



CF/42-0.19-9 SWRCB ORDER APPROVING TEMPORARY
URGENCY CHANGE IN PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950 &
16596 FOR 2012

April 5, 2012

Barbara Evoy, Deputy Director of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

RE: Petition for Temporary Urgency Change—Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950, and 16596

Dear Ms. Evoy:

Enclosed is a Petition for Temporary Urgency Change to modify the minimum instream flow requirements for the Russian River as established by Decision 1610 for Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950 and 16596. Accompanying the petition are the following:

- 1) A supporting analysis document: *Instream Flow Analysis for 2012 Temporary Urgency Change Petition.*
- 2) Notice of Exemption
- 3) California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Review Fee Payment
- 4) State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Petition Fee Payment

The petition is being submitted as required by the Russian River Biological Opinion issued by NOAA National Marine Fisheries in September 2008. The Sonoma County Water Agency requests that the Division of Water Rights act expeditiously to approve the requested changes to minimum instream flows as identified in the Russian River Biological Opinion.

I look forward to working with the State Water Resources Control Board and Division of Water Rights staff on this important conservation effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Grant Davis".

Grant Davis
General Manager

- c D. Butler, W. Hearn – National Marine Fisheries Service
E. Larson - CA Department of Fish & Game
P. Jeane, D. Seymour, T. Schram – Sonoma County Water Agency
S. Shupe, C. O'Donnell – Sonoma County Counsel
A. Lilly – Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan

State of California
State Water Resources Control Board
DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS
P.O. Box 2000, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000
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PETITION FOR TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE

(Water Code 1435)

X Change in Instream Flow Requirements

Applications # 12919A, 15736, 15737, 19351 Permits # 12947A, 12949, 12950, 16596

I (we) Sonoma County Water Agency hereby petition for a temporary urgency change(s) noted above
(Water Right Holders Name)
and described as follows:

The Sonoma County Water Agency requests that the State Water Resources Control Board make the following temporary changes to the Decision 1610 (D-1610) instream flow requirements for the period from May 1 through October 15: (a) reduce the D-1610 requirements in the Upper Russian River (from its confluence with the East Fork to its confluence with Dry Creek) to 125 cfs for Normal and Normal—Dry Spring 1 water supply conditions; (b) reduce the D-1610 requirements in the Lower Russian River (downstream of its confluence with Dry Creek) to 70 cfs for Normal and Dry water supply conditions.

These temporary changes are requested to comply with the National Marine Fisheries Service's *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* (September 24, 2008).

The Water Agency also requests that the minimum instream flow requirement as it pertains to the Upper Russian River be specified as a 5-day running average of average daily streamflow measurements, with the stipulation that instantaneous flows will not be less than 110 cfs. This will allow the Water Agency to manage streamflows with a smaller operational buffer, thereby facilitating the attainment of flow conditions determined by NMFS and DFG to be conducive to the enhancement of salmonid habitat.

Point of Diversion or Rediversion (Give coordinate distances from section corner or California Coordinates, and the 40-acre subdivision in which the present and proposed points lie.)

Present see permits Proposed no change

Place of Use (If irrigation, then state number of acres to be irrigated within each 40-acre tract.)

Present see permits Proposed no change

Purpose of Use

Present see permits Proposed no change

Does the proposed use serve to preserve or enhance wetlands habitat, fish and wildlife resources, or recreation in or on the water (See WC 1707)? No (yes/no)

***This question was answered 'No' because this petition is not being filed under Water Code section 1707. However, the requested temporary changes will benefit fish resources, for the reasons stated in NMFS's Biological Opinion.

The temporary urgency change(s) is to be effective from May 1, 2012 to October 15, 2012
(Cannot exceed 180 days)

Will this temporary urgency change be made without injury to any lawful user of water? Yes (yes/no)

Will this temporary urgency change be made without unreasonable effect upon fish, wildlife, and other instream beneficial uses? Yes (yes/no)

State the "Urgent Need" (Water Code 1435(c)) that is the basis of this temporary urgency change petition (attach additional information as necessary):

see attachment Instream Flow Analysis for 2012 Temporary Urgency Change Petition

If the point of diversion or redirection is being changed, is any person(s) taking water from the stream between the old point of diversion or redirection and the proposed point?

