

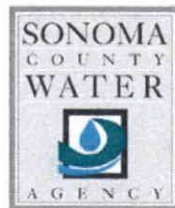
**Water Quality Monitoring Plan
for the Russian River
Sonoma County Water Agency
2012 Temporary Urgency Change**



Russian River Chinook

Prepared by

Sonoma County Water Agency



May 2012

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

By letter dated April 5, 2012, the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) petitioned the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) to temporarily reduce minimum instream flows in the Russian River as required by the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed* (Russian River Biological Opinion, NMFS 2008). NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion concluded that summer minimum instream flows required by Decision 1610 in the upper Russian River and Dry Creek are too high for optimal juvenile steelhead habitat. NMFS also determined that the conversion of the tidally-influenced Russian River estuary into a closed freshwater lagoon during the summer months would provide improved habitat for rearing juvenile steelhead. Given that, the Water Agency requested that the State Board make the following temporary changes to the Decision 1610 instream flow requirements:

- (1) From May 1 through October 15, 2012, instream flow requirements for the Upper Russian River (from its confluence with the East Fork of the Russian River to its confluence with Dry Creek) be reduced from 185 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 125 cfs. The minimum instream flow requirement for the Upper Russian River will be implemented as a 5-day running average of average daily stream flow measurements, with the stipulation that instantaneous stream flows will be no less than 110 cfs. This will allow the Water Agency to manage stream flows with a smaller operational buffer, thereby facilitating the attainment of the flow conditions that the Biological Opinion concluded are conducive to the enhancement of salmonids habitat.
- (2) From May 1 through October 15, 2012, instream flow requirements for the Lower Russian River (downstream of its confluence with Dry Creek) be reduced from 125 cfs to 70 cfs.

By Order dated May 2, 2012, the State Board approved the Water Agency petition. Provision 8 of the Order requires the Water Agency to submit a water quality monitoring plan to provide information to evaluate potential changes primarily to water quality, but also to the availability of aquatic habitat for salmonids, resulting from the proposed long term reduction of Decision 1610 minimum instream flows required by the Biological Opinion. The monitoring plan described hereinafter is submitted to meet the requirements of Provision 8 of the May 2, 2012 Order and in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), to assess potential impacts that could occur as a result of changed flows.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), steelhead, coho salmon and Chinook salmon in the Russian River watershed are listed as threatened or endangered species. Coho salmon is also listed as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). In September 2008, NMFS issued the Russian River Biological Opinion, a culmination of more than a decade of consultation under Section 7 of the ESA among Water Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and NMFS regarding the impacts of Water Agency's and Corps' water supply and flood control operations in the Russian River watershed on the survival of these listed fish species. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) issued a consistency determination on November 9, 2009, finding that the Russian River Biological Opinion was

consistent with the requirements of the CESA and adopting the measures identified in the Biological Opinion.

Studies conducted during the consultation period that ultimately led to this Biological Opinion indicate that summer flows required by Decision 1610 in the upper Russian River and Dry Creek are too high for optimal juvenile salmonid habitat. NMFS also concluded in the Biological Opinion that the historical practice of breaching the sandbar that builds up and frequently closes the mouth of the Russian River during the summer and fall may adversely affect the listed species. NMFS concluded in the Biological Opinion that it might be better for juvenile steelhead and salmon if the sandbar is managed during these times, to allow for the formation of a seasonal freshwater lagoon in the Russian River estuary. Minimum instream flows required by Decision 1610 result in flows into the estuary that make it difficult to maintain a freshwater lagoon while preventing flooding of adjacent properties.

Without the requested modifications to the instream flow requirements, the high summer time flows required by Decision 1610 will continue to jeopardize the recovery of coho salmon and steelhead in the Russian River and its tributaries.

Changing minimum instream flows will assure the maintenance of a natural resource, i.e., the instream resources of the Russian River, by increasing available salmonid rearing habitat in the upper Russian River and Dry Creek, and providing a lower, closer to natural inflow to the estuary between late spring and early fall, thereby enhancing the potential for maintaining a seasonal freshwater lagoon that could support increased production of juvenile steelhead.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Objective of this sampling and analysis plan: Supplement existing data to provide a more complete basis for analyzing spatial and temporal water quality trends due to Biological Opinion-stipulated changes in river flow and estuary management.

4.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

One of the conditions in the Order for the Temporary Urgency Change (TUC) petition states that Water Agency prepare this Water Quality Monitoring Plan (Monitoring Plan) for the Russian River. The objectives of the Monitoring Plan are to provide information to evaluate potential changes to water quality and availability of habitat for aquatic resources resulting from the proposed permanent changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flows that are mandated by the Biological Opinion. Furthermore, the Monitoring Plan will build upon previous water quality studies that have been conducted in the Russian River and the estuary as required by the Biological Opinion, and provide information to support the development of a CEQA document required for permanent changes to Decision 1610.

Monitoring will be conducted to track potential changes to water quality associated with reduced flows in the mainstem Russian River and extended closure of the estuary during the dry season to form a summer lagoon at the mouth of the river. Mainstem and estuary monitoring will include continuous hourly monitoring of temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and specific conductance at several stations stretching from Ukiah to Jenner. In addition, the estuary will be monitored hourly to observe salinity concentration and stratification in the water column; as well as up and downstream migration of the salt water layer associated with tidal exchange, periods of lower instream flows, and extended sandbar closures. Water samples (grab) will also be collected by Water Agency staff and analyzed for several

constituents by Alpha Labs in Ukiah and the Sonoma County Department of Health Services (DHS) Public Health Division Lab in Santa Rosa. .

Regarding water quality monitoring to support the Water Agency's CEQA compliance for changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements, the following preliminary questions help explain the objective of the monitoring plan:

- What are the background levels of nutrients and pathogens under the current minimum instream flow levels? How do these background levels respond to changes in instream flow, considering other contributing factors?
- Does water temperature and dissolved oxygen respond to changes in minimum instream flows?
- Are there secondary biological effects related to changes in water quality related to instream flow changes (e.g. stress to fish, plants, invertebrates) and if so, what are they? Effects to public health/recreation?
- What are the background levels of nutrients and pathogens in the Estuary? How do the levels respond to managing the estuary as a closed summer lagoon, considering other contributing factors?
- Do water temperature, dissolved oxygen, and salinity respond to managing the estuary as a closed summer lagoon?
- Are there secondary biological effects related to changes in water quality as a result of managing the estuary as a closed summer lagoon (e.g. stress to fish, plants, invertebrates) and if so, what are they? Effects to public health/recreation?

5.0 SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS PLAN

5.1 Mainstem Russian River Study

5.1.1 Datasonde Deployment

In coordination with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) the Water Agency funds the maintenance and operation of five multi-parameter water quality sondes on the Russian River located at Hopland, Diggers Bend in Healdsburg, the Water Agency's river diversion facility (RDS) at Mirabel, Hacienda Bridge and Johnson's Beach (see Figure 1). These five sondes are referred to as "permanent" as the Water Agency maintains them as part of its early warning detection system. The sondes take real time readings of water pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO), specific conductivity, and turbidity, every 15 minutes. The Hopland, Diggers Bend and Hacienda Beach data is provided in cooperation with the USGS on its "Real-time Data for California" website. The RDS and Johnson's Beach data is available via an "email subscription" available to the public via the Water Agency's website.

In addition to the permanent sondes, the Water Agency, in cooperation with the USGS, seasonally deploys sondes at various locations within the watershed. This year the Water Agency, in cooperation with the USGS will be installing seasonal sondes with real-time telemetry at a station north of Cloverdale at Commisky Station Road (USGS Cloverdale river gage) and at the Alexander Valley Road Bridge (USGS Jimtown river gage). The sonde at the Cloverdale gage collects DO and temperature and the sonde at

the Jimtown gage collects pH, temperature, DO, specific conductivity and turbidity; both locations will transmit the data and be available on the USGS real-time website.

5.1.2 Nutrient/Bacterial/Algal Sampling

Water samples will be collected from six (6) surface-water sites in the mainstem of the Russian River (Figure 1). All samples will be analyzed for nutrients, chlorophyll *a*, standard bacterial indicators (*e. coli* and enterococci), total and dissolved organic carbon, total dissolved solids, and turbidity (See Table 1). Sampling methodology and quality assurance protocols including: chain-of-custody procedures, sample labeling, storage and transport protocols, sample containers and sample collection methods, and decontamination will follow USGS Field Manual for the Collection of Water-Quality Data: U.S. Geological Survey Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations, Book 9, chapters A1-A9 (available online at <http://pubs.water.usgs.gov/twri9A>), in conjunction with protocols and procedures established by the contract laboratories (Alpha Labs and DHS Lab) and the Laboratory/Industrial Waste Services section in the Operations Division of the Water Agency. As identified in Table 1, Alpha Labs will be reporting the results at the MDL, however the data will be subject to their reporting protocols which will require that they flag the results as “Detected but below Reporting Limit; therefore, result is an estimated concentration, detected but not quantified (DNQ)”. DHS will be conducting the analysis for enterococci and *e-coli*. and will be reporting the results at the LRL/PQL.

Beginning May 24, 2012, grab samples will be collected weekly (Thursdays). See Figure 1 for a map of surface-water sampling locations. Measurements of water temperature and pH will be collected using a YSI 6600 datasonde and YSI 650MDS datalogger during water sample collection; pH will be calibrated using 2 buffers prior to use each day. The temperature feature is checked against an NIST thermometer and recorded.

Russian River mainstem sites from upper to lower (Figure 1) include:

- Russian River NR Hopland (USGS gage 11462500)
- Russian River NR Cloverdale (USGS gage 11463000)
- Russian River @ Jimtown (USGS gage 11463682)
- Russian River @ Diggers Bend (USGS gage 11463980)
- Russian River @ Riverfront Park (aka NR Windsor – USGS gage 11465390)
- Russian River NR Guerneville (aka Hacienda Bridge – USGS gage 11467000)

The mainstem sampling sites have varied over the last several years based upon discussions with the coordinating agencies. This year, Upper River sample sites will be conducted at USGS gage stations and/or datasonde sites to better correlate, if possible, several water quality parameters. Duplicate field samples for non bacterial parameters are being collected at the Hacienda Bridge sample site and triplicate field samples for bacterial indicators will be collected at Jimtown and Hacienda Bridge.

These analyses will further the effort to establish a water-quality baseline for the mainstem of the Russian River. The baseline established with these analyses will help the Water Agency and other agencies to assess the influence of reduced flows in the mainstem of the Russian River during summer flow conditions.

5.1.3 Reporting

A report describing the results of the Water Agency 2012 mainstem Russian River water quality monitoring and sampling effort will be prepared as described in the TUC Order. The report will provide summaries of data observations recorded for each constituent sampled or monitored and an assessment of changes in aquatic habitat availability and impacts if any to recreational activities. The report may also provide recommendations for changes to monitoring and sampling efforts to be conducted in subsequent years. The information from this report will be used in a subsequent report being prepared by the Water Agency for the Biological Opinion that incorporates other studies and discusses trends and observations relating to the proposed permanent changes to minimum instream flows during the summer months. The report shall be submitted by March 31, 2013.

5.2 Russian River Estuary Study

5.2.1 Datasonde Deployment

Water quality monitoring will occur at ten (10) stations in the lower, middle, and upper reaches of the Russian River estuary, including tributaries and areas upstream from the estuary that become inundated during closed lagoon conditions (maximum backwater area). Eight stations will be located in the mainstem between the mouth of the river at Jenner and Monte Rio and two stations will be located in Willow and Austin Creeks, in areas that are subject to tidal and/or closed lagoon inundation. Refer to Figure 2 for a map of estuary water quality station locations.

Water Agency staff will use several Yellow Springs Incorporated (YSI) 6600 series multi-parameter datasondes (sondes) equipped with a YSI 6560 combination conductivity/temperature sensor, a YSI 6561 or YSI 6589Fr pH sensor, and either a YSI 6562 dissolved oxygen sensor or YSI 6150 optical dissolved oxygen sensor to collect water quality parameters at all sites. Sondes will be programmed to record hourly measurements of water temperature (Celsius), dissolved oxygen (milligrams per liter, mg/L), specific conductance (microsiemens), salinity (parts per thousand, ppt), and hydrogen ion (pH). Monitoring sites will be accessed by boat or by foot.

