

***Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control
& Water Conservation Improvement District***

STAFF REPORT

To: Inland Water & Power Commission
From: Elizabeth Salomone, General Manager
Meeting: Thursday, November 12, 2020
RE: Report on Conservation Efforts including the Water Resiliency Task Force, EIR for D1610 Amendment, and SB 200

Conservation Efforts

At the October IWPC Meeting, an update on conservation was requested. A few of the measures taken by Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District include: *Undertaking an update of the District's adopted Water Conservation Plan and that of all District contract customers. *A Water Resiliency Task Force was formed (see below.) * In response to SB 88, the District installed more sophisticated meters which provide valuable data on diversion practices. *The Board continues to review relevant policies. *Staff continues to stay informed of regional water issues and potential solutions. *Board and Staff continue to engage in conversations with customers and community members to encourage water supply awareness. *The following message was distributed with the November 2020 Board Meeting agenda to all customers and interested parties:

DROUGHT ISSUES:

As you may be aware, we are experiencing below average rainfall and the third driest water year on record in the Ukiah region. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is taking a close look at the Russian River watershed and developing tools to determine possible future curtailments. This is a time to: ***Stay informed* *Stay involved* and *CONSERVE!***

Please contact the District if you would like to be involved in the newly formed Water Resiliency Task Force, leading our region toward enhanced water reliability.

For more Drought and Water Conservation Resources:

Visit Mendocino County Resource Conservation District's website:
<https://mcrd.org/resources/drought-water-conservation-resources> and
<https://mcrd.org/resources/flow-enhancement>

And Sonoma Water Agency's website: <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/>

Additionally, through the Water Resiliency Task Force (see below) the following information has been gathered to document regional conservation methods:

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- Residential and commercial water use assessments for Tribes (current) and small water suppliers (in 2014-15) in the RR watershed.
- Assistance to Tribes in the RR watershed in obtaining free distribution line leak detection (current).
- Free and well attended (30+ people) leak detection workshop for local water suppliers in February 2018.
- Water Wise radio programming on KZYX in 2015.
- Two residential and two ag water conservation workshops in the RR watershed in 2014-15.

California Land Stewardship Institute

To be certified in Fish Friendly Farming Program a grower must demonstrate they use the following BMPs: drip irrigation, regular checks for leaks in their frost and irrigation systems, have legal water rights, have a fish screen compliant with NMFS on any direct diversions, have backflow prevention on all water sources/facilities for chemigation and fertigation and list the total amount of irrigation water per acre per year. If the irrigation amount is over 0.6 AF/acre/year we discuss water conservation with the grower and recommend they use soil moisture monitoring systems to reduce their water use. These BMPs are already applied to 21,000 total acres encompassing 130 farms and 8800 irrigated acres in the Upper Russian River watershed. We currently have a grant that pays rebates for the installation of soil moisture an ET monitoring systems that we will be advertising to growers in this area later this year.

Redwood Valley Vineyards

Redwood Valley Vineyards is a 250 acre vineyard located at 10801 East Road, Redwood Valley, CA. Established by now-deceased Charles Barra 65 years ago in 1955, it is planted to nine varieties of wine grapes. Water for the vineyards is provided by six ponds on the property with a total storage capacity of approximately 185 acre feet of sheet flow water. No water is drawn from either wells or from the Russian River.

CONSERVATION PROTOCOL:

1. Drip irrigation vs. overhead saves around 40% for summer irrigation purposes
2. Tensiometers are used throughout the vineyard to monitor soil moisture.
3. Visual assessment is made for vines moving into the stressed, lack of water status.

Water Resiliency Task Force

The inspiration for forming the Task Force came from a recent State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) staff presentation at a regional Water Managers meeting and their invitation to implement local voluntary actions to reduce impacts on the Russian River. There is no leader of this group, though it is co-hosted by RRFC, Farm Bureau, and City of Ukiah staff. The aim of the Water Resiliency Task Force is to provide a way for local water users to communicate on essential regional water issues. It is a platform for shared interests and is intend to be inclusive and supportive.

The SWRCB is taking a closer look at the Russian River watershed to evaluate current conditions and plan for continued drought conditions. This includes further defining the natural flow of the Russian River to identify appropriate diversions of Project Water. They are asking for a proactive involvement with local stakeholders in preparation, including a more robust analysis of available data and development of an approach to conservation and related solutions.

Their initial assessment from their "*Upper Russian River Watershed Supply/ Cumulative Demands – 7/30/2020*" graph (see attached PowerPoint presentation) is that at certain times, there is not enough natural flow for Pre 1914 and Riparian water rights, (and therefore more junior appropriative rights.) As indicated by the graph, only Project Water under Sonoma Water Agency and RRFC water rights could be diverted from the Russian River at such times. This data is what will inform future curtailments. The SWRCB has indicated their willingness to explore sophisticated curtailments rather than establishing curtailments purely based on the date of the water right.

It was evident from Task Force discussions that there are varying interpretations of how water rights are to be used and extinguished during late summer months and/or droughts and how natural flows are calculated with regard to the Lake Mendocino reservoir. There is increasing concern among local water

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users that there are significant problems with the SWRCB's approach for calculating both supply and demand.

Additionally, the SWRCB is looking for assistance in communicating with diverters to conserve, perhaps even implementing local voluntary action to reduce impacts. They are going so far as to invite conversation with them on our regional coordination efforts such as this task force.

The Water Resiliency Task Force is meeting with the SWRCB on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 and a verbal update can be provided to IWPC at the November 12, 2020 meeting, if requested.

EIR for D1610 Amendment Update

Per Don Seymour, Sonoma Water:

Sonoma Water Agency reached out to the resource agency to address comments received on the initial draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and had a workshop with the SWRCB, F&W, & NMFS to go back over the modeling. An upcoming workshop is expected to go over several new alternatives. Also initiated conversations with SWRCB staff, which is a complete turnover from those who commented on the draft EIR. They are hoping to have the new draft out late spring 2021 and a certified EIR by autumn 2021.

SB 200

In July 2019, Gov. Newsom signed SB 200 (Monning) which created the Safe & Affordable Drinking Water Fund. The bill makes \$130 million available per year through 2030 to help water providers with their operating costs, including consolidating smaller water districts to help improve their management and finances. The bill establishes the fund within the State Treasury, and puts the State Water Resources Control Board in charge of administering the fund and creating the criteria for how the money will be awarded to qualified recipients

More Information from the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA):

<https://www.acwa.com/news/state-water-board-adopts-expenditure-plan-for-safe-and-affordable-drinking-water-fund/> and <https://www.acwa.com/news/acwa-supports-legislatures-approval-of-safe-drinking-water-funding-solution/>

Bill text: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB200