

**From:** [Neil Hancock](#)  
**To:** [\\_CityCouncilListPublic](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Oct/24/2023 Item 7.1 UPDATE ON RUSSIAN RIVER WATER FORUM AND POTTER VALLEY PROJECT  
**Date:** Monday, October 23, 2023 1:05:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [231023 Santa Rosa Item7.1 SonomaWater New Fel-Russian Facility.pdf](#)

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(a PDF version attached incase its easier to read)

Dear Mayor Rogers, Vice-Mayor MacDonald, Council Members Alvarez, Stapp, Fleming, Rogers, Okrepiek

A recent presentation on UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences “State of the Salmonids: Status of California’s Emblematic Fishes” concludes that California will lose more than half of its native anadromous salmonid’s and a third of its inland taxa in the next 50 years under current conditions. The current conditions are already appalling to where they have been 100 years ago. Restoration of these culturally, economically, and ecologically important species is a priority for many residents in Northern California.

With the PGE decommissioning their Eel River dams, there is a tremendous opportunity to support salmon recovery in the Eel River, but the Eel River’s ecological integrity must be maintained to do so.

There are some additional documents about Sonoma Waters Partnership  
<https://www.sonomawater.org/RegionalPartnership>

See the **Proposal .. (P-77)** and **Press Release** (August 7, 2023). The **Proposal** at paragraph (2) and also in the presentation, suggest “*fully implements a co-equal objectives of fish migration and water diversions*”. The presentation before you is largely about the mechanics of water diversions to the communities in the Russian River watershed, little is said about how this project might benefit Eel River Tribes and communities other than to note that PG&E is planning to remove their dams.

We are in a complex Mediterranean climate, with variable rainfall. It seems likely, that while maintaining the ecological integrity of the Eel River, some winter stream flows could be transferred to the East Fork Russian River and stored in Lake Mendocino, however, it is critical that any scheme to do so is broadly supported as ecologically viable by state and federal permitting agencies and by communities in the Eel River watershed.

As a rate payer part of the Retail Customers that have reduced water demand significantly, I hope we are not going to be subsidizing unsustainable agricultural usage in the East Fork and upper Russian River with our rates. The primary benefits of this scheme seem to primarily apply to the upper Russian River, and storage in the relatively small silted Coyote Dam which forms Lake Mendocino rather than to the much larger Lake Sonoma where much of Sonoma Water’s supply is stored. The cost burden of any future diversion project must not be unfairly allocated and how those costs are shared needs to be clear and transparent.

If you are concerned about the appalling state of fish migration and endangered fish species, I would suggest for any letter of support for Sonoma Water partnership, you direct staff to include

**“Any diversions of stream flow from the Eel River to the Russian River, should only be of a time and magnitude that maintains the ecological integrity of the Eel River.”**

This is in line with the statement in the press release from Bill Whipple, President, Round Valley Indian Tribes Tribal council – (Cotati Council packet Pg 25) ““Our goals are to restore the Eel River watershed from its degraded condition and to restore our salmon fishery to sustainable and harvestable populations. ....”

Finally the Los Angeles times has an opinion piece of the big picture benefits of 1600 dam removals, dams built with the wrong assumptions, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-10-19/dams-colorado-klamath-river-glen-canyon-removal-projects>

Dams have lifespans and it is clear the Eel River dams are not worth saving. If a water diversion is to be continued, we must do so in a way that does not continue to drive salmon extinct and push the impacts of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties’ unsustainable water use onto neighboring watersheds and communities.

Sincerely

Neil Hancock, Cotati. Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

## References

SOS II Fish in Hot Water. <https://www.casalmonandsteelhead.org/>

State of the Salmonids [https://watershed.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk8531/files/inline-files/SOS%20II\\_Final.pdf](https://watershed.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk8531/files/inline-files/SOS%20II_Final.pdf)

Background information <https://freetheeel.org/>

Sonoma Water “Proposal” updated August 3, 2023 -

[https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/PVP%20Proposal%20\(2023-08-03\)\(final\)%20\(002\)%20ADA.pdf](https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/PVP%20Proposal%20(2023-08-03)(final)%20(002)%20ADA.pdf)