Not Applicable (yes/no)

Are there any persons taking water from the stream between the old point of return flow and the new point of return flow? Not Applicable (yes/no)

If yes, give name and address, as well as any other person(s) known to you who may be affected by the proposed change.

I (we) consulted the California Department of Fish and Game concerning this proposed temporary change. Yes (yes/no)

If yes, state the name and phone number of the person contacted and the opinion concerning the potential effects of your proposed temporary urgency change on fish and wildlife and state the measures required for mitigation.

The Agency has been coordinating activities related to the Biological Opinion and DFG's Consistency Determination with Richard Fitzgerald (707-944-5568) and Eric Larson (707-944-5528) of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

Contacts at NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service for the Biological Opinion are Dr. William Hearn (707-575-6062) and Dick Butler (707-575-6058).

THIS TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE DOES NOT INVOLVE AN INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF THE APPROPRIATION OR SEASON OF USE. THIS TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE IS REQUESTED FOR A PERIOD OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY DAYS OR LESS.

I (we) declare under penalty of perjury that the above is true and correct to the best of my (our) knowledge and belief.

Dated April 4, 2012 at Santa Rosa, California



Signature(s)

(707) 521-6210

Telephone No.

404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-9019
(Address)

NOTE: All petitions must be accompanied by the **filing fee**, (see fee schedule at www.waterrights.ca.gov) made payable to the State Water Resources Control Board and an **\$850 fee** made payable to the Department of Fish and Game must accompany this petition. Separate petitions are required for each water right.

April 2012

Sonoma County Water Agency

**Instream Flow Analysis for 2012 Temporary Urgency Change
Petition**

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) controls and coordinates water supply releases from the Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam projects in accordance with the provisions of Decision 1610, which the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopted on April 17, 1986. Decision 1610 specifies the minimum flow requirements for the Russian River and Dry Creek. These minimum flow requirements vary based on water supply conditions, which are also specified by Decision 1610.

1.1 Minimum Flow Requirements

Decision 1610 requires a minimum flow of 25 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the East Fork of the Russian River from Coyote Valley Dam to the confluence with the West Fork of the Russian River under all water supply conditions. From this point to Dry Creek, the Decision 1610 required minimum Russian River flows are 185 cfs from April through August and 150 cfs from September through March during *Normal* water supply conditions, 75 cfs during *Dry* conditions and 25 cfs during *Critical* conditions. Decision 1610 further specifies two variations of the *Normal* water supply condition, commonly known as *Dry Spring 1* and *Dry Spring 2*. These conditions provide for lower required minimum flows in the Upper Russian River during times when the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury (owned and operated by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company) and Lake Mendocino on May 31 is unusually low. *Dry Spring 1* conditions exist if the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino is less than 150,000 acre-feet on May 31. Under *Dry Spring 1* conditions, the required minimum flow in the Upper Russian River between the confluence of the East Fork and West Fork and Healdsburg is 150 cfs from June through March, with a reduction to 75 cfs during October through December if Lake Mendocino storage is less than 30,000 acre-feet during those months. *Dry Spring 2* conditions exist if the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino is less

than 130,000 acre-feet on May 31. Under *Dry Spring 2* conditions, the required minimum flows in the Upper Russian River are 75 cfs from June through December and 150 cfs from January through March.

From Dry Creek to the Pacific Ocean, the required minimum flows in the Lower Russian River are 125 cfs during *Normal* water supply conditions, 85 cfs during *Dry* conditions and 35 cfs during *Critical* conditions.

In Dry Creek below Warm Springs Dam, the required minimum flows are 75 cfs from January through April, 80 cfs from May through October and 105 cfs in November and December during *Normal* water supply conditions. During *Dry* and *Critical* conditions, these required minimum flows are 25 cfs from April through October and 75 cfs from November through March.

