

March 24, 2010

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
PO Box 2000
Sacramento CA 95812-2000

Protest Regarding: Notice of Petition Requesting Modification to Water Rights Permits for Sonoma County Water Agency by Modifying the Minimum Instream Flow Requirements: Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950 and 16596 (Applications 12919A, 15736, 15737, and 19351.)

Petition Filed: 9-23-09 County: Mendocino and Sonoma Russian River

Dear Friends on the Board,

I'm writing to tell you of my opposition to lowering the flow of the lower Russian River from 125 cfs to 70 cfs in a normal rain year. We have experimented with lowered flows several times in the past few years. It turns the river into a creek in many places. You can't swim in places where usually there is swimming. Last summer, I went to the river a lot, but I hardly got to go swimming because the water was too shallow.

I have lived by the river for 27 years. My husband and I own our home. I feel that the river is an important habitat for people. It is a place where anyone in this whole region can go and relax, cool off, take a picnic, float on his back in the water and look up at the trees. It's like a pressure relief valve for the whole area. From Santa Rosa to Rohnert Park, Sebastopol to Guerneville, the Russian River is the river to go swimming or canoeing in. Teenagers come here, people on vacation come here, wine-tasting adults come here to do something with the kids. Families come with lots of food and umbrellas and stay all day. There are businesses set up around the river- canoe and kayak rentals, concession sales, cabin rentals, and craft stores and restaurants that need the tourist business. And there are homes all along the river- little towns that started out as summer homes that are now year-round communities. It changes things a lot if many areas become unsuitable for swimming.

The Russian River is the swimming pool for many people in this area. Take away the river and we have no place to go swimming. The ocean here is beautiful but too cold and dangerous for swimming.

I don't think that the Biological Opinion takes account of the needs of people. Therefore the Biological Opinion can't be the only criteria for management of the river. I can't see how flows as low as last summer could be beneficial for fish. They have less water to swim and grow in. They have fewer deep cool pools, and fewer places to hide from predators. The pollution is more concentrated with less water. The fish share more space with people and canoes when there is less of a river. I am not convinced that lowering river flow is good for fish. The minimum flow of 125 cfs seems about right as far as people and recreation are concerned. 85 cfs is too low.

I admit to being a little suspicious of the Sonoma County Water Agency, because in the past they have either wanted to be able to take more water out of the river, or be permitted to put more pollution into the river. I feel they don't value the Russian River enough as what it is - a beautiful, miles-long natural recreation area, the beautiful green jewel of Sonoma County.

Please help preserve the Russian River for all of us.

Thank you,

Barbara DeIonno
8175 Park Av
Forestville CA 95436

4-7-10

April 4, 2010
15044 Armstrong Woods Road
Guerneville, Ca 95446

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to protest the lowering of summer water flows to the Russian River.

I have been a resident on the Russian River for 32 years and in all that time have never seen the river at such an appallingly low discharge. It is horrendous what this lowering is doing to the water, the animals, and the habitat.

There is much more algae than previous years. I understand that the toxic blue-green algae are being found at many popular sites. This could only be because of the dangerously low water levels. The odor is much more intense. And I've noticed that there are fewer frogs when I kayak around. Plus I cannot take my kayak to many of the areas I use to go. I hit bottom frequently and the stench is very offensive in many places. The summer tourists seem much less for the area also.

I am asking that the cfs be kept to at least the 125 cfs discharge of previous years and more studies done before any cutbacks are made.

A full environmental review should be held before any more water is cut back from our wonderful Russian River.

Thank you,


Kim K. Pistey

Subject: River Stories**Date:** Sunday, April 4, 2010 2:04 PM**From:** LdelC <mompeach@comcast.net>**To:** <rrwpc@comcast.net>**Conversation:** River Stories

