

An environmentally sensitive stewardship organization protecting river, tributary and watershed property rights.

Russian River Property Owner's Association
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Wastewater Issues

By Katie Wetzel Murphy

It seems that every government body has a wastewater plan these days. The city of Santa Rosa has the Incremental Recycled Water Project which actually addresses direct discharge and reuse issues fore treated wastewater from Santa Rosa, Cotati, Rohnert Park and Sebastopol. The County water agency is on the verge of releasing the draft environmental impact report for the Northern Sonoma County Agricultural Reuse Project. This would involve storage and agricultural reuse of treated wastewater from a myriad of county and city water agencies, possibly including Geyserville, Cloverdale and Healdsburg as well as Santa Rosa and other municipalities. Healdsburg officials are developing their own plans for agricultural reuse of their treated wastewater in

Dry Creek Valley. The Sonoma County General plan update is addressing wastewater issues as well it encourages urban reuse (purple pipe) as a component of reuse.

On the surface, we would like to think that this is not our wastewater, so this should not be our problem. While many Russian River Property Owners may not live in these municipalities, we do use services in all of them. Our customers, our suppliers and our families need these larger municipalities to survive and wastewater and its disposal are a fact of life. We may not see the need for treated wastewater to irrigate our vineyards and farmlands now, but in 50 years, we may feel differently. Some areas in our water rich north county currently need more water reliability nonetheless. Reuse may also give us bargaining power with county

regulators that have far greater ability to control agricultural practices. Agricultural reuse of highly treated water is an efficient use of this commodity, but it only makes sense if it's dispersed at the choice of the farmers involved. The questions we need to ask our about our existing water rights, how they are respected and if reuse will be voluntary. Water is a precious commodity and it is in everyone's best interest that it be used wisely.

Critical habitat designations of endangered and threatened species leave our water resources open to restriction by governments in and out of our county. Powerful politics surround water, both fresh and recycled. We must keep on top of every aspect of the process and determine what we will and will not accept from the various and numerous agencies.



Officers of Russian River Property Owner's Association

President — Al Cadd
Vice President — Pete Dayton
Secretary — Johanna Vanoni
Treasurer — Lee Gunnerson

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PO Box 2124
Healdsburg, CA 95448

Editor — Wendy Dayton, Vista Designs, LLC

Dry Creek Decisions

By Wendy Dayton

Currently people living and working along Dry Creek have three possible scenarios that the SCWA and other agencies are considering as additional water sources. Part of the plan has the SCWA petitioning the state to release additional 26,000 acre feet (from 85,000 to 101,000 acre feet) from Lake Sonoma. This would most likely result on one of the two first ideas being implemented. The third, recycling water from Santa Rosa for irrigation use in the valley is the least appealing solution.

Dry Creek can be widened. This is extremely costly and will require that creek side property owners lose precious land. At an estimated cost of approximately \$680 million it should not be the first choice. This is needed because the extra water flow being requested from Lake Sonoma is too fast for the fish, harming Dry Creek's salmon and steelhead fisheries particularly in the summer when flows were historically low - or non-existent.

The second solution involves running a pipeline from Lake Sonoma. It would remove the need to widen the creek or further upset fish habitat. Flows in the river must be carefully regulated to avoid further damage to endangered species. It does require construction through Dry Creek valley. No particular path has been considered as yet.

The third and more troubling solution involves laying a pipeline from Santa Rosa carrying recycled water. Like the last possibility this requires extensive construction on a well traveled narrow road; similar to the construction headaches experienced during the Geysers pipeline construction through Alexander valley. Of even more concern though is the quality of the water. While the city of Santa Rosa can remove the "organics" in the water, they currently do not have the technology to remove heavy metals, prescription drugs and other waste by products from their discharge water.

Do you really want to drink wine made from grapes that have been irrigated

with water containing contaminants? Richard Rued stated that when he uses recycled water for frost protection in his vineyard, the "water makes (his) fingers crack". If the water cannot be discharged through soil percolation, why do they think its okay to use it for direct watering of crops? There is a lack of information about the health consequences of long term use of the water; shouldn't we find out before we even consider this plan?

NORTH SONOMA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL REUSE PROJECT

The project description and draft Environmental Impact Report are available at:

www.sonomacountywater.org



Annual Dinner
General Membership Meeting
5pm Wed. March 28th
Villa Chanticleer Annex
Keynote Speaker
Dr. Gregg Horton
(NOAA Fisheries)

SONOMA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATES

Information on upcoming General Plan update meetings can be obtained at :
<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/index.html>

STAY INFORMED!

Salmonid Coalition

Sonoma County Salmonid Coalition Working Towards Conservation and Certainty

The Sonoma County Salmon Coalition is a broad based group of interests that have come together for the purpose of creating a conservation agreement that would conserve protected salmonids and salmonid habitat in the Alexander, Dry Creek and Knights Valleys sub-basins of the Russian River Watershed.

The Russian River Private Property Owners Association is key to the Coalition's success. Crucial to conservation is the need to identify sites where restoration and enhancement of habitat projects should occur. Nearly 90% of the uplands

associated with these watersheds are privately owned. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) along with private property owners and representative organizations, seek to identify sites for these projects. The intent is to identify projects that benefit the species as well as the property owners.

The Coalition is also working with the Sonoma County Water Agency and the water contractors to identify conservation measures and funding sources for habitat protection and enhancement within these three sub-basins. Additionally, the use of reclaimed water for agriculture irrigation and urban irrigation are currently being explored.

Another key issue under discussion is the suggested stream setbacks appropriate to protect salmonid habitat. A sub-committee made up of members of the coalition, staffed by NMFS, will make recommendations to all coalition members as to setback distances.

