From: Neil
To: City Council Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Santa Rosa City Council Oct 21 Mtg
Date: Monday, October 20, 2025 4:59:34 PM
Attachments: Upper Russian River Position Paper.pdf

Dear Mayor Stapp, Vice Mayor Alvarez, Council members MacDonald, Fleming, Banuelos, Okrepkie and Rogers

In case an item comes up on the
"11.1.3 Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) - Water Advisory Committee "

about the recent Oct 6 SCWA update of "Statement of Interests",

When you read the "Statement of Interests", items 2 and 16, please read a snapshot of the context described in "Upper Russian River Ecological Integrity Position Paper " with basic publicly available data

Thankyou for considering this item, Neil Hancock, Cotati.

attachment : Upper Russian River Position Paper.pdf

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Neil : New email [redacted], still works [redacted]
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Upper Russian River Ecological Integrity Position Paper – Neil Hancock 1.0b

I would like to raise issues of the Upper Russian River ecological integrity while you are considering the "Statement of Interests" at Nov 3, 2025 Sonoma Water WAC/TAC meeting.

With expected changes in the diversion from the Eel to the Russian River and the recent 2025 NMFS Russian River Biological Opinion, now is the opportunity to update the goals for managing the Upper Russian River (URR) so that there is an increased focus on resilient water supplies for all use types and improving the ecological integrity of the river. The primary challenges are:

- how do we refocus efforts on the need to restore the ecological integrity of the natural systems for all, while balancing growing demands on a limited water supply;
- how do we manage a limited water supply when there is limited transparency and accountability in use; and
- who pays for water infrastructure that might be needed? While all physical infrastructure has a maintenance life, green infrastructure where appropriate can be less costly and is typically multi-benefit. For a fly over of the RR click here.

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) declared the Russian River as fully appropriated in 1989. A variety of complicated interests rely on water flows of the URR, particularly in the hot, dry months—an issue exacerbated by poor accounting of water availability and little transparency in water needs. One tool that has been tested by the SWRCB is the voluntary water sharing program. A better understanding of water demands, community education, and other changes are still necessary before such a program can operate without Emergency Declarations. Flows during our driest periods could be better managed with a broader portfolio of tools. Options could include:

- A better water extraction demand forecasting tool for flow management from Hopland to Healdsburg, possibly using more transparent water rights with the new Waterboard Upward system. Large users could forecast their usage in a tool that informs water releases;
- monitoring by river section of underground storage (gaining or losing) during proposed water release changes or flow pulses;
- more onsite storage ponds to capture winter precipitation for summer use, and
- improved water use monitoring, metering, and reporting requirements, to name a few.

Specific Water Cities and Districts Published Use

Potter Valley Irrigation District (Pop. 1,700): This district serves more than 272 agricultural customers and 6,960 acres. It has a SWRCB license to divert 22,670AF between April 1 & Nov

15. A Nov 2021 study suggested alternative supply options to help address reliability in the face of a two-basin solution.

Ukiah (Pop. 16,072): UWMP documents show the city's total water consumption was 3,030AF in 2020. It documents a RR water right of 16,507AF. The Ukiah Valley Ground Water basin, a Holocene alluvium, receives an annual aquifer recharge of about 25,300AF per year, and size in excess of 400,000AF. Ukiah identifies 30,000 neighbors and 8 water agencies including Hopland in Ukiah Valley.

Cloverdale (Pop. 8964): UWMP documents show the city used 1,320AF in 2020 for a population of 9,213 people. It documents water rights of 27,92AF from RR and 73,653AF from Big Sulfur Creek.

Sonoma Water Contractors

For a comparison Sonoma Water UWMP, Sonoma Water Contractors with 600,000+ customers, used 44,530AF in 2024, and have water right to RR of 75,000AF/yr. This supply is drawn principally from Lake Sonoma, and is withdrawn at the Wohler-Mirabel collector. See #1 Statement of Interest.

Lake Sonoma's water storage is 250,000AF. Lake Mendocino storage is 125,000AF and it is ~68 river miles upstream of the Dry Creek confluence.

The information in this brief has been obtained from public-domain sources. If any information is used for public policy, its validity should be verified separately. Any opinions expressed are those of Neil Hancock