I was about ten or eleven years old when we moved to Sonoma County from San Diego. We got here in the summer of 1969. My mom had to work, so my brothers and I were sent straight away to summer camp with the Boys (& Girls) Club where we camped for a couple of weeks on the west side of Wohler Bridge. (Good Clean Fun, Yes?) During the seventies, every spring I would cut school and make my way to the Hacienda Bridge where I spent probably the most enjoyable hours of my life flying off the rope swing that was once attached to the underside of the bridge. Later, I would spend some of my days off at the "nudie" beach back on the east side of Wohler. My sons father and grandfather have caught actual steelehead from Steelehead Beach area. I could see the rocks underneath the streams up on Fred McMurray's end of the river when on trailride campouts with Sebastopol Wranglers. I LIVED at Squaw Rock for a time. Took baths in the river at dawn; even drank the water. Then I moved away to the work-a-day world. When I returned...it was like entering a foreign land. No Trespassing signs and fences guarding beach access. NO BEACH ACCESS?!?!?!?! No fishing without a liscense displayed visibly on your person...I have been back here six years and have seen two steelehead. Fishing for what? The mud is so slippery in some areas, it is as if we had an ExxonValdez episode right here on the river and the ludwigia (sp?) choke what is left of the smaller beaches. Low flow makes the water thick and nasty feeling. You can't see your hand in front of your face with goggles on. What ARE those brown foamy sludge patches anyway? The first year we were back here, all the dogs got yeast infections in their ears. (River Bend 2004). One year, I had wildlife flocking to the dogs' water bowls because there was so much chlorine in the water due to flooding etc., the little animals were constipated. Check it out for yourself. I am a full advocate of the choice to die at home, but I have cleaned up hillsides of medical waste and debris. If people REALLY cared about our river, we WOULDN'T OWN beaches. We WOULDN'T allow low flow, and we WOULDN'T allow constant dumping of chemical waste especially during crush season. Thank you...

In addition to the enclosed form letter concerning the Russian River, I have the following comments to make. It should be noted my family has owned a summer cabin in the Summer Home Park area of the Russian River for over sixty years, and during that period I have spent anywhere from weekends to the whole summer at the river. It should also be noted that I am an avid beachgoer and fisherman. That being said, I feel I am pretty well qualified to speak to the current pathetic state of the river during the summer. The people in charge of managing the resources of the river should be ashamed of what they have done to what was once a wonderful resource, and now are trying to make it just about worthless.

The river used to be a wonderful place to swim, fish, canoe, or just hang out on the beach. Now in our area with this low flow the smallmouth bass fishery is virtually nil, the canoeing is difficult, and swimming isn't much fun with all the algae (either attached or floating in the water). There is also an increasing population of invasive plants along parts of the shoreline. Up until a few years ago I used to love to take my canoe out and troll for smallmouth bass. I used to be able to paddle under our temporary bridge just about any time of day and hook a bass-No More. I gave my canoe away in disgust a couple of years ago since the fishing has gotten so poor. By August it becomes impossible to troll with all the algae floating in the water. You put your lure in the water, and within a minute it is covered with algae. Last summer the fishing got so bad one couldn't even catch a carp at our beach. Carp fishing used to be a lot of fun for the youngsters at our beach. It's gotten so bad it is getting to be a challenge to have our 4th of July swim races since the river is so shallow by then. By August last summer you could stand on our bridge and see everything on the bottom. In all my years, I've never seen the river that low. What is really scary is that last summer the flow was never as low as was permitted and conditions were terrible, and now you people want to make this permanent. I'm all for Steelhead and Salmon, but there is a lot more to the River than those two fish species. It amazes me that just about every time I drive around the area surrounding the River I either see a new grape field being planted or new housing units under construction. The approval for new vineyards or housing is insane given our limited water resources. From what I have read, Sonoma County has absolutely no idea how much ground water is being used.

I urge you not to make the low flow a permanent proposition. You are ruining what was once an absolutely wonderful recreational area. You should all take a canoe trip down the river in August and talk to people along the way.

Please do the right thing!

Robert A. Campbell
11710 Oak Road
Forestville, CA 95436

Lloyd Guccione
15270 Orchard Road
Guerneville, Ca. 95446
869-2935

April 7, 2010

**Attachment to Protest Regarding:
Notice of Petition Requesting Modifications to Water Rights Permits
for Sonoma County Water Agency by
Modifying the Minimum In-stream Flow Requirements:
Permits 12947A, 12949, and 16596
(Applications 12919A, 15736, and 19351)**

I am in agreement with the position, concerns, and calls/protest of Ms. Brenda Adleman and the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee, and other members of my communities of the lower Russian River, who view Sonoma County Water Agency's Petition as potentially severely deleterious to both water quality and the economy of the region/locale.

