

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

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# Russian River Property Owner's Association

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## 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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RRPOA  
[www.russianriverpoa.org](http://www.russianriverpoa.org)

**Editor** — Wendy Dayton, Vista Designs

## Farmers Concerned Over Reuse Project

**Recycled water could harm crops**  
© Elizabeth Larson, Capital Press, May 17, 2007  
As Sonoma County considers a massive water reuse project, a group of Healdsburg farmers and grape growers are concerned that the project could do more harm to their crops and their fresh water rights. Allan Nelson, Richard Rued, Harry Black, David Fanucchi and Alvin Cadd recently gathered at Nelson's home in the Dry Creek Valley to discuss what they believe are serious problems with the North Sonoma County Agricultural Reuse Project. In March, the Sonoma County Water Agency released its draft environmental impact report on the plan, which proposes annually supplying 7,234 acre feet of municipal wastewater - treated in a three-step process - to as many as 21,500 acres of agricultural lands in the Alexander, Dry Creek and Russian River valley areas. The plan calls for 19 storage reservoirs, eight booster stations and nine distribution pumping stations and 112 miles of transmission pipeline. Brad Sherwood, programs specialist with the agency, said the entire project's price tag is currently estimated at \$385.1 million. The Healdsburg group consists of families who have farmed in Sonoma County for generations. These days, they said, development in Sonoma County is putting a squeeze on them like never before. With those demands come resource pressures and for these farmers, it's not land or market prices that have them most concerned. It's water. The men believe the reuse project would take their fresh water for the county's urban development and leave them with wastewater. They say they would have no problem with the plan if the water were treated to a higher level.

"We'll take the water when you clean it up," Cadd said. Nelson said an added concern is that the wastewater could ultimately contaminate their crops and groundwater supplies, which Fanucchi said would be a problem for future generations. They are also worried about how consumers might view crops treated with wastewater. "There's too much we don't know about this," Cadd said. They've been to information meetings the water agency has hosted on the plan, but they remain skeptical. All of the men agree that they believe the project, in one form or another, will happen. They also believe that eminent domain is likely to be used to obtain reservoir sites. "Ag used to have a lot of say, but we're losing our grip fast," Nelson said. Addressing the Healdsburg group's concerns about danger to their deeded water rights, Sherwood said state water code prohibits the agency from touching the farmers' current water rights and that isn't an agency objective. As to water quality, the tertiary treated wastewater proposed for reuse is extremely clean, said Sherwood. It must measure up to state regulations on what materials can be in it. Any water in the reuse project would meet those standards, he said. The reuse project is a long-term project, Sherwood explained. "The agency has been working with the community for the past several years on this project. We'll listen to everyone." That includes inviting public input on the plan's specifics, such as where storage reservoirs would be located. He said the agency plans to pursue a series of negotiations and easements to gain reservoir locations, rather than use eminent domain - words likely to knot the stomach of most farmers. Water years like this one, which has been extremely dry so far, are an exam-

ple of when the recycled water would be beneficial, he said. Lex McCorvey, executive director of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, said he's heard concerns like those voiced by the Healdsburg farmers - eminent domain, threats to water rights - from others, and the Farm Bureau respects those concerns. "This is such a complex issue that there are no easy solutions." McCorvey said many producers and growers have no idea what changes the project could bring with it and what it could mean for water rights and availability. McCorvey said he believes the Sonoma County Water Agency is "trying to make the best of a very difficult situation" in dealing with county water supplies. He said believes the agency when it maintains it won't use eminent domain. The Sonoma County Farm Bureau's board hasn't taken an official stance on the project, McCorvey said, and it hasn't made comments on the draft environmental impact report, which it is still considering. Generally, the Sonoma County Farm Bureau has supported water reuse, he said. The plan could be a good use for the treated wastewater, McCorvey said. He cautioned, however, that farmers must be careful and not become dependent on that particular water source. McCorvey said Sonoma County is facing an issue that the rest of the state is confronting - the need for increased water storage. "More of the focus and attention needs to be placed on finding more water sources, rather than just managing existing water supplies," he said.

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### PROTECT FUNDS FOR THE WILLIAMSON ACT!

Gov. Schwarzenegger proposed cutting the funding for the act in the May revision of his 2007 budget, but experts say the attempt to gut funding for the state's farmland protection program was "essentially dead on arrival". While the state Senate and Assembly budget committees voted to fully fund the program, the governor continues his threat to "blue line" the funding from the state budget.

