

North Coast Water Board to consider \$6.4 million fine against luxury resort developer for Clean Water Act violations

December public hearing scheduled after settlement negotiations fail

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HEALDSBURG -- After settlement negotiations broke down between the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and the developer of the 258-acre Saggio Hills resort over [the alleged discharge of millions of gallons of highly turbid water into Russian River tributaries](#), the regional board scheduled a December public hearing to consider the proposed \$6.4 million fine.

“Despite our efforts to settle this matter, the parties have been unable to resolve disputed factual matters and the North Coast Water Board has reissued the complaint,” said Claudia E. Villacorta, North Coast Water Board Assistant Executive Officer. “It is our goal to settle enforcement matters as expeditiously as possible.”

The hearing to consider the amended complaint will be conducted December 10-11. Sonoma Luxury Resort LLC has the option to pay the proposed penalty, propose a settlement or supplemental environmental project, or contest the proposed penalty.

At the hearing, the regional board will consider the amended administrative complaint against the developer, Sonoma Luxury Resorts LLC, that includes new evidence of three additional unauthorized discharge events not in the original complaint. This increases the total discharge volume from 6.6 million to 9.4 million gallons and the proposed fine from \$4.9 million to \$6.4 million. The investigation by board staff found major violations of the federal Clean Water Act and stormwater permitting program that threatened vulnerable salmon populations and harmed water quality in tributaries of the Russian River.

A copy of the [amended administrative complaint](#) is available for review on its enforcement website.

Owners of construction sites larger than one acre must enroll in the stormwater permitting program, which among other things, requires hiring a “stormwater professional” to design and install erosion and sediment controls. Failure to design, employ and maintain best management practices that prevent or minimize pollutants from discharging off site can result in sediment-laden stormwater that threatens to smother aquatic animals and habitat, alter or obstruct flows that could lead to flooding, and reduce water clarity.

The [North Coast Water Board’s](#) mission is to develop and enforce water quality objectives and implement plans that will best protect the region's waters while recognizing our local differences in climate, topography, geology and hydrology.

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