Currently the Monte Rio Wastewater Task Force of the Community Development Commission of Sonoma County is addressing defining issues/problems associated with the lower river and inclusive with this is the potential negative (adverse) impact of low flows upon impairment status of sections of the river under 303(d).

I request that the period of public input and protest be indefinitely extended until:

1. The environmental report is available and the public is allowed a minimum of 90 days following its public availability to comment.

2. Independent study of upstream and adjacent source, distribution, impact and other related conditions for nutrients, algae and plant blooms, water temperature, pathogens, pharmaceuticals, and other contributory factors affecting water quality and quantity is concluded, released to the public, and certified. Currently available studies are piece-meal, inconclusive, have questionable methodologies, and have been framed in their scope by agencies and entities with a particular interest in a set outcome.

I am additionally very concerned that the SCWA is being unresponsive to legitimate local concerns and that its program for water conservation has failed to include conservation of water resources by failing to include domestic, commercial, and agricultural detergent, phosphate, and other source products identification. This is meant, in part, to mean the identification by brand name retail and wholesale products whose use is contributing to the nutrient enrichment of the Russian River Watershed and the implementation of a program for either the elimination of such products and/or the promoting of alternative (bio-friendly-neutral) products.

Concern must also be mentioned regarding National Marine Fisheries and their program/agenda and its impact upon other agencies and regional/local/locale interests in analysis potentials and solutions. In other words the current situation is froth with conflicting assessments and 'solutions' that have are very highly potentially adversarial.

Public confidence in the "process" appears to be low. Also, public concern seems to be growing over regulatory agendas being driven by external political considerations (including bureaucratic "turf" battles) than by the health and good of locales; including the fiscal/financial restraints and impacts.

Please deny the Petition.

Sincerely yours,



Lloyd Guccione

My experiences at the Russian River June through September 2009 during low flow:

My family and I own a home at Summer Home Park on the Russian River. Last year, the water was lower than we had ever seen it.

Upstream from our beach there were many large underwater plants that had never seen before.

There was a much greater amount of green algae floating in the water. At times it smelled terrible.

None of the neighborhood children caught any large fish. Usually my 11 year-old son catches one decent sized bass (about 10 inches) at the end of each summer.

Mark Guenther 4-5-10

Mark Guenther

11849 Redwood Rd

Forestville, CA 95436

April 5, 2010

Bianca & Thomas Kolonusz-Partee
15440 Old River Road
Guerneville, CA 95446
707.887.2534

RE: Russian River Protest to Petition Requesting Modification to Water Rights Permits
for Sonoma County Water Agency By Modifying the Minimum Instream Flow
Requirement...

PAGE 2 of 2

Born and raised on the Russian River my husband and I have recently settled here. Knowing first hand the richness of the Russian River for the wildlife and people that live in the community along the river I am against the manipulation of the flow of the Russian River. The claim for preserving three species of fish through controlling the flow of the River is not validated and is too dangerous to the other parts of the ecosystem that rely on the flow of this river. Is the water being diverted elsewhere for use and are those who are benefiting supporting this change? It is extremely disappointing to come back to what I consider home only to have people making incredibly stupid decisions to control a natural resource putting animals, people and the natural environment in danger.

I learned to swim in the Russian River in Monte Rio when I was a little girl. I learned to rowboat at the mouth of the river in Jenner in High School. Summer is an important memory to me and much of that is wrapped around the long days spent in the River. As an adult I hope to bring that joy to a future generation. My husband and I are fixing up our house across the street from the Russian River outside of Guerneville. We were drawn to this house because of its closeness to the River and potential for kayaking and swimming in the summer. Now I am worried that the river kept at low flow will be dangerous to my family and I.