Sonoma Water Press Release August 7, 2023 Regional Partners Submit Proposal to Preserve Potter Valley Diversion

and Fish Passage Options

[https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/08-7-23%20Press%20Release\\_Potter%20Valley%20proposal\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/08-7-23%20Press%20Release_Potter%20Valley%20proposal_FINAL.pdf)

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Neil Hancock

Re Council Meeting Oct/24/2023 Item 7.1 UPDATE ON RUSSIAN RIVER WATER FORUM AND POTTER VALLEY PROJECT

Dear Mayor Rogers, Vice-Mayor MacDonald, Council Members Alvarez, Stapp, Fleming, Rogers, Okrepkie

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We are in a complex Mediterranean climate, with variable rainfall. It seems likely, that while maintaining the ecological integrity of the Eel River, some winter stream flows could be transferred to the East Fork Russian River and stored in Lake Mendocino, however, it is critical that any scheme to do so is broadly supported as ecologically viable by state and federal permitting agencies and by communities in the Eel River watershed.

As a rate payer part of the Retail Customers that have reduced water demand significantly, I hope we are not going to be subsidizing unsustainable agricultural usage in the East Fork and upper Russian River with our rates. The primary benefits of this scheme seem to primarily apply to the upper Russian River, and storage in the relatively small silted Coyote Dam which forms Lake Mendocino rather than to the much larger Lake Sonoma where much of Sonoma Water's supply is stored. The cost burden of any future diversion project must not be unfairly allocated and how those costs are shared needs to be clear and transparent.

If you are concerned about the appalling state of fish migration and endangered fish species, I would suggest for any letter of support for Sonoma Water partnership, you direct staff to include

**"Any diversions of stream flow from the Eel River to the Russian River, should only be of a time and magnitude that maintains the ecological integrity of the Eel River."**

This is in line with the statement in the press release from Bill Whipple, President, Round Valley Indian Tribes Tribal council – (Cotati Council packet Pg 25) ""Our goals are to restore the Eel River watershed from its degraded condition and to restore our salmon fishery to sustainable and harvestable populations. ...."

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Dams have lifespans and it is clear the Eel River dams are not worth saving. If a water diversion is to be continued, we must do so in a way that does not continue to drive salmon extinct and push the impacts of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties' unsustainable water use onto neighboring watersheds and communities.

Sincerely

Neil Hancock, Cotati. Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

## References

SOS II Fish in Hot Water. <https://www.casalmonandsteelhead.org/>  
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Sonoma Water "Proposal" updated August 3, 2023 -  
[https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/PVP%20Proposal%20\(2023-08-03\)\(final\)%20\(002\)%20ADA.pdf](https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/PVP%20Proposal%20(2023-08-03)(final)%20(002)%20ADA.pdf)

Sonoma Water Press Release August 7, 2023 Regional Partners Submit Proposal to Preserve Potter Valley Diversion and Fish Passage Options  
[https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/08-7-23%20Press%20Release\\_Potter%20Valley%20proposal\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sonomawater.org/media/PDF/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply/pvp/08-7-23%20Press%20Release_Potter%20Valley%20proposal_FINAL.pdf)

**From:** [Hollie Smith](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Eel River Diversion Project  
**Date:** Monday, October 23, 2023 4:44:59 PM

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Dear City Council

I can see on your agenda, there is a proposal by a Sonoma Water / Regional Partnership to gain support for plans to save the "diversion" capacity from the Eel River in the midst of PG&E's decommission process. As a resident of Santa Rosa, I have listened to or attended every planning meeting of the Russian River Water Forum since its inception. Why? Because I care about what happens to our water supply, and how we citizens impact the ecology of our area with our water use. It has been a curious and bumpy process to see how various stakeholders try to resolve conflicting needs.

Not every participant in the RRWF supports continuing the "diversion" concept; that said, after dams are removed, it seems likely that some winter stream flows could be transferred to the East Fork Russian River and stored in Lake Mendocino; however, it is critical that any scheme to do so is broadly supported as ecologically viable by state and federal permitting agencies and by communities in the Eel River watershed.