All sondes will be recalibrated following the manufacturer's 6-Series User Manual and data downloaded every two weeks by Water Agency staff. The YSI temperature sensor utilizes a thermistor that does not require calibration or maintenance. However, thermistor accuracy will be checked against a National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) thermometer during initial deployment to ensure the sensor is functioning properly. The YSI 6560 conductivity sensor will be calibrated using a 10,000 microsiemen ($\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$) standard. The YSI 6561 pH sensor will be calibrated to two points using buffer solutions of pH 4, 7, and/or 10. The YSI 6562 dissolved oxygen sensor will be calibrated using the dissolved-oxygen-calibration chamber-in-air method where the calibration chamber is set-up with water and allowed to reach 100-percent saturation prior to calibration. The YSI 6150 optical dissolved oxygen sensor will be calibrated using a one-point dissolved-oxygen-calibration chamber-in-air method where the calibration chamber is set-up with water and allowed to reach 100-percent saturation prior to calibration.

Field calibration and data collection will be conducted using the YSI 650 Multiparameter Display System (MDS) datalogger designed to work with the 6-Series datasondes. Data will be downloaded onto the YSI 650 MDS and then transferred to a PC, where data will undergo analysis by Water Agency staff.

Monitoring sites (Figure 2) include:

- Russian River @ Mouth at Goat Rock State Beach (2 YSI 6600 Datasondes)
- Russian River @ Patty's Rock upstream from Penny Island (2 YSI,6600 Datasondes)
- Willow Creek at the 1st Bridge (1 YSI 6600 Datasonde)
- Russian River @ Sheephouse Creek downstream of Sheephouse Creek (1 or 2 YSI 6600 Datasondes)
- Russian River @ Heron Rookery halfway between Sheephouse and Freezeout creeks (2 YSI 6600 Datasondes)
- Russian River @ Freezeout Creek downstream of Freezeout Creek (2 YSI 6600 Datasondes)
- Russian River @ Brown's Pool downstream of Austin Creek (1 YSI 6600 Datasonde)
- Austin Creek downstream of first Steel Bridge (1 YSI 6600 Datasonde)
- Russian River @ Villa Grande (1 YSI 6600 Datasonde)
- Russian River @ Monte Rio downstream of Dutch Bill Creek (1 YSI 6600 Datasonde)

The five mainstem stations located in the lower, middle, and upper reaches of the estuary between the Mouth and Freezeout Creek will have a vertical array of two datasondes, with the exception of Sheephouse Creek which may only have one sonde in the mid-depth portion of the water column. Monitoring stations will be comprised of a concrete anchor attached to a steel cable suspended from the surface by a large buoy with sondes attached at varying depths along the cable. The rationale for choosing these sites was to locate the deepest pools at various points throughout the Estuary to obtain the fullest vertical profiles possible and to monitor anoxic events and temperature or salinity stratification. The three stations in the lower and middle estuary that are predominantly saline will have sondes placed at the surface (approximately 1-meter depth) and mid-depth portions of the water column. The two stations in the upper estuary, where water is predominantly fresh, will be located at the mid-depth and bottom of the water column.

Three additional mainstem stations will be established in the maximum backwater area, upstream from the estuary in freshwater habitat that becomes inundated during sandbar closure events. The stations at Brown's Pool and Villa Grande will have one datasonde each placed at the bottom of the pool or thalweg, which is the deepest part of the water column. They will be placed in this manner to track the potential migration of saline water upstream of Freezeout Creek during estuary closure. The Monte Rio station has not previously been observed to become saline and will have one sonde suspended at approximately mid-depth (during open conditions) in the thalweg, or deepest part of the water column. The two tributary stations in Willow and Austin creeks will each have one sonde that will be suspended at approximately mid-depth (during open conditions) in their respective thalwegs near the confluences with the Russian River.

Sondes will be located in this manner to track changes to water quality in the water column, vertically and longitudinally, within the estuary during reduced instream flows, tidal fluctuation and closure events. The placement of sondes in this manner will also allow Water Agency staff to track changes to water quality that may be associated with the migration and stratification of the salt water layer within the estuary, as well as the enhancement of habitat conditions for juvenile salmonids.

5.2.2 Nutrient/Bacterial/Algal Sampling

Water samples will be collected from 5 surface-water sites in the Russian River estuary (Figure 2). All samples will be analyzed for nutrients, chlorophyll *a*, standard bacterial indicators (*e. coli* and enterococci), total and dissolved organic carbon, total dissolved solids, and turbidity (See Table 1). Sampling methodology and quality assurance protocols including: chain-of-custody procedures, sample labeling, storage and transport protocols, sample containers and sample collection methods, and decontamination will follow USGS Field Manual for the Collection of Water-Quality Data: U.S. Geological Survey Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations, Book 9, chapters A1-A9 (available online at <http://pubs.water.usgs.gov/twri9A> in conjunction with protocols and procedures established by the contract laboratories (Alpha Labs and DHS Lab) and the Laboratory/Industrial Waste Services section in the Operations Division of the Water Agency. As identified in Table 1, Alpha Labs will be reporting the results at the MDL, however the data will be subject to their reporting protocols which will require that they flag the results as “Detected but below Reporting Limit; therefore, result is an estimated concentration, detected but not quantified (DNQ)”. DHS will be conducting the analysis for enterococci and *e.coli*. and will be reporting the results at the LRL/PQL.

Beginning May 22, 2012, grab samples will be collected every two weeks (Tuesdays) when flows are above Decision 1610 normal year levels (125 cfs – measured at USGS gauging station 11467000, near Hacienda), and will be collected weekly when flows drop below Decision 1610 normal year levels (125 cfs). See Figure 2 for a map of surface-water sampling locations. Measurements of water temperature and pH, will be collected using a YSI 6600 datasonde and YSI 650MDS datalogger during water sample collection.

Russian River Estuary sites (Figure 2) include:

- Russian River @ Jenner Boat Ramp
- Russian River @ Bridgehaven below Willow Creek
- Russian River @ Duncans Mills above Freezeout Creek
- Russian River @ Casini Ranch below Austin Creek
- Russian River @ Monte Rio below Dutch Bill Creek

Duplicate field samples for non bacterial parameters and triplicate field samples for bacterial indicators will be collected at the Monte Rio sampling site. Additional focused sampling will also occur under certain conditions and following specific river management and operational events, noted below, at the sites listed above.