This issue must be considered more closely and with input from those of us who it affects directly.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

 4/5/10
4.5.10

Bianca & Thomas Kolonusz-Partee

Brian Grant
9000 South Street
Monte Rio, CA 95462

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
PO Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

May 11, 2010

Protest Letter Regarding,
Notice of Petition requesting modification to water rights permits for Sonoma County
Water Agency by modifying the minimum in stream flow requirements:
Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950 (Applications 12919A, 15736 and 19351)

To whom it may concern,

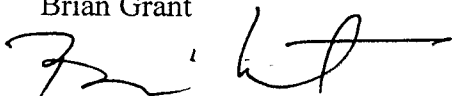
I am a 13 year resident of Monte Rio, California a small town located on the lower Russian River. My family and I use the Russian River throughout the year for recreation and the river plays a large role in our daily lives. We have had the luxury of canoeing the River from Cloverdale to the Ocean with frequent water excursions in our local lower River area. The alteration of the flow levels will have a serious impact on the ability for the public to enjoy the River. We have observed a several large blooms of Ludwigia in the lower river area between the towns of Rio Nido to Duncans Mills. This invasive plant species will continue to choke the oxygen from the river as the water temperatures rise and the flow levels decrease. These blooms will limit access to habitats for many species including the Coho and Chinook salmon as well as Steelhead trout, all populations that breed in the river.

In the Summer of 2009 I began observing the flow levels of the Russian River via the Hacienda monitoring station on the California Department of Water Resources, data exchange center website. Most of the month of July and August the flow levels fluctuated between 30-50 Cubic Feet per second. These artificially low water levels are a result of the Sonoma County Water Agency redirecting the water from the River. The Agency has no information at this time to evaluate the impact the lowered flow levels will have and are having on the local species.

The impact the significant reduction in flow levels will have on the local ecology and the overall health of the watershed is entirely unknown at this time. There has been no analysis of the water quality data collected to date. I am protesting the modification calling for lowering the Russian River summer flows in the River from 125 cfs to 70 cfs during a normal rain year. More years of data are needed before permanent changes are implemented.

Sincerely,

Brian Grant



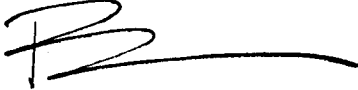
Rebecca Radtke
1819 Polk Street #185
San Francisco CA 94109
May 11, 2010

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS
P.O. BOX 2000
SACRAMENTO, CA 95812-2000

To Whom It May Concern:

As a resident of the San Francisco Bay Area since 1995, I have taken many trips to the Monte Rio and Guerneville area to visit friends who own property on the river. I grew up on a man made lake where algae blooms were a constant problem, and love swimming in the Russian river where flowing water helps keep the river clean and healthy. While I do believe we need to take measures to help protect our fish habitat and restore their population, I am very concerned that lowering the flow levels, as proposed will do more harm than good to both the fish and the people that use the river.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Rebecca Radtke

I HAVE OWNED MY PROPERTY ON THE BANKS OF THE RUSSIAN RIVER FOR THIRTY YEARS. DURING THAT TIME I HAVE SEEN MANY CHANGES IN THE RIVER AND THE COURSE IT HAS TAKEN.

THE INVASIVE PLANT LIFE HAS CONTINUED TO GROW, SO MUCH SO, THAT PART OF OUR RIVER CHANNEL HAS BEEN OBSTRUCTED.

MY HOUSE IS ON A SIDE CHANNEL OF THE RIVER. WE ARE WEST OF THE SUMMER BRIDGE IN EAST GUERNEWOOD HEIGHTS. THERE IS AN ISLAND BETWEEN SEVERAL PROPERTIES AND THE MAIN PART OF THE RIVER. THE WATER HAS ALWAYS BEEN LOW IN OUR CHANNEL, NOW WITH THIS ENACTMENT, IT WILL BE EVEN LOWER. THERE IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SWIM. FOR THIS REASON, I ASK YOU TO KEEP THE RIVER AT ITS PRESENT HEIGHT.

