

commentletters - Comments for May 6th Workshop on Order WR 2009-0027-DWR

From: <rachel@rrgetaways.com>
To: <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>, <randy.poole@scwa.ca.gov>
Date: 4/23/2009 6:03 PM
Subject: Comments for May 6th Workshop on Order WR 2009-0027-DWR

April 23, 2009

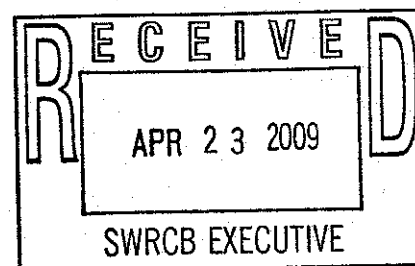
Jeannie Townsend

Clerk to the Board

State Water Resources Control Board

1001 I Street

Sacramento, CA 95814



Randy Poole

General Manager/ Chief Engineer

Sonoma County Water Agency

PO Box 11628

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RE: Comments for May 6th Workshop on Order WR 2009-0027-DWR

Dear Chairman Hoppin and Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my concern regarding impacts, both business and personal, related to Order 2009-0027- DWR and modifications in permit terms that would reduce

those impacts. The reduction in flows will cause severe impacts to water quality, recreation, community water systems, over-summering juvenile salmon and Steelhead as well as the lower River economy that depends on a healthy Russian River.

I am gainfully employed by Russian River Getaways, Inc., a vacation rental business generating revenues of nearly \$3,000,000 a year, bringing 30,000 or more visitors to the river annually, employing 22 people and supporting numerous ancillary businesses. Last year with river flows at 85 cfs, we barely were able to make it through the summer. The algae blooms made the river unswimmable in many areas, even had there been sufficient water, and we suspect that water quality was severely degraded. Because the water agency did not test for pathogens or excess nutrients, we never knew to what degree, but our dogs drinking from the river became ill for the first time. This also makes me concerned for my children who swim in the river every summer while visiting Grandma, a prominent local resident and business owner. Tourists who came to the river last summer left disappointed and we suspect many will never return. And we'll never know how many endangered fish, too small to notice or count, died; when the algae blooms, they cannot survive.

Right now our tourist industry is in great distress due to economic conditions. A reduction of flows below 85 cfs will ring the death knell for the tourist industry here. Our area provides Sonoma County with the great majority of its TOT funds; that will disappear. With vineyards failing to conserve while removing huge amounts of our groundwater (you can drive anywhere here in the winter and see their huge irrigation systems running full-tilt in the rain) and with towns claiming water conservation when their efforts have been pathetic at best (25% of the 2004 usage—give me a break—that's nothing at all), destroying the lower river does not make any sense from an economic or ecological point of view when there are numerous other remedies for the problems in the Mendocino dam and the degradation of Dry Creek and other salmon habitats, both short-term and long-term.

In order to reduce the impacts from reduced flows under Order 2009-0027-DWR we urge you on May 6 to take action to protect water quality and beneficial uses in the Russian River. Specifically we urge you to:

- Increase frequency of chemical water quality monitoring to every two weeks with results posted promptly on a public website to proactively prevent water quality problems such as algae blooms from increased nutrient concentrations

- Include new provisions in the order to require flow changes in response to violations in water quality standards or as needed to protect juvenile ESA listed fish over the summer, the water agency released water to protect grapes from frost on April 14 to 16th so we expect increases to protect water quality as well

- Installation of additional gauges as needed to ensure instantaneous flow compliance levels are maintained, in 2004 and 2007 compliance levels were violated under previous orders

- A minimum of 25% mandatory conservation for SCWA customers and all users downstream of Dry Creek to help maintain flows and conserve water in case of multi-year drought.

- Mandatory conservation by all permitted water diversions upstream of Dry Creek including agricultural and rural residential diversions and streamside wells pumping underflow

- Additional prohibitions in the Order on diversions that are not permitted in critically dry conditions or if needed a separate order restraining those unpermitted diversions to protect water storage in Lake Mendocino and maintain higher flows

- Keep order prohibition on commercial turf irrigation in SCWA service area and expand to include all commercial turf using water from the Russian River

We believe that modifying the order to include these provisions will improve protection of water quality, juvenile endangered fish and likely result in somewhat higher flows due to reduced diversions. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Rachel LeGrand, Internet Tech

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