- Removal of Johnson’s Beach and/or Vacation Beach Dam – 3 samples within 10 days after dam removal
- Sandbar Closure – 3 samples within 10 days (or weekly)
- Sandbar Breach – 3 samples within 10 days after breach
- Lagoon Outlet Channel implementation – 3 samples within 10 days after implementation.

At the conclusion of any focused sampling event, regular sampling will resume following the schedule based on flows, as described above.

These analyses will continue the Water Agency effort to establish a water-quality baseline for the Russian River estuary (including the maximum backwater area) from Monte Rio to the river mouth at Jenner. The baseline established with these analyses will enable Water Agency to assess the influence of reduced flows on water quality, including aquatic habitat availability and public recreational opportunities in the lower mainstem, the Russian River estuary under open and closed conditions, and on the operation of a lagoon outlet channel across the river mouth sandbar, during summer flow.

5.2.3 Reporting

A report describing the results of the Water Agency 2012 Russian River estuary water quality monitoring and sampling effort will be prepared as described in the Russian River Biological Opinion. The report will provide summaries of data observations recorded for each constituent sampled or monitored and the impacts if any to aquatic habitat availability and public recreational activities. The report may also provide recommendations for changes to monitoring and sampling efforts to be conducted in subsequent years. The information from this report will be used in a synthesis report being prepared by Water Agency for the Biological Opinion that incorporates other estuary studies and discusses trends and observations relating to the proposed permanent changes to minimum instream flows and estuary management during the summer months. The report shall be submitted by March 31, 2013.

5.3 Quality Assurance Program

As previously identified sampling methodology and quality assurance protocols including: chain-of-custody procedures, sample labeling, storage and transport protocols, sample containers and sample collection methods, and decontamination will follow USGS Field Manual for the Collection of Water-Quality Data: U.S. Geological Survey Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations, Book 9, chapters A1-A9 (available online at <http://pubs.water.usgs.gov/twri9A>), in conjunction with protocols and procedures established by Alpha Analytical Laboratories and the Sonoma County Department of Health Services Public Health Division Lab (the Water Agency's contract laboratories) and the Laboratory/Industrial Waste Services section in the Operations Division of the Water Agency.

Table 1. List of bacterial indicators and nutrients to be analyzed in water samples collected from the Russian River Mainstem and Estuary.

Compound	Test Method	Method Detection Limit (MDL)	Laboratory Reporting Limit (LRL/PQL ¹)	Units
Nitrogen, Total	SM4500-N	0.2	0.5	mg/L
Nitrogen, Total Organic	SM4500-N	0.2	0.2	mg/L
Nitrogen, ammonia as N	SM4500NH3C	0.1	0.2	mg/L
Ammonia Unionized	SFBRWQCP	0.00010	0.00050	mg/L
Nitrogen, nitrate as N	EPA300.0	0.050	0.20	mg/L
Nitrogen, nitrite as N	EPA300.0	0.010	0.20	mg/L
Organic carbon, dissolved	SM5310C	0.0400	0.300	mg/L
Organic carbon, total	SM5310C	0.0400	0.300	mg/L
Phosphorus, orthophosphate	SM4500-P E	0.020	0.020	mg/L
Phosphorus, total	SM4500-P E	0.020	0.10	mg/L
Total Dissolved Solids	SM2540C	4.2	5.0	mg/L
Chlorophyll (a)	SM10200H	0.000050	0.010	mg/L
Enterococci	SM9223 (entro) ⁴	2.0	2.0	MPN ²
<i>e-coli</i>	SM9223 (clert) ³	2.0	2.0	MPN
Turbidity	EPA180.1	0.020	0.10	NTU

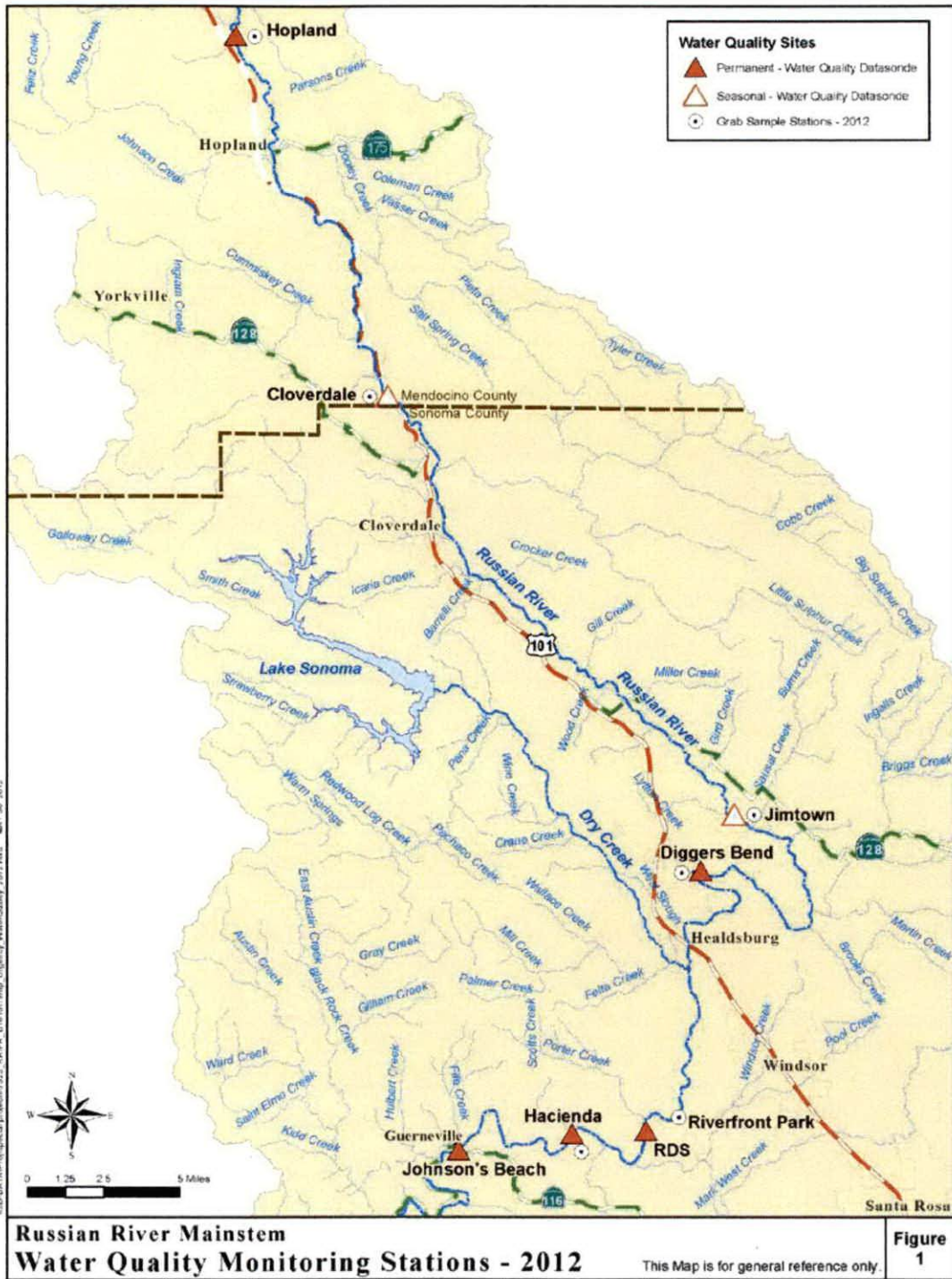
Alpha Labs will be reporting the results at the MDL, however the data will be subject to their reporting protocols which will require that they flag the results as “Detected but below Reporting Limit; therefore, result is an estimated concentration, detected but not quantified (DNQ)”. The Sonoma County Department of Health lab will be conducting the analysis for enterococci and *e-coli* and will be reporting the results at the LRL/PQL.

