



Friends of the Eel River

California and National Wild & Scenic River www.eelriver.org

Dear friends:

We need your help to bring our valuable and endangered North Coast rivers and fisheries back to health, while setting the stage for effective and sustainable water supplies for all of us. The new water supply agreement is now being reviewed for approvals by each of the 9 water contractors and the Sonoma County Water Agency. Rohnert Park and Cotati have already signed. All our hard work, hopes and plans for improvements to water and watershed management for the next 35 years are being decided now.

On **Tuesday evening Sept. 6, at 7:30pm**, two of these contracting agencies will hold hearings on all or parts of the draft Restructured Agreement for Water Supply ("Agreement")

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Agenda item #14: Potter Valley Project and Its Importance to Continued Operation of the Russian River Water Supply System

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William Massey, President; George Roberts, Manager

Agenda item: Discussion and possible approval of Restructured Agreement for Water Supply

This Agreement between SCWA and the 9 Prime Water Contractors replaces all the prior Amended Agreements (the last was Amendment 11, signed in 2001), and runs until 2040. All Prime Contractors must sign in order for the Agreement to become effective. SCWA Board of Directors (Supervisors) will bat last. The Prime Contractors are: the Cities of Cotati, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sonoma, the Town of Windsor (a new addition to the list), and Forestville Water District, North Marin Water District (NMWD), and Valley of the Moon Water District. Marin Municipal Water District is not a signatory to this agreement, but has their own separate agreement with SCWA.

Read the draft Restructured Agreement for Water Supply ("Agreement") at:

<http://www.scwa.ca.gov/newagreementhome.html>

The Agreement is a binding contract that will shape policy, practices and costs among contractors on their customers' use of water, the Russian and Eel River watersheds, groundwater and growth. The Agreement will obligate ratepayers to pay for the myriad of collection, storage, transmission, and treatment projects, as well as restoration and mitigation projects for environmental damages.

Friends of the Eel River asks you to **demand that the proposed purchase of the Potter Valley Project ("PVP") be deleted from the Agreement**. SCWA has had a long-standing offer to buy the PVP from PG&E:

1. **The financial costs and risks of purchasing and operating the PVP are huge**, likely in the hundreds of millions of dollars, yet remain undefined for local ratepayers. Ask the Board members to reveal the projected costs of decommissioning, or repairing, replacing and updating the PVP. Ask for the costs of installing an effective fish ladder and fish passage past Cape Horn (Van Arsdale Lake) and Scott Dams (Lake Pillsbury). Ask them to provide you with the costs of installing and maintaining an effective fish screen at the tunnel headworks. Ask them to reveal the habitat restoration costs as a result of PVP's damages to the Eel River endangered fisheries. Why should ratepayers assume unknown risks with the Agreement's planned purchase of the PVP?

2. SCWA has repeatedly declared over the years and in court documents **that the water diverted from the Eel River is NOT necessary for water deliveries to Sonoma and Marin county prime water contractors**, but instead is used for water diverters of the upper Russian River. Why should local ratepayers assume the costs and risks of this small, antiquated hydroelectric project for water not used here?

3. Since 1908, **the PVP water diversions have been instrumental in the collapse of the once great salmonid and steelhead populations of the Eel River**. The dams prevent passage of migrating fish to hundreds of miles of cold, clear spawning and rearing habitat upstream, and flows during the summer and fall are reduced to a lethal current of warm, algae and bacterial infested toxic water. The economic losses to Humboldt, Mendocino and Lake counties are well over \$15M per year just for lost recreational fishing and boating activities. It is long past time to end this destructive practice. Why should water contractors continue this obsolete and harmful practice?

4. **SCWA has NO water rights for the water diverted through the PVP**, and the State Water Resources Control Board has continuously denied their applications. The inclusion of the purchasing provision in the Agreement is merely an attempt to shore up political persuasion for future applications.

For more details, history and data, see <http://www.eelriver.org> Attached is also correspondence on these issues from Marin Municipal Water District (to SCWA) and from Marin Group, Sierra Club.

I strongly encourage all of you to attend these meetings, and voice your opinions on the draft Agreement. Ask questions about core policies, costs, and the Agreement's failure to firmly define and address sustainability in our water supplies and watersheds. Ask them to eliminate

wastewater discharges to the Russian River. Ask them to eliminate gravel mining of the aquifer and improve free aquifer storage and natural filtration. Ask them to include mandatory and targeted water and energy efficiencies, not just voluntary conservation. Ask them what a water treatment plant would cost.

Ask them how much the new Agreement will cost you as ratepayers.

For those of you who remember the Amendment 11 battles, and the subsequent public workshops conducted by the Contractors in 2002-2003, you will undoubtedly notice that most of the principles and policy goals relating to watershed management and sustainability of our water supplies have disappeared from this final Agreement. (see <http://www.scwa.gov/publicoutreach.html> for results of those workshops.) The overarching desires of the stakeholders, residents and ratepayers who participated in those hearings was for comprehensive and integrated planning and consideration of environmental impacts, and the promotion of thriving ecosystems. Those goals, as well as others relating to SCWA governance, and system wide goals for the protection of watersheds and water quality have been diluted or removed from the Agreement. That dismissal of broad public input followed SCWA's summary announcement in Feb 2002 that it was drafting its own water agreement, and would not be bound by the contractor initiated public process that started in Nov. 2001. Contractors then started their own meetings with consultants and SCWA, shaping the document now on the table.

These issues and opportunities have not gone away - things have gotten worse, as we well know. The Contractors have the ability to restore broad and specific policies to the Agreement.

This Agreement, combined with the General Plan Water Resource Element, the EIR for the WSTRP, and the Urban Water Management Plans are the key places we can still help shape water policy for the next 2-5 generations. These final choices are yet to be made by the council and board members of the Contracting agencies.

Unlike the Board of Supervisors, your local elected officials are answerable to you and the ratepayers for what they charge you for water supplies. Let them know firmly that you want clear and responsible answers now, before they sign the Agreement.

I will forward more information on other city and district meetings as this goes along. Please put the two Sept. 6th public hearings on your calendars. Attend or write to them. Help make sure that the councilmembers and board members hear from people other than SCWA staff and their respective agency's engineers.

Thanks again to all. See you soon.

Best wishes,

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