**Take Action.** Contact the Governor at:  
Web: gov.ca.gov/  
E-Mail: governor@governor.ca.gov  
Write: The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, Ca 95814  
Phone: (916)445-2841  
Fax: (916) 445-4633



**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!**

## General Plan Update

By Dennis Murphy  
The Sonoma County General Plan Update is moving up to the Board of Supervisors. After four plus years with the Citizens Advisory Committee and Planning Commission a final EIR and update are being prepared by planning staff to be ready in August.

Along with shifting some of the regulations to more logical elements, and expanding some others, there is a new Water Element. Although there was much discussion that a General Plan should be a general document around goals, objectives and policies, there are many specific actions required of the county and its citizens. It will be important for landowners to become knowledgeable of the policies when looking towards the Board hearings in August.

The Water Element has many policies around conservation, exports, imports and reuse. The largest controversy is

well monitoring. Individual private wells and agricultural wells are mostly exempt from county monitoring, but any discretionary permit will trigger the monitoring provisions. Additional studies of groundwater are called for and a cooperative basin study is now underway in the Sonoma Valley.

The impacts of commercial businesses outside of urban areas are tightly regulated, as they were in the 1989 General Plan. Stronger policies have been added for scenic, traffic, biotic, noise, light, historical and water impacts. Wineries are considered agricultural processing facilities, but are looked at as a commercial use none-the-less. As proposed water use will be monitored and visitor serving use such as tasting rooms and public events are regulated. Most of these policies are applied already to any Use Permit to the Planning Department. Private residences will be looked at as to their

visual impacts from county roads. (call this the Invisibility Clause)  
The addition of all streams listed on USGS maps as of 03 for riparian setbacks is the largest change put forth. As proposed, setbacks will generally follow the Vineyard Ordinance, with exceptions still in place for unbuildable lots and biological mitigation plans. A 25 foot vegetative strip along all listed streams is proposed as a minimum setback. The fencing rules were changed to be adaptable to various site specific conditions. It is unclear how any one fence will be treated, but there is a provision for wildlife migration needs in the General Plan.

So, get ready for the August Board of Supervisors hearings. Study how the proposed changes affect you and Sonoma County in general, and be ready to comment in a clear concise manner before the Board.

## RRPOA 2007 General Membership Dinner and Meeting

By Johanna Vannoni

The RRPOA yearly general membership meeting and dinner was held at the Villa Chanticleer Annex on March 28, 2007.

Treasurer and set up committee chairperson Lee Gunnerson reported attendance of 87 members and guests. President Al Cadd thanked everyone who made donations of wine, money and facilities for our use this past year. Al introduced special guests: Family Water Alliance representatives - Founder Sue Sutton, Board Members Vicky Murphy and Mary Gordon; 4<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor Paul Kelley and Sonoma County Sheriff's Deputy Greg Quacchia.

Supervisor Paul Kelley urged RRPOA members and guests to stay involved in County Government especially the 2020 General Plan Update process. President Al Cadd said RRPOA has had a very active year. Board members Al Cadd, Harry Black, Allan Nelson, Dave Fanucchi and Richard Rued have attended many meetings - especially ones to do with wastewater issues and General Plan updates.

Our main speaker Dr. Greg Horton explained his mission working in Sonoma County. He is not employed by NOAA Fisheries, but he is a consultant hired by the Sonoma County Water Agency to re-evaluate the main stem of the Sonoma County part of the Russian River and selected tributaries for prime Salmonid rearing habitat. Dr. Horton and his crew will visit targeted areas in Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley and Knights Valley. After gaining property owners permission he will re-evaluate streams against 10 year old Fish and Game studies to see if these tributaries still meet prime fish rearing

habitat worth spending restoration dollars on.

Dr. Adina Merenlender a University of California researcher based at the Hopland Field Research Center explained a new concept to fit our unique Mediterranean climate. We need to locally store more water from our excess wintertime run off. This means develop more off stream storage by building small dams and reservoirs which store winter run off water allowing it to be available in the dry season for irrigation or heat damage protection to vineyards etc. The idea is to pump less water out of the ground during the dry season allowing water to feed into the Russian River Tributary streams which in turn will enhance summer fish habitat for endangered salmonids. A win-win situation for property owners and endangered fish. This study will aid in changing restoration rules so property owners can obtain permission (and funding) to build this type of water storage.