I would hope you ask Sonoma Water & Partnership to include in any plans:

"Any diversions of stream flow from the Eel River to the Russian River, should only be of a time and magnitude that maintains the ecological integrity of the Eel River, and its ability to support proper fish migration."

Sincerely

Hollie Smith, [REDACTED] SR 95401.

**Hollie**

**From:** [drmayhew@comcast.net](mailto:drmayhew@comcast.net)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] UPDATE ON RUSSIAN RIVER WATER FORUM AND POTTER VALLEY PROJECT  
**Date:** Monday, October 23, 2023 4:53:04 PM

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TO: [cc-comment@srcity.org](mailto:cc-comment@srcity.org)

Re Council Meeting Oct/24/2023 Item 7.1 UPDATE ON RUSSIAN RIVER WATER FORUM AND POTTER VALLEY PROJECT

Dear City Council:

A recent presentation on UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences "State of the Salmonids: Status of California's Emblematic Fishes" concludes that California will lose more than half of its native anadromous salmonid's and a third of its inland taxa in the next 50 years under current conditions. The current conditions are already appalling to where they have been 100 years ago. Restoration of these culturally, economically, and ecologically important species is a priority for many residents in Northern California.

With the PGE decommissioning their Eel River dams, there is a tremendous opportunity to support salmon recovery in the Eel River, but the Eel River's ecological integrity must be maintained to do so.

We are in a complex Mediterranean climate, with variable rainfall. It seems likely, that while maintaining the ecological integrity of the Eel River, some winter stream flows could be transferred to the East Fork Russian River and stored in Lake Mendocino, however, it is critical that any scheme to do so is broadly supported as ecologically viable by state and federal permitting agencies and by communities in the Eel River watershed.

As a rate payer, and part of the Retail Customers that have reduced water demand significantly, I hope we are not going to be subsidizing unsustainable agricultural usage in the East Fork and upper Russian River with our rates. The primary benefits of this scheme seem to primarily apply to the upper Russian River, and storage in the relatively small silted Coyote Dam which forms Lake Mendocino rather than to the much larger Lake Sonoma where much of Sonoma Water's supply is stored. The cost burden of any future diversion project must not be unfairly allocated and how those costs are shared needs to be clear and transparent.

There are some additional documents about Sonoma Waters Partnership  
<https://www.sonomawater.org/RegionalPartnership>

See the Proposal .. (P-77) and Press Release (August 7, 2023). The Proposal suggests at paragraph (2) (and on presentation) "fully implements a co-equal objectives of fish migration and water diversions". The presentation before you is largely about the mechanics of water diversions to the communities in the Russian River watershed, little is said about how this project might benefit Eel River Tribes and communities other than to note that PG&E is planning to remove their dams.

If you are concerned about the appalling state of fish migration and endangered fish species, in the Russian Rivers and Eel Rivers I would suggest you ask Sonoma Water to include in any plans :

**"Any diversions of stream flow from the Eel River to the Russian River, should only be of a time and magnitude that maintains the ecological integrity of the Eel River."**

This is in line with the statement in the Sonoma Water Press Release from Bill Whipple, President, Round Valley Indian Tribes Tribal council – "Our goals are to restore the Eel River watershed from its degraded condition and to restore our salmon fishery to sustainable and harvestable

populations. ...."

Finally the Los Angeles times has an opinion piece of the big picture benefits of 1600 dam removals, dams built with the wrong assumptions, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-10-19/dams-colorado-klamath-river-glen-canyon-removal-projects>

Dams have lifespans and it is clear the Eel River dams are not worth saving. If a water diversion is to be continued, we must do so in a way that does not continue to drive salmon extinction and push the impacts of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties' unsustainable water use onto neighboring watersheds and communities.

Sincerely,

Dan Mayhew

[REDACTED]

Sonoma, CA 95476

**From:** [Jaime Neary](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Cc:** [Don McEnhill](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Russian Riverkeeper Comment Re: Russian River Water Forum & Potter Valley  
**Date:** Monday, October 23, 2023 5:00:31 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[RRK\\_SRCity Comments Item 7.1 \(10.23.23\).pdf](#)

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Good afternoon,

Please find attached Russian Riverkeeper's comments on Item 7.1.

