

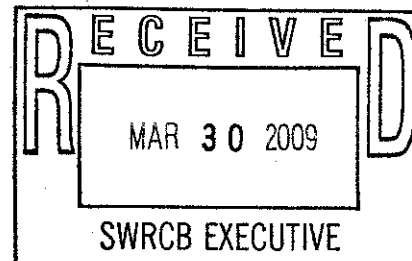
4/7/09 Bd Wrkshp
Russian River Frost Protect.
Deadline: 4/2/09 by 12 noon

From: "Steve Dutton" <sdutton@sonic.net>
To: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov
Date: Mon, Mar 30, 2009 9:50 AM
Subject: 4/7/09 Russian River Frost Protection Workshop

Steve Dutton
President
Dutton Ranch Corp.
PO Box 48
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March 30, 2009

Charlie Hoppin
State Water Resources Control Board
PO Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Chairman Hoppin:

I am writing with concerns that the State Water Resources Control Board will cut off water for frost protection purposes in the Russian River Basin.

Growers in Mendocino County have been actively participating in a coalition to manage the water needs of agriculture, municipal and environmental interests. I understand the need for conservation, but also believe steps can be taken to ensure a healthy agriculture economy, while avoiding harmful impacts to fish. The SWRCB should continue to support these efforts.

Due to the reduced levels of Lake Mendocino, many growers have already received a 50% cutback on water from their usage in 2008. The allocated water could be used for irrigation or frost protection, but the proposed regulations would take that option away.

While agriculture has had to cut back, the SWRCB is mandating artificially high releases based upon a normal rain year, when in fact there is precious little water left in the lake. Instead of continuing to require these releases, the SWRCB should act quickly so the water we will need later is not lost today.

It is impossible to watermaster the Russian River Basin, especially on an emergency basis. That means regulations like those on the Napa River would basically outlaw frost protection, which has always been a reasonable use.

Having the ability to utilize frost protection methods is essential to the pears and grapes grown in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. This action could cause permanent crop losses and severe economic impacts to the surrounding communities.

Last year's frost event was an extreme and rare occurrence. Since that time farmers have taken proactive measures to protect instream flows.

Emergency regulations prohibiting frost protection are not needed and are not the right answer. Please consider the alternatives available to ensure simultaneous protections.

Sincerely,

Steve Dutton
707-823-0448
President
Dutton Ranch Corp.