Figure 1 shows all of the required minimum instream flows specified in Decision 1610 by river reach, the gauging stations used to monitor compliance, and the definitions of the various water supply conditions.

1.2 Water Supply Conditions

There are three main water supply conditions that are defined in Decision 1610, which set the minimum instream flow requirements based on the hydrologic conditions for the Russian River system. These water supply conditions are determined based on criteria for the calculated cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury from October 1 to the first day of each month from January to June. Decision 1610 defines cumulative inflow for Lake Pillsbury as the algebraic sum of releases from Lake Pillsbury, change in storage and lake evaporation.

Dry water supply conditions exist when cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury from October 1 to the date specified below is less than:

- 8,000 acre-feet as of January 1;
- 39,200 acre-feet as of February 1;
- 65,700 acre-feet as of March 1;
- 114,500 acre-feet as of April 1;
- 145,600 acre-feet as of May 1; and
- 160,000 acre-feet as of June 1.

Critical water supply conditions exist when cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury from October 1 to the date specified below is less than:

- 4,000 acre-feet as of January 1;
- 20,000 acre-feet as of February 1;
- 45,000 acre-feet as of March 1;
- 50,000 acre-feet as of April 1;
- 70,000 acre-feet as of May 1; and
- 75,000 acre-feet as of June 1.

Normal water supply conditions exist whenever a *Dry* or *Critical* water supply condition is not present. As indicated above, Decision 1610 further specifies three variations of the *Normal* water supply condition based on the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31. These three variations of the *Normal* water supply condition determine the required minimum instream flows for the Upper Russian River from the confluence of the East Fork and the West Fork to the Russian River's confluence with Dry Creek. This provision of Decision 1610 does not provide for any changes in the required minimum instream flows in Dry Creek or the Lower Russian River (the Russian River between its confluence with Dry Creek and the Pacific Ocean). A summary of the required minimum flows in the Russian River for *Normal*, *Normal-Dry Spring 1* and *Normal-Dry Spring 2* water supply conditions is provided here:

1. Normal: When the combined water in storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 of any year exceeds 150,000 acre-feet or 90 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less:

From June 1 through August 31	185 cfs
From September 1 through March 31	150 cfs
From April 1 through May 31	185 cfs

2. Normal-Dry Spring 1: When the combined water in storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 of any year is between 150,000 acre-feet or 90 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less, and 130,000 acre-feet or 80 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less:

From June 1 through March 31	150 cfs
From April 1 through May 31	185 cfs

If from October 1 through
December 31, storage in Lake
Mendocino is less than
30,000 acre-feet 75 cfs

3. Normal-Dry Spring 2: When the combined water in storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 of any year is less than 130,000 acre-feet or 80 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less:

From June 1 through December 31	75 cfs
From January 1 through March 31	150 cfs
From April 1 through May 31	185 cfs

2.0 PROJECTED WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS

From October 1, 2011 to April 3, 2012, the cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury was 147,457 acre-feet. Consequently, the water supply condition starting April 1 was categorized as *Normal*. Based on the designation of a *Normal* water supply condition, the Decision 1610 required minimum instream flows in the Upper Russian River (from the East Fork Russian River to the Russian River's confluence of Dry Creek) is 185 cfs and on the Lower Russian River (from the confluence with Dry Creek to the Pacific Ocean) is 125 cfs until at least the end of May. As discussed above, the water supply condition starting June 1, and in effect for the remainder of the year, will be determined based on cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury and the combined storage of Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31. At this time, the projected cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury and the combined storage amount are difficult to predict because they are heavily dependent on late spring precipitation. However, based on the current hydrologic trends, the Water Agency anticipates *Normal* or *Normal-Dry Spring 1* water supply conditions starting June 1. Consequently, the Decision 1610 required minimum instream flows in the Upper Russian River will likely be either 185 cfs or 150 cfs and on the Lower Russian River 125 cfs.

3.0 RUSSIAN RIVER BIOLOGICAL OPINION

Under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), coho salmon in the Russian River watershed are listed as an endangered species, and steelhead and Chinook salmon are listed as threatened species. Additionally, coho salmon are listed as an endangered

species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). In September 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued the Russian River Biological Opinion (Biological Opinion). This Biological Opinion was the culmination of more than a decade of consultation under Section 7 of the ESA by the Water Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) with NMFS regarding the impacts of the Water Agency's and Corps' water supply and flood control operations in the Russian River watershed on the survival of these listed fish species.

Studies conducted during the consultation period that ultimately led to this Biological Opinion led NMFS to conclude that the summer flows in the Upper Russian River and Dry Creek required by Decision 1610 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 estuary was managed as a seasonal freshwater lagoon. Minimum instream flows lower than those required by Decision 1610 may result in flows into the estuary that improve opportunities to maintain a freshwater lagoon while preventing flooding of adjacent properties.

To address these issues, NMFS's Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency and Corps to implement a series of actions to modify existing water supply and flood control activities that, in concert with habitat enhancement measures, are intended to minimize impacts to listed salmon species and enhance their habitats in the Russian River and its tributaries. The Water Agency is responsible for the following actions under the Biological Opinion:

- Petitioning the State Water Board to modify permanently the requirements for minimum instream flows in the Russian River and Dry Creek (Petition filed 6/23/2009);
- Enhancing salmonid habitat in Dry Creek and its tributaries;
- Developing a bypass pipeline around Dry Creek, if habitat enhancement measures are unsuccessful;
- Changing Russian River estuary management;
- Improving water diversion infrastructure at the Water Agency's Wohler and Mirabel facilities;
- Modifying flood control maintenance activities on the mainstem Russian River and its tributaries; and
- Continuing to participate in the Coho Broodstock program.

The Biological Opinion acknowledges that implementing permanent changes to the minimum instream flow requirements for the Russian River and Dry Creek will take

several years, including the time needed for review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and compliance with state and federal regulations. Consequently, the Biological Opinion requires that, starting in 2010, the Water Agency file annual petitions with the State Water Board for temporary changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements in the mainstem Russian River until the State Water Board has issued an order on the Water Agency's petition for permanent changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements.¹ The Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency to request that the mainstem minimum instream flow requirements be temporarily changed to the following value during *Dry* water supply conditions:

- 70 cfs between May 1 and October 15 at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) gage located at Hacienda Bridge (with the understanding that an operational buffer typically will result in flows of approximately 85 cfs)
- 125 cfs between May 1 and October 15 at the USGS gage located at Healdsburg

The temporary changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flows specified in the Biological Opinion are summarized in Figure 2. (The Biological Opinion does not require the Water Agency to seek any temporary changes to the minimum instream flow requirements for Dry Creek.)

4.0 CRITERIA FOR APPROVING TEMPORARY URGENT CHANGE TO PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950, 16596

As required by Water Code section 1435, subdivision (b), the Board must make the following findings before issuing a temporary change order:

1. The permittee or licensee has an urgent need to make the proposed change;
2. The proposed change may be made without injury to any other lawful user of water;
3. The proposed change may be made without unreasonable effect upon fish, wildlife, or other instream beneficial uses; and
4. The proposed change is in the public interest.

¹ The Water Agency filed annual petitions on April 6, 2010 and April 18, 2011. The State Board issued temporary urgency change orders for the petitions on May 24, 2010 and June 1, 2011, respectively.

4.1 Urgency of the Proposed Change

Decision 1610 set the minimum instream flow requirements that the State Water Board concluded, in 1986, would benefit both fishery and recreation uses, and would “preserve the fishery and recreation in the river and in Lake Mendocino to the greatest extent possible while serving the needs of the agricultural, municipal, domestic, and industrial uses which are dependent upon the water” (D 1610, § 13.2, page 21). The State Water Board also concluded in Decision 1610 that additional fishery studies should be done (D 1610, § 14.3.1, pages 26-27).

Twenty-six years later, it appears that the flows set by Decision 1610 no longer benefit both fishery and recreation uses. To the contrary, the Biological Opinion concludes that summertime flows in the Russian River during *Normal* water supply conditions, at the levels required by Decision 1610, are higher than the optimal levels for the listed fish species. The Biological Opinion contains an extensive analysis of the impacts of these required minimum instream flows on listed fish species. The Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency to file a petition with the State Water Board to improve conditions for listed species by seeking permanent reductions in the minimum instream flow requirements contained in Water Agency’s existing water rights permits. The Biological Opinion also contains the following requirement:

“To help restore freshwater habitats for listed salmon and steelhead in the Russian River estuary, SCWA will pursue interim relief from D1610 minimum flow requirements by petitioning the SWRCB for changes to D1610 beginning in 2010 and for each year prior to the permanent change to D1610. These petitions will request that minimum bypass flows of 70 cfs be implemented at the USGS gage at the Hacienda Bridge between May 1 and October 15, with the understanding that for compliance purposes SCWA will typically maintain about 85 cfs at the Hacienda gage. For purposes of enhancing steelhead rearing habitats between the East Fork and Hopland, these petitions will request a minimum bypass flow of 125 cfs at the Healdsburg gage between May 1 and October 15. NMFS will support SCWA’s petitions for these changes to D1610 in presentations before the SWRCB.”

(Biological Opinion, page 247.)

One of the species listed under the federal ESA (coho salmon) is also listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has issued a consistency determination in which it determined that the incidental take statement issued to Water Agency by NMFS in connection with the Biological Opinion is consistent with the provisions and requirements of CESA.

In light of this background, an urgent need exists for the proposed change. As discussed in the Biological Opinion, the temporary changes that are requested in this

petition will improve habitat for the listed species by reducing instream flows and by increasing storage for later fishery use, without unreasonably impairing other beneficial uses, thus maximizing the use of Russian River water resources. Moreover, given the listings of Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead under the federal ESA, there is a need for prompt action. As demonstrated by the Biological Opinion, there has been an extensive analysis of the needs of the fishery, and fishery experts agree that the Decision 1610 instream flows appear to be too high.

4.2 No Injury to Any Other Lawful User of Water

If this petition is granted, the Water Agency still will be required to maintain specified minimum flows in the Russian River. Because these minimum flows will be present, all other legal users of water still will be able to divert and use the amounts of water that they legally may divert and use. Accordingly, granting this petition will not result in any injury to any other lawful user of water.

4.3 No Unreasonable Effect upon Fish, Wildlife, or Other Instream Beneficial Uses

This petition is based upon the analysis contained in the 2008 Biological Opinion, which was issued primarily to improve conditions for fish resources in the Russian River system. Two types of improved conditions will result from an order approving this petition. First, the Biological Opinion concludes that stream flows that are required by Decision 1610 are too high for optimum fish habitat. If this petition is granted, then lower stream flows, which will result in better fish habitat, will occur. Second, lowering the required minimum instream flows will result in higher fall storage levels in Lake Mendocino. The resulting conservation of water in Lake Mendocino will allow enhanced management of Russian River flows in early fall for the benefit of fish migration.

It is possible that reduced flows in the Russian River may impair some instream beneficial uses, principally recreation uses. However, although some recreation uses may be affected by these reduced flows, any such impacts on recreation this summer will be reasonable in light of the impacts to fish that could occur if the petition were not approved.

4.4 The Proposed Change is in the Public Interest

As discussed above, the sole purpose of this petition is to improve conditions for listed Russian River salmonid species, as determined by NMFS and DFG. Approval of the Water Agency's petition to reduce instream flows to benefit the fishery will also result in higher fall storage levels in Lake Mendocino, which will make more water available in the fall for fishery purposes. Under these circumstances, it is in the public interest to temporarily change the Decision 1610 minimum required instream flows.

5.0 REQUESTED TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE TO PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950, 16596

The Temporary Urgency Change Petitions (TUCP) that the Water Agency filed in 2004, 2007 and 2009 requested reductions in the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements to address low storage levels in Lake Mendocino. In contrast, this petition, like the TUCPs filed in 2010 and 2011, is required by the Biological Opinion to provide improved conditions for threatened and endangered fish species. Water supply storage in Lake Mendocino as of April 3, 2012 was approximately 86,000 acre-feet, which is significantly higher than the April 3 levels observed in 2007 (71,019 acre-feet) and 2009 (53,650 acre-feet).

The proposed changes in the Decision 1610 Russian River minimum instream flows that are requested by this petition will not result in unusual circumstances. The proposed changes to minimum instream flows are within the range of those that already occur during the *Dry* and *Critical* water supply conditions specified by Decision 1610. Due to low rainfall and other hydrologic factors, flows in the Russian River from June through October for the three-year period from 2007 through 2009 have been similar to or lower than the minimum flows in the requested changes.

Because the requested changes are not driven by low storage levels in Lake Mendocino, reductions in summertime diversions by the Water Agency would not be beneficial. Under expected conditions, reducing the Water Agency's summertime diversions at Wohler-Mirabel would increase flows in the lower Russian River downstream of Wohler-Mirabel, which would exceed the minimum flows recommended in the Biological Opinion. In addition, since 2004 there has been a steady reduction in the amounts of wholesale water delivered by the Water Agency to its customers. In water year (WY) 2003/2004 the Water Agency's total water deliveries were 66,556 acre-feet. In WY 2010/2011, the Water Agency's total water deliveries were 47,045 acre-feet, a decrease of 39 percent. This is a result of a number of factors, including: (1) recent drought conditions; (2) the economic recession; and (3) significant long term conservation efforts by the Water Agency and its customers.

Historically, the Water Agency and its water contractors have implemented water use efficiency programs that align with the California Urban Water Conservation Council's Best Management Practices (BMPs). While these BMPs remain the baseline for the region, the adoption of the Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership in December 2010 memorialized the region's commitment to long-term, year-round water use efficiency. This partnership removes one of the most significant barriers to implementing conservation programs, funding. Each of the partners has committed to a minimum level of funding that is allocated specifically to conservation program implementation.

Furthermore, reductions in diversions by the Water Agency would likely result in increased groundwater pumping by the cities and special districts that purchase wholesale water from the Water Agency. This would have the unintended consequence of stressing local groundwater resources even though adequate surface water is available from the Russian River system.

To improve its efforts at achieving the optimal habitat conditions in the Lower Russian River and to optimally manage flows in the entire river, the Water Agency has requested in this year's TUCP (as in last year's) that the minimum instream flow requirement as it pertains only to the Upper Russian River be implemented on a 5-day running average of average daily streamflow measurements with the condition that instantaneous flows be no less than 110 cfs. This adjustment will allow the Water Agency to manage streamflows with a smaller operational buffer, thereby facilitating the attainment of the low flow conditions that the Biological Opinion identifies as being conducive to the enhancement of salmonid habitat. Reducing the operational buffer will also conserve water supply in Lake Mendocino, resulting higher storage levels in the fall for increased releases for the outgoing migration of Chinook salmon and improving carry-over storage for the following year.

The potential need to make changes after 1986 to the minimum instream flow requirements specified in Decision 1610 was contemplated by Decision 1610. Decision 1610 states: "Our decision will be subject to a reservation of jurisdiction to amend the minimum flow requirements if future studies show that amendments might benefit the fisheries or if operating the project under the terms and conditions herein causes unforeseen adverse impacts to the fisheries." As discussed in this petition, fisheries studies conducted during the last decade, which ultimately led to NMFS' Biological Opinion, now indicate the need to amend the Decision 1610 minimum flow requirements. The Water Agency therefore requests that the State Water Board approve this petition.