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April 28, 2008

Ms. Karen Niiya, Senior Engineer  
Division of Water Rights  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Niiya:

The Sonoma County Winegrape Commission represents nearly 1800 vineyard owners in Sonoma and Marin Counties. We have been actively involved in developing a watershed approach for managing instream flows in Sonoma County. We feel this approach can address existing problems in obtaining water rights and in protecting threatened and endangered species of fish. The current water rights process is not working to the detriment of landowners and the fish.

The proposed policy attempts to prescribe methods to maintain instream flows, applying a single approach to all streams in the 5 Northern California Counties. We feel the generic approach proposed will be costly to implement and may not address the water rights backlog that currently exists. The watershed approach alternative is one we have been pursuing in Sonoma County for two years. The group is called the Salmon Coalition and includes landowners, regulatory agency representatives and environmental groups. We have relied on research by Dr. Adina Merenlender and her team to model stream flows in order to determine when and how much water might be diverted during peak winter flows in order to reduce direct appropriation of water for irrigating vineyards from streams in the summer. The group has also surveyed streams and prioritized projects that will remove barriers and improve fish habitat. We feel such stream-specific and local initiatives for a watershed approach to managing instream flows is superior to the generic alternative outlined in your proposed policy.

We ask that Sonoma County be supported in its efforts to implement a watershed approach to water rights that will serve agriculture and better manage instream flows that support salmonid recovery in Sonoma County streams. The approach is adaptable to other watersheds in other California counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nick Frey".

Nick Frey  
President