Paul Olson

16830 Center Way
Guerneville 95446

Dear Sirs:

I've lived along the Russian River in Monte Rio for over 60 years and have witnessed many changes going on in the River. In the 1950's & 1960's the River at Monte Rio's public beach was at least 12 feet deep in the middle of the channel between the beach and the Highland Dell Hotel. There were two docks that you could dive from, and a rope strung from one dock to the other to warn of deep waters. Now that same public beach is called the "Monte Rio Kiddy Beach" because of its shallowness—no docks, no ropes but lots of moss and algae! People can be seen ankle, knee or waist deep in places that once was over one's head! This due in part to the buildup of silt from various negative conditions going on up stream, i.e. gravel mining, bottom release from dams, agriculture, etc.. That's not to say that the River was healthy back in the 50's, it was muddy, smelled of dead eels, and no ducks were ever to be found swimming around. Maybe due to the fact that the Department of Fish and Game began a "trash" fish eradication program in 1954 in the River from Healdsburg to the East Fork above Ukiah. Rotenone, poison, was sprayed which suffocated the fish by affecting their gills. According to an article dated November 12, 1956 in the Ukiah Daily Journal this was an experiment done to kill off all the undesirable non-game fish but nearly all the fish in the river were killed!! Came the late 1970's, 80's and 90's when osprey, ducks, turtles, otters, among others seem to have proliferated to the enjoyment of many. Recently, in the 2000's when I've kayaked or canoed from Guerneville to Monte Rio not only do you have to get out and walk in various places because the River has become so shallow but what exists now are blooms of algae, thick moss and an invasive plant called Ludwigia. With the completion of the Coyote Dam in 1959 the State asked Sonoma and Mendocino counties to specify what flows they wanted and according to the Ukiah Daily Journals article, "Water Releases From Coyote Dam for Fish Asked by State", Guerneville needed 125 cfs to maintain its fishery. With the lowering of the water flow to 35 cfs this leads me to conclude the future of River life will be Imperial. We've made mistakes in the past, let's learn from those and move in a more responsible way.

Sincerely,

Doreen Atkinson

1896 2 Upper Terrace
Monte Rio 95462

During the summer of 2009 I swam or kayaked in the Russian River almost daily at a beach near my home. During June & July 2009 my grandchildren were staying with me and also swam in the river several times per week. As the summer progressed, we observed algal blooms - to the extent that it became impossible to swim without becoming entangled. This has never happened before to this extent - and I have been swimming at that beach since 1980, every summer! Also I have never before been able to wade completely across the river before in spots where I have always been able to swim.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kaufman

Andrea Kaufman
14529 Redwood Lane
Guerneville 94946

State Water Board,

4-2-10

From:
Robin Johnson
14514 Memory Dr
Rio Nido 95471

I have been enjoying the river
since 1996. Over the last
couple of years I have
been shocked by the below
listed sites while kayaking
& swimming around Rio Nido.

- increase in blue-green
algae growths floating on
top of the water. (Years ago
one could see small algae growths
along the shore AT the end of season).
Recently, algae growths are wide-spread
and from late Spring thru Fall.

- increase Ludwigia clumps.

- Don't see/hear Frogs or River
otters.

- These changes can't be good for
people OR fish. Dan. Johnson

I care deeply about the health of the Russian River and the wild life that populate it. Last summer^{July to Aug., 2009} we noticed extremely shallow water in our area, especially towards Duncan Mills. There were many areas with massive overgrowth of invasive grasses. We kayak several times a week and want to continue doing so, observing the abundant wildlife well adapted to the pre-summer '09 levels. Please please do not allow the reduced flow in the summer to become a permanent reduction.

Sincerely

Martha Haler
Willow Creek Rd
Jenner

Karen Cox
16252 Main St.
Guerneville 95446

For the 1st time, I had
to tell our customers that
Johnson Beach had been
posted because of high
bacteria - many times I
had to warn customers
about this - In all my
years on the lower Russian River
(15 yrs) I have never seen so
many large algae ~~growths~~ growths - If
(low flow) is detrimental to the
health of people, the natural habitat
and business - Who does it benefit -
The water Agencies? That's not enough
to pollute the river

Dear Board

I WORK IN Guerneville For over 12 years. Last year, lots of visitors were freaked because of high bacteria at Johnson's Beach. They went home early from trip. I stopped going in river 2 years ago because it smells bad. This isn't good for people, business + poor Fish, NO MORE LOW Flow please.

Cindy Amsick

2105 Cazadero Hwy.
Cazadero, CA 95421

Sincerely,

Gary Bodum
(Signature)

April 3, 2010
(Date)

I have been a Sonoma County Parks Volunteer at Steelhead Beach on the Russian River for almost five years. I now walk from my home to the Park at Steelhead Beach five days a week. My duties include trail maintenance & notifying the rangers of any problems I see. Doing this helps keep me sane.

