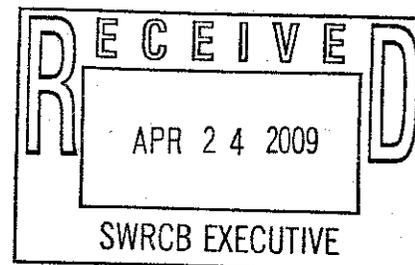
Dear Chairman Hoppin and Members of the Board,

As the owner of one of the largest and most established canoe and kayak outfitting services on the west coast I am deeply concerned about the reduction of flows on the Russian River. For the past 55 years, River's Edge (formally Trowbridge) has been providing excursion trips on the Russian River between Asti and Healdsburg. We service tens of thousands of guests per season, including hundreds of scout and youth groups.

Recreation is a very small industry in comparison and cannot absorb the hits that larger industries can. Dismissing the recreation aspect of this "Wine Country" will impact all tourism based businesses. At least 50% of our clients either lodge, dine, shop, and wine taste while they are visiting this area.

I am distressed by the impending impacts related to Order 2009-0027-DWR and modifications in permit terms that would reduce those impacts. The reduction in flows will cause severe impacts to water quality, recreation, community water systems, over-summering juvenile salmon and Steelhead as well as the lower River economy that depends on a healthy Russian River. The low flows and unhealthy conditions of the river will combine to create conditions that will totally deny access to the Russian River to hundreds of thousands of people.

Whether seeking escape, adventure or exercise from one of a half



dozen companies providing wonderful self guided day trips, to the myriad of beaches and gravel bars along the river that offer a place to cool down during our hot summer days for the thousands upon thousands of families, we, the citizens who live, work and recreate along the Russian River also have a right to enough water for our benefit.

Our practices are not destructive to the life and well being of the river. Each day during the summer, thousands of people w/ kayaks on the roofs of their cars make their way to all points along the Russian River from Ukiah to Jenner to paddle, relax and enjoy the natural beauty of our river. The large vast majority barely leave even a footprint on the river.

Your decision to lower the flow below 90 cfs without requiring major cutbacks in water use from all communities that use Russian River water is unjust and prejudicial. We support the well being of all communities who live in the river and along the river. We do not take our water for granted. We know what a special resource we have. We celebrate the river and its water almost every day.

We are the only ones who are being told there is a very serious water shortage. No other community is being asked to take drastic actions because no one in government is mandating it. Your decision will take away our precious water, because no one wants to cut back from irrigating vineyards, watering lawns and golf courses, and being generally wasteful of water. Serious cutback in water use by the contractors should also be mandatory under these circumstances. If we are going to be a 'green' society, then it means that we

all share in the bounty when we are prosperous and we all share some of the pain when we have shortages, especially critical shortages.

During the summer, I employ five people who take home paychecks that affect thirteen people. I am one of many businesses in the tourism industry that rely upon the vibrant health of the Russian River. This decision to cut flows to 35 cfs will have such an adverse affect not only on the river and its ec-system but also an adverse affect on some many people during what is already tough economic times. This does not make a bit of sense. It will create an unbelievable, unnecessary strain upon our whole community. Large groups of people will be devastated by your decision. Please understand this.

For that purpose, I urge you to reconsider the implementation of this order, in order to reduce the impacts from reduced flows under Order 2009-0027-DWR. We urge you on May 6 to take action to protect water quality and beneficial uses in the Russian River.

Specifically we urge you to:

- Increase the minimum flow to 90 cfs
- Mandate strict water conservation for all contractors and their customers
- Increase frequency of chemical water quality monitoring to every two weeks with results posted promptly on a public website to proactively prevent water quality problems such as algae blooms from increased nutrient concentrations

- Include new provisions in the order to require flow changes in response to violations in water quality standards or as needed to protect juvenile ESA listed fish over the summer, the water agency released water to protect grapes from frost on April 14 to 16th so we expect increases to protect water quality as well

- Installation of additional gauges as needed to ensure instantaneous flow compliance levels are maintained, in 2004 and 2007 compliance levels were violated under previous orders

- A minimum of 25% mandatory conservation for SCWA customers and all users downstream of Dry Creek to help maintain flows and conserve water in case of multi-year drought.

- Mandatory conservation by all permitted water diversions upstream of Dry Creek including agricultural and rural residential diversions and streamside wells pumping underflow

- Additional prohibitions in the Order on diversions that are not permitted in critically dry conditions or if needed a separate order restraining those unpermitted diversions to protect water storage in Lake Mendocino and maintain higher flows

- Keep order prohibition on commercial turf irrigation in SCWA service area and expand to include all commercial turf using water from the Russian River

We believe that modifying the order to include these provisions will

improve protection of water quality, juvenile endangered fish and likely result in somewhat higher flows due to reduced diversions. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Lollie Mercer (Owner)

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