NMFS has yet to determine the regulatory certainty that they are going to provide to landowners who choose to participate in the conservation agreement. However, to secure landowner participation, the coalition along with regulatory Agencies, understand that regulatory certainty for landowners will need to be determined.

Clean Water Act

Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Enforcement

By Johanna Vanoni

Coming to the Russian River Watershed in the next few years will be implementation and enforcement of this Act through Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Action Plans.

The TMDL process provides a quantitative assessment of water quality problems, contributing sources of pollution, and the pollutant load reduc-

tions or control actions needed to restore and protect the beneficial uses of an individual waterbody impaired from loading of a particular pollutant.

TMDL Action Plans will address several stream problems in the Russian River Watershed such as: sedimentation, temperature, pathogens, mercury, low dissolved oxygen and nitrogen.

Improving TMDLs will enhance fish habitat and aid in the recovery of endangered fish species. It should also help produce better water in the Rus-

sian River for human activities such as swimming and boating.

Matt St John is the North Coast Water Quality Control Board's acting lead TMDL Unit.

Matt can be reached at (707)570-3762 or MStjohn@waterboards.ca.gov

Become a Member of the RRPOA, sign up a friend or renew your membership!

Name _____	Amount Enclosed:
Parcel Address _____	_____ \$45 small parcel/ Homeowner
Mailing Address (if different) _____	_____ \$90 large parcel/ Commercial
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	_____ \$25 Associate Member (non-voting)
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Mail to: RRPOA, PO Box 2124, Healdsburg, CA 95448

Message from our President - Ever Changing River

THE RUSSIAN RIVER , EVER CHANGING YET ALWAYS THE-SAME

If you are a city dweller, it is a beautiful playground and a source of our water. If you are a property owner in it's flood plain, that is not always the case. Most of the time it is our friend but when it turns on you it can be treacherous! Presently, the river in Alexander Valley is approaching the same condition that it was during my childhood (sure sign of age when we start talking about the good old days.) The gravel bars were covered with willows and there were fair sized trees at water edge in many places. Just the kind of river we would want it to be. It was a great place to swim, fish, and play. The pool to riffle ratio was about the way fish would order it to be if they could. The only drawback was that it was so lonely. You rarely saw another person. I do remember one occasion seeing a couple neighbors with a glass bottomed box and a long handled gig vainly trying to spear a steelhead in a deep hole.

I am sure there were more fish in the system then than there are now, but just how many more is only a guess. There was no official count then and there is not much in the way of a count now. I do know that the ratio of fish to fisherman now is not in favor of the fish.

As time passes, the trees at the edge of the stream are growing as is the brush on the gavel bars. This makes for a good playground, you may even see a jackrabbit or a coyote. We used to find a sandy spot behind a clump of willows close to the water and have neighborhood hot dog roasts. Those are some of my fondest memories. Although this may seem ideal, it is a disaster waiting to happen. Normal high waters and minor floods contribute heavily to gravel build up. As the flow encounters a willow clump the water slows down and looses part of the gravel load it is transporting. Down stream of every willow clump you will observe a 2 ft high mound of gravel

about 10 ft long. Thus, the continuation of buildup.

In the Fall of 1937 it was about the same condition as it is today. Then came the BIG FLOOD OF 37. The channel was so clogged with growth and so high that there was no capacity for this tremendous flow. It totally destroyed all of the trees along the bank that we dearly loved.

Water takes the line of least resistance. It was easier to wash away the soft silt under the riparian buffer than to go over the high gravel bars. In those days my grandfather maintained a two to three hundred foot setback. Partly to filter debris and gravel from washing into the orchard, also bulldozers were uncommon and hardly affordable. In just a few days, all of the Riparian setback was gone plus about nine acres of orchard. As the new channel was cut the old channel slowed down and dropped it's load burring the growth and raising the center of the channel even higher. For many years it looked like a desert. At that time there was no flood control, no gravel removal no bank protection. There were not even any so called environmentalists to lay blame.

Subsequent floods through 1963 kept the river in much the same condition. We have not experienced any great floods since then so the river is approaching the same condition as in 1937. The New Year flood of 06 was not a very big event compared to previous events. Had the channel been maintained, the Geyserville bridge would still be there. Although I think the new bridge is great.

I'm afraid we are on the verge of history repeating itself. As one location, the unimpeded water way is narrowed to just 75 feet. A 60,000cfs flow would have to accelerate to about 50 miles per hour to make it through that bottleneck. That won't happen so it will need to seek another route. There again, the line of least resistance will be the old Cotton Wood riparian zone and on to the vineyards beyond. At the

least, this will cause a great amount of damage. Vines will be buried in gravel and debris and the trellis system will be destroyed. It is not impossible that the farmer will find that some of the vineyard has disappeared and a new channel has replaced it.

Migrating fish need a defined channel to follow. A fragmented stream is not beneficial to fish, the environment in general or to the hard working farmer in it's path. When the waters receded from the 1955 flood literally thousands of juvenile steelhead were stranded on dry land.

The River Keeper must have passed by here many times in his boat. Either he does not understand the dynamics of the river or he simply does not care what happens. This upcoming disaster can be easily prevented without resulting damage to fish or the river ecology. To obtain a permit, at this time, to repair this problem, would be impossible. Beyond a doubt River Keeper would be one of the first to protest.

It is our hope that through the Salmonid Coalition we can remove emotion and hidden agendas and proceed with common sense.

I frequently hear folks from other organizations state that the river should be returned to it's natural state. Does anyone know what that is? It was never a freestone trout stream, nor has it ever been a spring creek. In reality, from Cloverdale through Alexander Valley and beyond it has always been a river flowing through an alluvial flood plain of it's own making,



Al Cadd, President RRPOA

Subject to Change Without Notice.

Hope the New Year is kind to all.

Regards, AL