Last summer (2009) for several days I arrived at the boat launch area of the park and a notice was posted that due to excessive bacterial levels swimming was not advised. The notice was up for several days. I assume the low flow contributed to this situation. While the boat launch was posted, Children's Beach & West Beach in the west end of the park and a few hundred yards downstream & where a majority of people swim was not posted. Lowering flows even more can only exacerbate this kind of problem.

Thanks for your consideration

Gary Bodum

8150 Park Ave
Forestville 95436

4-5-10

Chopper an Irish Setter who LOVES
to swim — went for a swim in the river
in back of 20290 River Blvd in Monte Rio,
and was ill for about 3 days — this occurred
last summer (2009)

To our looking at the river — it seems to
be greener

Pete / Sandy Nesterake

20290 River Blvd.
Monte Rio 95462

OUR RETREATIONAL USE OF THE
RIVER WAS ALL BUT ELIMINATED
LAST YEAR BECAUSE OF LOW WATER
NEAR OUR PROPERTY AT VACATION BEACH
AREA IN GUERNEVILLE. WE DID NOT
USE OUR KAYAKS AT ALL FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN OVER 25 YEARS AND
HARDLY WENT SWIMMING AT ALL....
HAD TO USE THE RIO NIDO POOL

INSTEAD! WATER IN RIVER WAS MUCKY
& DIRTY ALL SUMMER.

Bess Neimcewicz
17640 Orchard Ave
Guerneville 95446

Please note:

This past summer, during low tides our floating dock was completely beach. In addition, our house in Dunsmuir Mills (26580), Hwy 116, Water front showed "numerous," very large algae blooms, which were not present in years past. These underwater blooms were very unsightly, and actually interfered with the launching of canoes and kayaks. The River has changed over the last few years, and, in our opinion, not in a beneficial way.

~~Willis~~

Willis Clarke (contributed picture
in Report)

8210 Country Lake Dr
Orangevale 95662

KAYAKING IS MY SPORT IN THE VERY
POLLUTED RUSSIAN RIVER. IN MY YOUNGER DAYS
I WOULD SWIM UNDERWATER + WATCH THE FISH
IN THE RUSSIAN RIVER. NOW I TRY NOT TO EVEN
PUT A FOOT IN THE POLLUTED RUSSIAN RIVER.

Michael Genais
17969 Sweetwater Springs Rd
Overnerville 95446

3/31/10

In addition to the concerns listed, I am most particularly concerned that increased algae will exacerbate methylation of the huge mercury deposits within the rivers silt.

The legacy of mercury mining over 100 years.

The mines of the ghost town of Mercury are flooded to great depths - est @ 500'.

The stream that has its confluence with Fifes Creek @ the foot of Sweetwater Road flows through the incompletely roasted opal tips from one of the largest & long lasting mercury mines.

Our Sweetwater springs (municipal) wells are sunk in gravel at the rivers edge.

No-one seems to be testing our water at the appropriate time i.e. @ its warmest & when the runoffs churn up the bottom in the early winter.

P.O. Box 508
Monte Rio 95462

Thank you
Bruce S. J. Maher

3-24-2010

Health issues:

Grandchildren, from swimming and playing in the river mud, have had numerous pink eye infections and the youngest granddaughter has had recurring staphylococcus infections.

Both needed medical attention. The staphylococcus infections has been serious and she and the parents, were advised, to stay out of the river water.

We feel, the river has become a huge pollution issue.

Maryann & John Oldham

Home address:

1845 Anne Way
San Jose, Ca 95124

Summer Home Park Corporation
Dr Kevin B Sawyer, president
646 Fremont Ave
Los Altos, CA 94024
(650) 948-5355

April 5, 2010

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Re: PROTEST REGARDING NOTICE OF PETITION REQUESTING
MODIFICATION TO WATER RIGHTS PERMITS FOR SONOMA COUNTY
WATER AGENCY ("SCWA") BY MODIFYING THE MINIMUM INSTREAM FLOW
REQUIREMENTS; PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950, AND 16596 (APPLICATIONS
12919A, 15736, 15737, AND 19351) PETITION FILED 9-23-2009, COUNTIES OF
MENDOCINO AND SONOMA, AFFECTING THE RUSSIAN RIVER

Dear Water Board,

Summer Home Park is a community of 150 homes including two beaches and a virgin woodland greenbelt totaling about 220 acres on both sides of the Russian River in the "mid-river" area proximate to Forestville, CA, and about 2 miles down river from the SWCA's existing water extraction pumps, known as the Mirabel pump station.

