

6088 Elk River Road
Eureka, CA 95503

20 March, 2009

Matt St. John, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
mstjohn@waterboards.ca.gov

Dear Mr. St. John and North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board:

I support your continued listing of Elk River (Eureka Plain Hydrologic Unit) as a 303(d) watershed severely impaired by silt and sedimentation.

In the early 1970's I worked on an organic farm near Elk River Courts in the middle valley, and in 1973, for a magazine article, interviewed Mr. Wrigley and walked his apple orchards in the upper valley. When we revisited the valley and bought a house on Elk River Road in fall 2007, I was shocked at the erosion damage that had been allowed to occur. One house the realtor showed us, on the South Fork, had no potable water, a condition we later learned is common in the upper valley due to sedimentation and run-off from Pacific Lumber's logging operations. After heavy rain, like many valley homes, it was not accessible due to flooding. Mr. Wrigley's daughter now presides over dying orchards, not to mention the gardens and wells and salmon spawning grounds that have been smothered in silt. Meanwhile, in the closing months of 2008, PL was having a liquidation sale, and for weeks we watched as their trucks hauled the forest past our front door, all under the approving eye of our state and federal regulatory agencies.

Yesterday I walked along the Elk River estuary, from the railroad bridge out to the bay and back along the river. Three days after a storm the river was still murky, visibility a foot or two, with what appeared to be large clumps of submerged algae moving downstream. Along the bank a fresh deposit of silt coated my shoes. I was given a new rod and reel for Christmas, and have heard another frequent visitor to the estuary estimate that 200 salmon were taken from the river last year, but I won't be fishing there. The river and the life it supports are simply too damaged.

I would think keeping Elk River on the 303(d) list is about the least we can do--although my upriver neighbors don't seem to believe that your agency, the most trusted of our agencies of public trust, is capable of anything more than that. After establishing TMDL limits, they say your board granted PL many bonus acres of Tier II zero-sediment logging, and has now passed this exemption on to Humboldt Redwood Corporation. They say there's no point writing you letters, and I'm inclined to agree. Maybe the next least thing you could do for water quality would be to follow the recommendations of the Little Hoover Commission and reform the way your regional boards make such flawed decisions

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Jerry Martien