

CITY OF SANTA ROSA

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LETTER 49

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**DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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Santa Rosa City Council, BPU,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
c/o City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Ave./Santa Rosa 95402

Dear Council, BPU and Corps members, September 24, 1996

Comments that follow are re: 1996 DEIR/EIS, public comment opportunity, Sept. 24, 1996, Finley Center, Santa Rosa.

Comment #1, refer to DEIR/EIS Vol. 1, 1-33

001

The Draft uses the word "estero" to refer to each of the estuaries of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Although each estuary is, in fact, by name called "Estero", the word "estero" does not seem to be recognized nor used by the public as another way of saying "estuary". Therefore "estero" may not convey the functional ecological meaning to the public as "estuary" does. For CEQA and NEPA purposes of adequately informing and facilitating involvement of the public and public decision-makers, it seems that two changes are appropriate: first, whenever "Estero Americano" and "Estero de San Antonio" are used, the phrase "the estuary" should precede them (thus modified, the reader would read "the estuary Estero Americano" and "the estuary Estero de San Antonio"); second, whenever "estero" (or plural form, possessive form, etc.) is used, "estuary" (or its plural, etc.) would be used instead.

Failure to make this change will be regarded as a significant inadequacy of the document!

Comment #2, refer to DEIR/EIS Vol. 2 contents listing

002

When the reader seeks to investigate noise impacts of the project or its components, the Draft states, "No supporting documents produced". In fact, there is documentation of significant adverse public reaction to and concern about Project components noise potential and impacts and of substantial public question about whether or not landowners and/or occupants of property potentially sited for wastewater pumps/pump stations had ever been and adequately been informed about the potential noise impacts of the pumps.

The relevant documentation is in the "Draft Summary Feedback Reports, Santa Rosa/Subregional Long-Term Wastewater Project EIR/EIS", dated February 23, 1996 by the

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inclusion of its cover letter to its recipients. The relevant dialogue is recorded under "Roundtable #2, LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION / PUBLIC SERVICES / NOISE / AIR / ENERGY, November 16, 1995, appearing on pages five through eight (pp. 5-8).

002
(cont.)

The level of public interest and the specificity of the concerns about expected pump station noise levels, it seems factually significant and legally necessary to include a thorough reporting and evaluation of these impacts and the public's interest in and concerns about them in the EIR/EIS.

Comment #3, DEIR/EIS Vol. 1, 2-21 and Vol. 2, 4.2-8 regarding Irrigation Conservation Management Programs (ICMPs) and Vol. 1, 1-36, 37 regarding the Sensitive Biological Resources Conservation Program (SBRCP) and Revegetation Program (RP)

003

It seems possible during the life of the Project and in later years that political and economic circumstances might occur which would result in putting in jeopardy the funding for continuance of the ICMPs, the SBRCP and RP. If such reduction or elimination of funding for any or all of these programs occur, then it is likely that the monitoring and mitigation actions necessary to prevent or mitigate environmental impacts covered by an affected program would be impaired.

The EIR/EIS needs to describe in what way(s) impairment of the operation of these programs is avoided or remedied in order to satisfy the need to present impacts avoidance, minimization, monitoring and mitigation schemes which adhere to legal and regulatory guidelines, as well as to Project design and operation expectations. Just as a tangible part of a Project component or facility and any given Project operating procedure needs and is expected to be feasible and sustainable for the life of the project, these programs need to be demonstrated to be politically and economically feasible and sustainable.

Comment #4, DEIR/EIS Vol. 1, 1-21

004

The attrition of irrigation land from the treated wastewater reclamation program is discussed. Here as well as elsewhere in the Draft, e.g., in discussions of the ICMPs, there is no mention of continued impacts monitoring of attrited lands and natural resources, e.g., ground and surface waters and biological resources, which were previously monitored.

It seems to be apparent that potential impacts of the use of the treated wastewater have a significant potential to persist following attrition, making continued

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monitoring prudent and necessary. It also seems possible that soil management practices would affect these potential impacts for sometime following attrition, so that ICMPs and impacts monitoring be developed and operated to include post-attrition practices, monitoring and reporting.] 004 (cont.)