Best,  
Jaime

**Jaime Neary** || Staff Attorney  
Russian Riverkeeper  
[REDACTED]

It's your River—we protect it!





October 23, 2023

City of Santa Rosa  
City Council  
69 Stony Circle  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

*Submitted via email to: [cc-comment@srcity.org](mailto:cc-comment@srcity.org)*

**RE: Council Meeting Oct/24/2023 Item 7.1 UPDATE ON RUSSIAN RIVER WATER FORUM AND POTTER VALLEY PROJECT**

Dear City Council:

On behalf of Russian Riverkeeper (RRK), I welcome the opportunity to submit these comments regarding the Russian River Water Form and Potter Valley Project. Russian Riverkeeper is a local nonprofit that has been successfully protecting the Russian River watershed since 1993. Through public education, scientific research and expert advocacy, RRK has actively pursued conservation and protection for the River's mainstem, tributaries and watershed. Our mission is to inspire the community to protect their River home, and to provide them with the tools and guiding framework necessary to do so. For that reason, we submit the following comments.

A recent presentation on UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences "State of the Salmonids: Status of California's Emblematic Fishes" concludes that California will lose more than half of its native anadromous salmonid's and a third of its inland taxa in the next 50 years under current conditions. The current conditions are already appalling to where they have been 100 years ago. Restoration of these culturally, economically, and ecologically important species is a priority for many residents in Northern California and throughout the State.

With the PG&E decommissioning their Eel River dams, there is a tremendous opportunity to support salmon recovery in the Eel River, but the Eel River's ecological integrity must be maintained to do so.

We are in a complex climate, with variable rainfall, seasonal patterns, and unpredictable future climate change. It seems likely, that while maintaining the ecological integrity of the Eel River, some high winter stream flows could be transferred to the East Fork Russian River and stored in Lake Mendocino; however, it is critical that any scheme to do so is broadly supported as ecologically viable by state and federal resource permitting agencies and by communities in the Eel River watershed.

Urban users have strongly tackled the need to reduce water demands in response to recent dry periods via conservation actions and through water rates that are reflective of necessary efficiency upgrades. Urban users have also been subject to real-time metering and reporting for decades now so there is readily available data to support those urban use reductions. With urban users taking on these burdens, it is important that any future diversion structure or financial needs related to the Potter Valley Project not result in the subsidization of unsustainable



agricultural usage in the East Fork and upper Russian River with urban user rates. The cost burden of any future diversion project must be fully transparent and must fall on those that will benefit from any future changes.

Those being asked to support any future proposal, be it via funding or public support, must have assurances that all waters being diverted and paid for with public funds are fully accountable. This includes, but is not limited to: how much water is being diverted to the Russian, who is diverting that water from the Russian, where water is being diverted from the Russian, how much is being diverted from the Russian, when that water is being diverted from the Russian, and how it is being used. This accounting must be transparent.

Dams have lifespans and it is clear the Eel River dams are not worth saving at this point as resource agencies, PG&E, and local scientific experts have all determined. If a water diversion is to be continued, we must do so in a way that does not continue to drive salmon extinct and push the impacts of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties' unsustainable water use onto neighboring watersheds and communities.

Further, it is incredibly important that any future diversion and use of that water be subject to reasonable conservation measures to help ensure long-term sustainability within our own watershed. In drier years, we must be able to function within our own means and take necessary actions to reduce use equitably across the watershed so that beneficial and tribal uses are not negatively impacted. This includes looking more holistically at our available water supplies and water demands to identify direct and indirect impacts of our decisions elsewhere.

Lastly, even if a project proposal for future diversions is successful and a funding source is identified, there is still no guarantee that a winter, run-of-the-river diversion will be available for the Russian River to benefit from. The further we get into the future and as climate change continues to impact our region, the reliability of any diversion is likely to continue to diminish just as it already has for the last 100 years. Our community must come together to achieve long-term sustainable water supply.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment and welcome any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jaime Neary".

Jaime Neary  
Staff Attorney  
Russian Riverkeeper

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don McEnhill".

Don McEnhill  
Executive Director  
Russian Riverkeeper