Also in attendance were Marc Kelley and Carolyn Wasem from the Salmonid Coalition. This Coalition was developed to find a workable solution to the Critical Habitat Designation placed upon the Russian River. So far the Salmonid Coalition has been quite successful in developing co-operative conservation plans for use by Sonoma County property owners. Marc and Carolyn thanked the RRPOA and its Board of Directors for all the help we gave them. Initially Marc and Carolyn were hired by a few local property owners to contact NOAA. They did, and used a fish

restoration plan the Russian River Property Owners Association had already developed as a basis for the plan that was the result. Now we have NOAA-NMFS and the RCD working together - a first. Marc pointed out we are not going to let the fish deprive us of our property rights. Carolyn told us we must work within fish enhancement goals (the Endangered Species Act) and NOAA in order to protect our water rights. She urged us to co-operate with Drs. Horton and Merenlender.

RRPOA member and Sonoma County Planning Commission Member Dennis Murphy gave a brief talk on the County's 2020 General Plan update. (website info is on the first page) He urged us all to study the update material and attend the Board of Supervisor meetings as they start soon. You get one chance to speak so be concise. Pay attention to pump monitoring - you will inherit this when you get a use permit.

President Al Cadd commented on the Wastewater Re-use Plan. He urged we keep an open mind. Eventually methods will be developed to clean recycled water of all contaminants. Right now we are concerned with what may be in the water that could possibly lead to problems later on. Will waste water in reservoirs stagnate and smell? Will there be delivery costs to us that use this water? Can we lose water rights to pump fresh water if we are not using them for awhile?

## RRPOA Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed:  
 Parcel Address \_\_\_\_\_ \$45 small parcel/  
 Homeowner  
 Mailing Address (if different) \_\_\_\_\_ \$90 large parcel/  
 Commercial  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Associate Member  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ (non-voting)

Mail to: **RRPOA, PO Box 2124, Healdsburg, CA 95448**

### Message from our President -

Dear Members and Friends,

Weather-wise, it has been an interesting spring. Summer has started; the grapes look good; the tomatoes are starting to bear fruit and we've been watering for awhile now. Speaking of water brings to mind the Sonoma County Ag. Reuse Plan. This is something that we all need to be aware of and watch closely. On the surface it looks Politically Correct. (and politically advantageous for some.) Imagine a multi million dollar pipeline system connected to a municipal source. We would be leaders in the field and gain worldwide recognition.

We could even say that we are doing it to save threatened fish.

My opinion is that this plan, as presented will give Sonoma County Water Agency a big assist toward their goal of increasing their water right from seventy five thousand acre feet to one hundred and ten thousand acre feet.

Taking well water from Agriculture and replacing it with waste water will be a big help to convince the Water Resources Control Board that we are making the best use of the supply.

I guess that to some folks, shipping more water to Marin County is a best use but I'm not convinced. How can that possibly benefit the average citizen of Sonoma County?

I was unable to attend the last scoping hearing presented by the County but Alan Nelson, Richard Rued and Dave

Fanucchi did a great job of presenting our views. Thanks a lot guys, that was well done!

Cynthia Murray, President and CEO of the North Bay Leadership Council supported the plan as is. She stated that other regions are using waste water with no ill effects. That may be true, but perhaps the problems just haven't shown up yet. This is a long term deal. She also said that we are behind times and need to be educated. Isn't it strange how many times we are told we need education when we disagree with some one?

I wonder if she is aware that Sonoma County Growers are using the latest irrigation technology? Also, it costs a lot of money to pump water so we don't use any more than necessary.

I don't feel that we will escape this dilemma by opposing it. Popular demand and public opinion will eventually force us into it. First of all we will be labeled as Fish Killers. Even though RRPOA is a leader in fish restoration efforts (bet no one will call Marin County fish killers). It's not about the fish it's about who gets the water.

If we are going to be forced into using recycled water, we should band together and force the agencies to clean it up to our standards. However, water quality is not the only problem I can foresee. First of all we will become "Rate Payers of the City of Santa Rosa or the Water Agency. Rates in S.R. have been somewhat unstable and

subject to change. Will we be able to negotiate rates comparable to pumping costs or will we be at the mercy of civil service protected bureaucrats who have no incentive to keep costs down? Then there is the question of dependability, will water be available when it's needed or will it be available at the convenience of the pipeline crew? If waste water is delivered to us in it's present form what will it do to our image as premium grape growers? Have you ever smelled this water after it laid in a closed pipe for a week? These are only examples of many questions that I feel sure will arise. I wonder if the designers of the plan have considered any of our concerns.

I suggest that we all vigorously oppose this plan until it is made into something we can live with. Remember, your Water Right is the same as a Property Right and has a monetary value the same as the land. Do not give it away.



Al Cadd, President RRPOA

Hope all of you have a great Summer, Regards AL