

February 18, 2011

Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
Attention: Paul Murphey
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Re: Big Sur River Hearing

Dear Members of the State Water Resources Control Board,

I am writing this letter to urge the State Water Resources Control Board to approve Application 30166 submitted by James J. Hill III for El Sur Ranch.

The El Sur Ranch is an exceptional and unique property along the Big Sur Coast. Its uniqueness derives not simply from its geographic location, scenic, and environmental values, but from the care and quality of the stewardship exercised by the Hill family.

As one of the most iconic properties along the California coast, it serves as a gateway to Big Sur and showcases the care and effort demonstrated by the Hill family for decades in managing a working cattle ranch and tending to the needs of the land and their neighbors.

One need only see the routine and consistent maintenance of the fence lines, access roads, water use management, and brush and fire clearance to appreciate the commitment needed to preserve and nurture such an exceptional property.


Few, if any, public or private properties in Big Sur are managed and cared for in this manner and the results directly benefit the land, the community, its historic culture, and the visual scenic qualities of the Big Sur Coast that millions of visitors a year travel along Highway 1 to enjoy.

In a community that is famous and revered the world over for its environmental qualities, I can think of no better example of a consistent, competent, caring, and very successful stewardship of a landmark property than that of the El Sur Ranch under the ownership and management of the Hill family.

I have had the good fortune to have been raised in Big Sur and have spent countless hours over the last 49 years, hiking, running, recreating and otherwise enjoying Andrew Molera State Park and in particular the lower reaches of the Big Sur River and its entry into the Pacific Ocean near and around the area surrounding the wells used by the El Sur Ranch. At no time have I seen any indication or evidence of harm or environmental damage to this critical area as a result of the management and activities associated with the El Sur Ranch.

In addition to my experience as a life-long resident of Big Sur, I am an owner and the General Manager of Nepenthe Restaurant. I was raised with an appreciation of the importance of caring for our land and its environmental resources for future generations and I see the Hill family's stewardship of the El Sur Ranch as an excellent example for all those who love and care for Big Sur.

Sincerely,



Kirk Gafill
48460 Highway 1
Big Sur, CA 93920