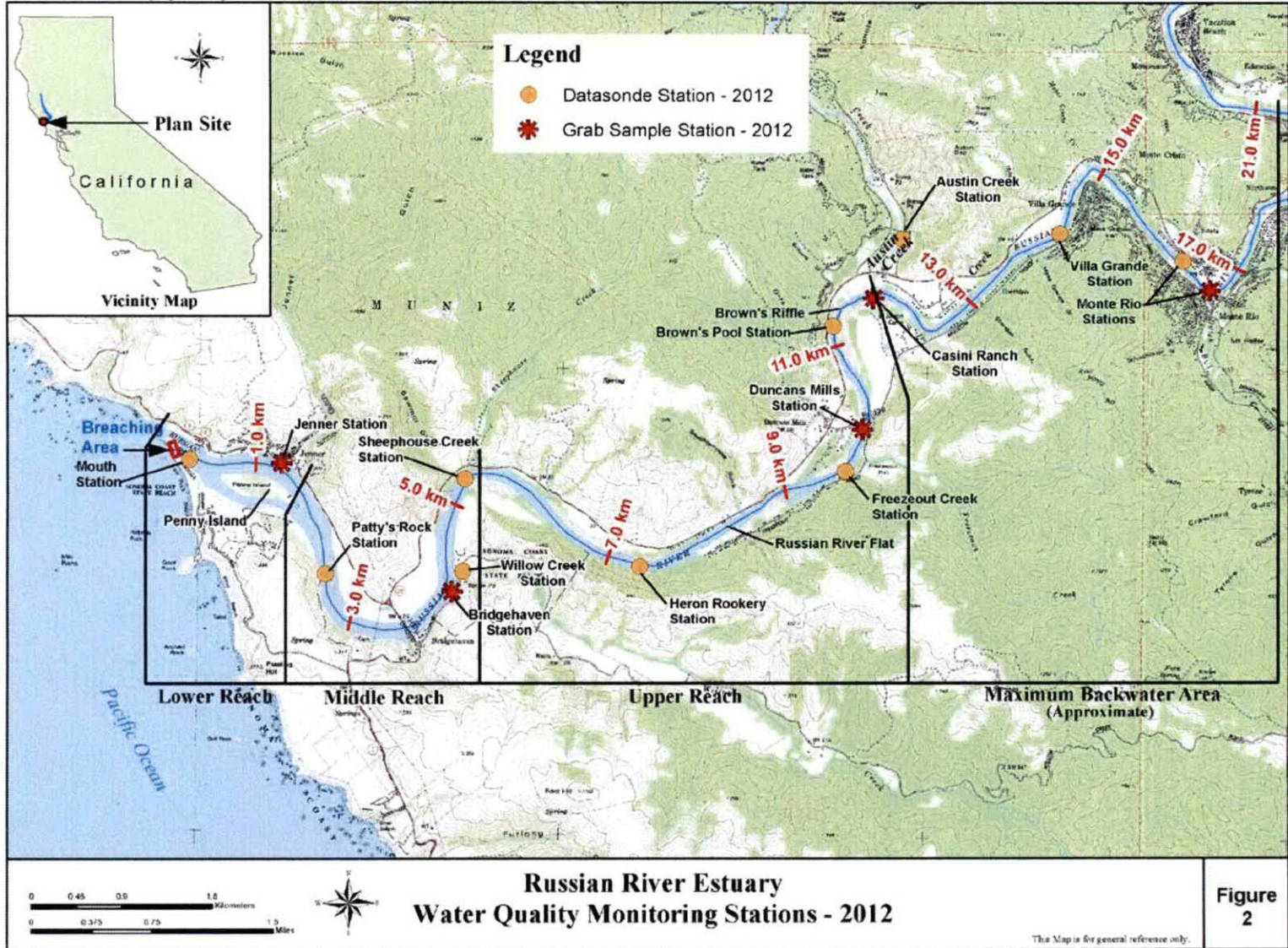
¹ PQL – Practical Quantitation Limit

² MPN – most probable number

³ clert – Colilert Method

⁴ entro – Enterolert Method





NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

MAY 23 2012

To: X Office of Planning & Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

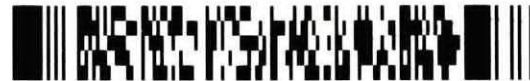
From: Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

X County Clerk
County of Sonoma
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

2012-E0012
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SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY
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X County Clerk
County of Mendocino
Ukiah, CA 95482

OFFICIAL RECORDS
Susan M. Ranochak - Clerk-Recorder
Mendocino County, CA



Project Title: Petition by Sonoma County Water Agency Requesting Approval of a Temporary Urgency Change in Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950, and 16596 in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties (Applications 12919A, 15736, 15737, and 19351): 2012 Temporary Changes to Minimum Instream Flow Requirements of Decision 1610

Project Location: The proposed action is to temporarily change the required minimum instream flows in the Russian River in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. Figure 1 shows the minimum instream-flow requirements in the water-right permits of the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) for its Russian River Project that are in effect now and that will remain in effect if the proposed action is not approved. The proposed action is to temporarily change some of these requirements, to the "Temporary Changes" shown in Figure 2, for the period from May 1, 2012, through October 15, 2012. Communities and cities along the Russian River include Ukiah, Hopland, Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg, Forestville, Mirabel Park, Rio Nido, Guerneville, Monte Rio, Duncans Mills, and Jenner.