Comment #5, DEIR/EIS Vol. 1, 1-31, 32; Vol. 2, 4.2-15, and; Vol. 15, 4.18-1, 2 005

In the Draft Vol. 1 on 1-31 is the following: "Storage reservoirs for agricultural irrigation are not specifically addressed in the Sonoma County General Plan or Zoning Ordinance. Based upon the function of the reservoirs as an integral part of agricultural production and the presence of other agricultural reservoirs in similar zones, it appears that the reservoirs will be consistent with the General Plan and zoning...."

Likewise, the Draft Vol. 2, 4.2-15, as the assertion "The Sonoma County General Plan is not specific regarding consistency of large storage reservoirs within an agricultural land use designation. Because the reservoirs are for the purpose of supporting increased agricultural production, this document concludes that the storage reservoirs are consistent...."

From a comprehensive reading of the Draft, it appears to be substantially misleading and factually incorrect to assert that the proposed storage reservoirs "function...as an integral part of agricultural production" in the Project area. Project history and development criteria belie this (DEIR/EIS Vol. 1, 1-1, 1-2, and 1-19; Vol. 2, 4.2-15). The proposed reservoirs are designed to store treated wastewater as a component of the total Project. The Project is proposed to serve the current and future needs of an urban/suburban community. The General Plans of the System's component communities and guidelines imposed by the RWQCB are repeatedly sighted for Project origins and fundamental design criteria.

When the proposed storage reservoirs are identified for what they are, it is also no longer possible to assert that they are like "other agricultural reservoirs in similar zones", nor that "the reservoirs will be consistent with the General Plan and zoning".

Only the facts will be acceptable in the EIR/EIS. The proposed Project is not an agricultural development and conservation project; it is driven by the General Plans encouraging urban/suburban growth of the communities served by the Subregional System.]

In the light of these facts, questions about ag lands with Williamson Act contracts and about consistency with Sonoma County zoning persist and even become more significant as real obstacles for the proposed Project alternatives.] 006

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quoting the Draft again, this time from vol. xv,
4.18-1,2, we are told,

007

"The Subregional System includes the cities of Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Rohnert Park and Cotati. The system currently serves...uses within each city's incorporated boundaries, and could serve uses within the Spheres of Influence of the member jurisdictions if these are annexed....There are also unincorporated areas which are served....

"This section presents existing conditions and buildout projections implied by each jurisdiction's General Plan as of April 1994. The total projected growth...was used as the basis for determining the size and physical specifications of each alternative....

"Certain sectors have a larger impact on the generation of wastewater, therefore it is important to understand which sectors are projected to experience the greatest growth in order to more accurately estimate the sewage treatment capacity that will be required to serve total growth." End of quote from Socio-economics.

Factual and consistent, clear presentation in the Draft and Final EIR/EIS is a first and necessary action among all of the choices and actions needed to create workable Project alternatives.]

Comment #6, DEIR/EIS Vol. 2, 4.2-6, 7 & 8

008

Regarding the ICMP for agricultural irrigation components of the proposed Project, significant impact questions are raised about the practical usefulness of both the trace elements loading criteria and soil erosion T value criteria.

Actual public and legal tolerance of trace element loading of soils and of soil erosion may not conform to these trace elements criteria and the USDA soil erosion T value criteria. Certainly the public is aware of the actual soil erosion that has occurred and that continues on farms operating under USDA guidelines, and trace elements presence is a matter of growing concern in regard to public and environmental health.]

It is appropriate for the Draft to incorporate comprehensive data on the actual consequences of ICMPs which adhere to these criteria. This is important to the public to know how ICMPs may historically affect the environment; this history is also important to farmers who might consider alternatives. It certainly affects perception about feasibility of any agricultural irrigation component in a watershed affecting the resources of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.

009

See also Draft EIR/EIS Vol. 2, 4.2-22, 23 and Vol. 1, 1-32.]

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