The 150 homeowners utilize their homes and the beach primarily as vacation homes, and the majority are long-term families, some tracing back 100 years to the very beginning of the Russian River resort development. Protruding from our beach is a massive rock, affectionately known as "The Rock," which has been a focus of beach photographs for over 100 years. In a recently compiled book on Summer Home Park, it is quite striking to see the reduced summer time flow of the river at The Rock. Years ago, The Rock sat well off of the beach, and you could canoe around it, and there was a diving board affixed to The Rock. In recent summers, The Rock sits high and dry; it is inconceivable that a diving board be placed on The Rock. We also have a dock built 50 years ago, to hold canoes during summers, built at what was then the waterline during summer. That dock typically now sits six feet above the old water line.

I cannot translate how many more cfs it takes to raise the river six feet in the area of Summer Home Park, to the summer level of years gone by, but I can tell you that the river was better for recreation, held far more quantities and varieties of fish, and was superior in every respect to the recent summers.

In the strongest possible terms, we protest the modification by which SWCA would reduce its Russian River summer flows in the lower river from 125 cfs to 70 cfs during a normal rain year, and to as low as 35 cfs in a critical dry year.

In short, we understand that SWCA does not wish to pour its inventory of stored water into the Russian River as that reduces their saleable inventory in a marketplace where potable water is scarce. However, the pending action sets a new normal for the foreseeable future, without regard to SWCA's ability in any future year to support a higher flow (i.e. SWCA would be free to sell water rather than raise the cfs if it had the reserves to so choose), let alone a different balance of what is in the River's best interest and SWCA's.

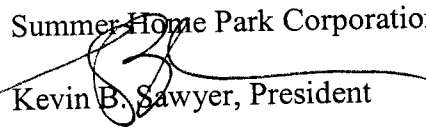
We understand the minimal summer flows have been in the range of 35-70 cfs during the recent past summers. At this level, downstream of the Mirabel pumps, the river becomes a series of interconnected warm ponds. For recreational purposes, swimming and diving are negatively impacted, and canoeing involves "portage" carries over the shallowest portions. We have noticed an increased level of adverse reactions from presumably more concentrated bacteria, which apparently also thrive in the warmer temperatures – increased rashes and infections requiring prescription antibiotics to resolve (where topical treatments worked previously), and particularly among toddlers (and dogs) an increase in adverse reactions to ingesting summer water.

We are concerned that, coupled with flood control management at the dams, the river's otherwise free flow is restricted both summer and winter, and the scouring of the riverbottom has been so reduced that the river is shallower due to both sediment build-up (not being washed out in the winter) as well as lower water flows in the summer. In addition to recreational beneficial uses of the water being negatively impacted by the sedimentation build-up and lower flows, we do not believe that cumulative negative impacts to the watershed, fish, and related wildlife have been adequately described.

On a very related issue, we are aware the TMDL ("Total Maximum Daily Load") studies are scheduled by the RWQCB, and obviously we are concerned that less dilution, due to lower flow, will raise the pollutant levels and force consequences for the effluent concentrations in the Basin, particularly as AB885 regulations are promulgated and enforced (re: human waste) and also agricultural runoff concentrations and all other pollutant levels would rise not by higher pollutant loading, but by less dilution due to lower flow. Setting a minimal 35-70 cfs would mean that the RWQCB must use these levels in its TMDL analyses. Simply put, to the extent SWCA is allowed to reduce river flow, then, notwithstanding direct impacts on recreation and watershed health, SWCA needs to accept responsibility for mitigating to non-significant levels the quite foreseeable consequences of currently-allowed pollutant levels shifting to concentration levels which are actionable. These impacts may also increase the economic impacts many-fold, as the impacts affect sewer system upgrades, changes in agricultural practices, etc.

We have sent a copy of this protest to the Sonoma County Water Agency.

Summer Home Park Corporation


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