Project Background: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued its *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed* (Russian River Biological Opinion) on September 24, 2008.¹ NMFS concluded in the Russian River Biological Opinion that the continued operations of Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Water Agency in a manner similar to recent historic practices, together with the Water Agency's stream channel maintenance activities and estuary management, are likely to jeopardize and adversely modify critical habitat for endangered Central California Coast coho salmon and threatened Central California Coast steelhead.

The Water Agency controls and coordinates water supply releases from the Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam projects in accordance with the requirements of Decision 1610, adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) in 1986. NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion states that changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements will enable alternative flow management scenarios that will increase available rearing habitat in Dry Creek and the upper Russian River, and provide a lower, closer to natural inflow to the estuary between late spring and early fall, thereby

¹ NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion may be accessed online at www.sonomacountywater.org and may be reviewed at the Water Agency's office at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA.

To: Martini-Lamb

APR 04 2012
TO: 5/4/12

enhancing the potential for maintaining a seasonal freshwater lagoon that will likely support increased production of juvenile steelhead and salmon.²

As required by NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion, in September 2009 the Water Agency filed a petition with the SWRCB to make permanent changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements. This petition presently is pending before the SWRCB. The SWRCB will not act on this petition until the necessary environmental impact report is prepared and the water-rights issues associated with this petition are resolved. This process is expected to take several years.

Until the SWRCB issues an order on this petition, the Water Agency must maintain the minimum instream flows specified in Decision 1610, with resulting impacts to listed salmonids, unless temporary changes to these requirements are authorized by the SWRCB. To help restore freshwater habitats for listed salmon and steelhead in the upper mainstem Russian River and the estuary, NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion requires that the Water Agency petition the SWRCB for temporary changes to minimum instream flow requirements beginning in 2010 and for each year thereafter until the SWRCB issues an order on the Water Agency's petition for the permanent changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements. The temporary changes include a reduction in the minimum instream flow to 70 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the lower Russian River between May 1 and October 15, with the understanding that, because of the need to maintain an operational buffer above this minimum requirement, the Water Agency typically will maintain a flow of about 85 cfs at this point. Additionally, for the purposes of enhancing steelhead rearing habitat between the East Fork and Hopland, the temporary changes include a reduction in the minimum instream flow to 125 cfs in the upper Russian River between May 1 and October 15.³ NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion only requires petitions for temporary changes to minimum streamflows on the mainstem Russian River, and not on Dry Creek. This petition therefore does not seek changes in required Dry Creek flows, which will be maintained at the levels currently required by Decision 1610.

The permanent and temporary changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flows specified by NMFS in the Russian River Biological Opinion are summarized in Figure 2. NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion states that, in addition to providing the expected fishery benefits, the revised minimum instream flow requirements should promote water conservation and seek to limit effects on instream river recreation.⁴

Description of Purpose, Nature, and Beneficiaries of the Project: To comply with the requirements of NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion, the Water Agency is filing a temporary urgency change petition with the SWRCB that asks the SWRCB to make the following changes in the instream flow requirements for the Russian River mainstem that are specified in Decision 1610 and the Water Agency's water right permits between May 1 and October 15, 2012: (a) a minimum instream flow requirement of 125 cfs in the upper Russian River (upstream of the confluence with Dry Creek and downstream of the confluence of the East and West Forks) measured as a 5-day running average of average daily streamflow measurements with the stipulation that instantaneous flows will not be less than 110 cfs. and (b) 70 cfs in

² National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 243. September 2008.

³ National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 247. September 2008.

⁴ National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 244. September 2008.

the lower Russian River (downstream of its confluence with Dry Creek), with the understanding that for compliance purposes the Water Agency will typically maintain a flow of about 85 cfs at this location.

Decision 1610 specifies the minimum instream flow requirements for Dry Creek and the Russian River (see Figure 1). These requirements vary based on defined hydrologic conditions. If approved, the requested reductions in Russian River instream flow requirements will be in effect May 1 through October 15, 2012. Under Normal water supply conditions, minimum flows during this time period could be as high as 185 cfs in the upper Russian River, 125 cfs in the lower Russian River, and 80 cfs in Dry Creek. Under the proposed change, minimum flows could be as low as 125 cfs in the upper Russian River and 70 cfs in the lower Russian River. No change in the Dry Creek requirements is required by the Biological Opinion or proposed and the minimum flow requirement in Dry Creek will remain at 80 cfs. The proposed changes in Russian River instream flow requirements will not result in any unusual circumstances, because the proposed minimum instream flow requirements are within the range of those that already occur during Dry and Critical water supply conditions under Decision 1610. In addition, due to low rainfall and other factors, flows in the river in recent years have been similar to or lower than the proposed changes. For example, compared to summer 2009, the requested minimum flows are slightly higher for the lower Russian River and substantially higher for the upper Russian River.

During the period that the proposed temporary flow changes are in effect, the Water Agency will also monitor water quality and fish, and collect and report information and data related to monitoring activities, as required by NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion. This information will assist with the study and development of required future permanent minimum instream flow changes.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: State Water Resources Control Board- Division of Water Rights

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Sonoma County Water Agency

Exempt Status: (Check one)

Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268) _____

Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)); _____

Emergency Project (Sec.21080 (b)(4); 15269(b)(c)); _____

Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: State CEQA Guidelines 15307: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources

State CEQA Guidelines 15308: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment

State CEQA Guidelines 15301(i): Existing Facilities

State CEQA Guidelines 15306: Information Collection

Statutory Exemptions. State Code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt: The proposed action is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under the State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15307, 15308, 15301(i), and 15306.

A. Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources and the Environment
Guidelines Sections 15307 and 15308 provide that actions taken by regulatory agencies to assure the maintenance, restoration or enhancement of a natural resource and the environment are categorically

exempt from CEQA. If approved, the proposed changes in Russian River minimum instream flow requirements will increase available rearing habitat in the upper Russian River and provide a lower, closer to natural inflow to the estuary between late spring and early fall, thereby enhancing the potential for maintaining a seasonal freshwater lagoon that could support increased production of juvenile steelhead. NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion states that these changes are necessary to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of the listed species.⁵ The proposed changes also will conserve water in Lake Mendocino to benefit adult Chinook salmon migrating upstream in the fall.


B. Existing Facilities

Guidelines Section 15301(i) provides, generally, that the operation of existing facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination is categorically exempt from CEQA. Subdivision (i) of Section 15301 specifically includes maintenance of streamflows to protect fish and wildlife resources. The Water Agency's petition to the SWRCB to change to the instream flow requirements specified in NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion does not request and will not expand Water Agency use or increase the water supply available to the Water Agency for consumptive purposes. The proposed change in Russian River minimum instream flow requirements still will be within the existing operational parameters established by Decision 1610.

C. Information Collection

Guidelines Section 15306 provides that basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource are categorically exempt from CEQA. These activities may be part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted or funded. The water quality and fishery information and data collected during the period that the proposed temporary flow changes are in effect will assist with the study and development of the required future permanent minimum instream flow changes.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Jessica Martini-Lamb Area Code/Telephone: 707-547-1903

Signature:  Date: 04/04/2012 Title: General Manager

Lead Agency Applicant
Date Received for filing at OPR:

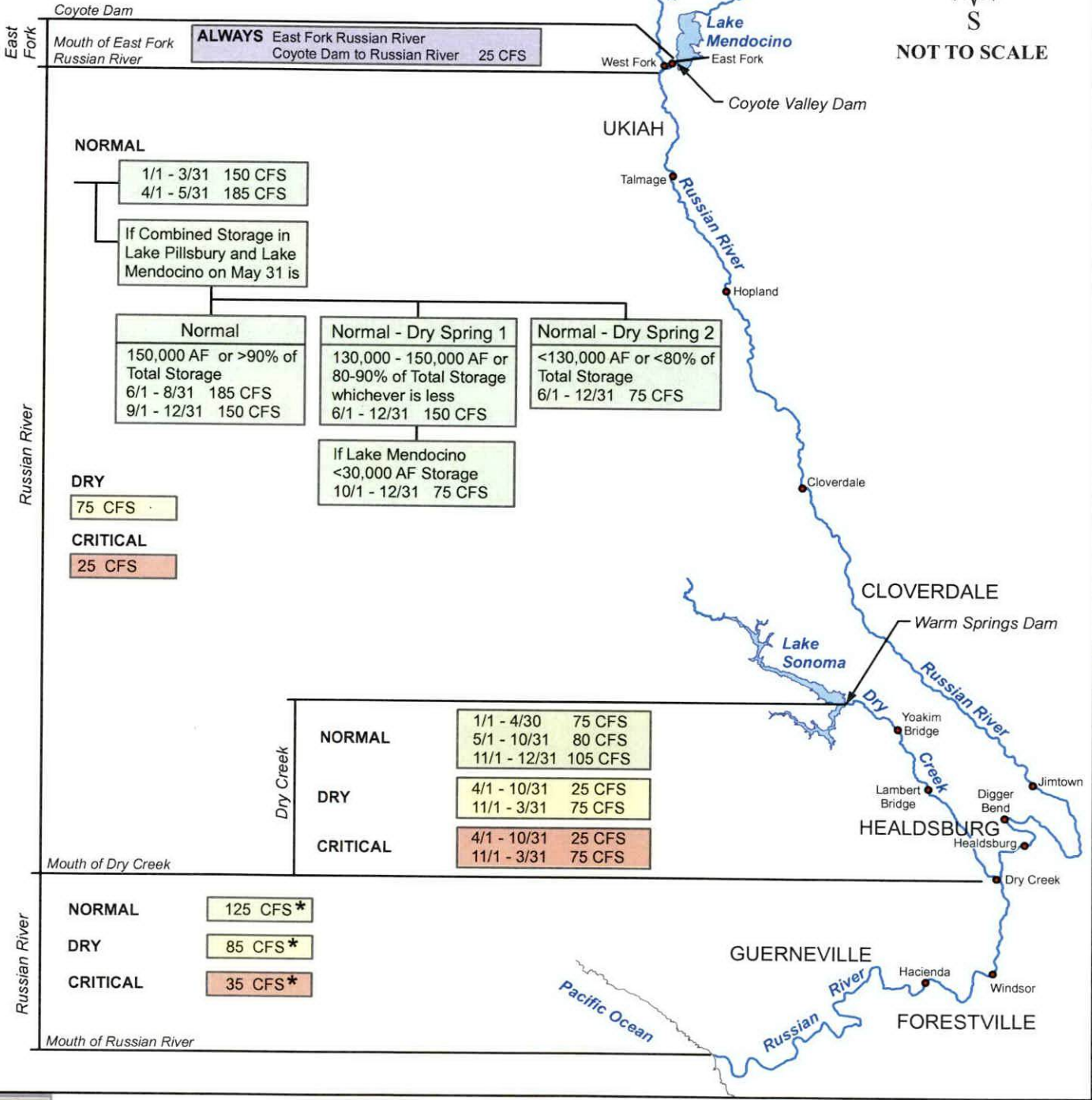
⁵ National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 247. September 2008.

Cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury (acre-feet) from Oct 1 through						
	1/1	2/1	3/1	4/1	5/1	6/1
NORMAL	≥8,000	≥39,200	≥65,700	≥114,500	≥145,600	≥160,000
DRY	<8,000	<39,200	<65,700	<114,500	<145,600	<160,000
CRITICAL	<4,000	<20,000	<45,000	<50,000	<70,000	<75,000

Water Supply Conditions Prevailing on 6/1 Apply Through 12/31

LEGEND

- All flows are minimums, expressed in cubic feet per second.
- * - Unless Lake Sonoma elevation is below 292.0, or if prohibited by the United States Government.
- AF - Acre-Feet
- - USGS Stream Gage Compliance Points



ALWAYS East Fork Russian River
Coyote Dam to Russian River 25 CFS

NORMAL
1/1 - 3/31 150 CFS
4/1 - 5/31 185 CFS
If Combined Storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 is

Normal
150,000 AF or >90% of Total Storage
6/1 - 8/31 185 CFS
9/1 - 12/31 150 CFS

Normal - Dry Spring 1
130,000 - 150,000 AF or 80-90% of Total Storage whichever is less
6/1 - 12/31 150 CFS

Normal - Dry Spring 2
<130,000 AF or <80% of Total Storage
6/1 - 12/31 75 CFS

If Lake Mendocino <30,000 AF Storage
10/1 - 12/31 75 CFS

DRY
75 CFS

CRITICAL
25 CFS

Dry Creek

NORMAL	1/1 - 4/30 75 CFS 5/1 - 10/31 80 CFS 11/1 - 12/31 105 CFS
DRY	4/1 - 10/31 25 CFS 11/1 - 3/31 75 CFS
CRITICAL	4/1 - 10/31 25 CFS 11/1 - 3/31 75 CFS

Russian River

NORMAL	125 CFS*
DRY	85 CFS*
CRITICAL	35 CFS*

Russian River Basin Streamflow Requirements

Per State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1610, April 1986

Figure 1

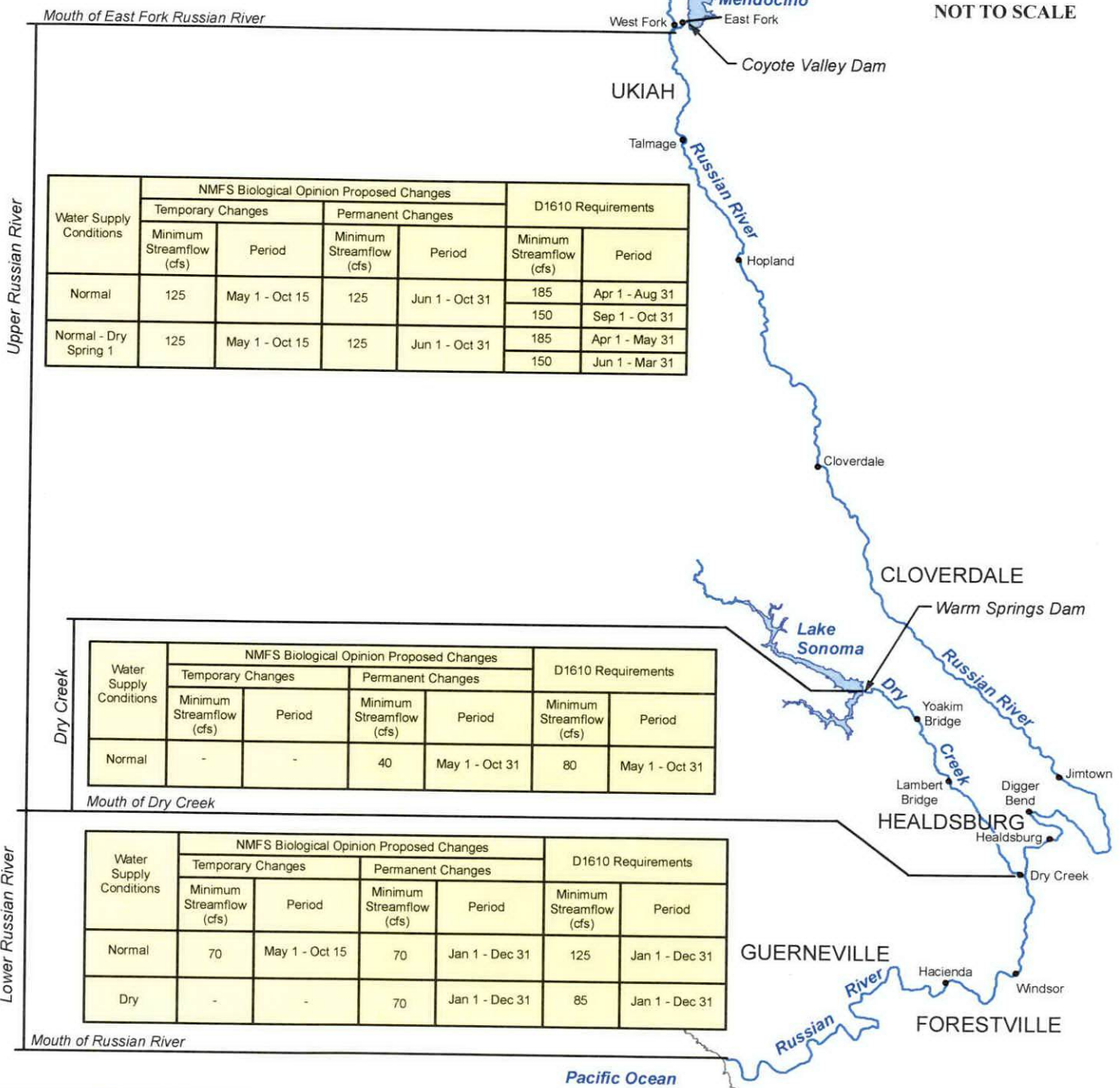
FILESERVER\DATA\wpr\nbaakent\Schram_P\Projects\2011-USGS-Gauge-Streamflow.mxd April 4, 2011



LEGEND

AF - Acre-Feet

● - USGS Stream Gage Compliance Points



Upper Russian River

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	125	May 1 - Oct 15	125	Jun 1 - Oct 31	185	Apr 1 - Aug 31
Normal - Dry Spring 1	125	May 1 - Oct 15	125	Jun 1 - Oct 31	150	Sep 1 - Oct 31
					185	Apr 1 - May 31
					150	Jun 1 - Mar 31

Dry Creek

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	-	-	40	May 1 - Oct 31	80	May 1 - Oct 31

Lower Russian River

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	70	May 1 - Oct 15	70	Jan 1 - Dec 31	125	Jan 1 - Dec 31
Dry	-	-	70	Jan 1 - Dec 31	85	Jan 1 - Dec 31

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**Russian River Biological Opinion
Proposed Minimum Instream Flow Changes**
Per National Marine Fisheries Service's Biological Opinion Issued September 24, 2008

Figure 2