

**Russian River Flows Forum  
Guerneville Vets  
January 22, 2002**

IT'S MY GREAT PLEASURE TO BE WITH YOU HERE  
TONIGHT TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THE  
RUSSIAN RIVER AND THE PEOPLE AND  
CREATURES THAT DEPEND ON IT.

TONIGHT YOU WILL HEAR FROM THOSE WHO  
PROPOSED OR SUPPORT A PLAN TO REDUCE  
FLOWS IN THE RIVER BY AS MUCH AS 80  
PERCENT IN THE SUMMER IN ORDER TO IMPROVE  
HABITAT FOR ENDANGERED SALMON.

AND TONIGHT YOU WILL HEAR THE EXPERT  
TESTIMONY FROM PEOPLE WHO DISAGREE WITH  
THIS PLAN.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, THIS MEETING WILL  
PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR AUDIENCE  
TO ASK QUESTIONS.

WE ARE **NOT** HERE TONIGHT TO DEBATE THE  
ENVIRONMENT VS. THE ECONOMY. I THINK THAT  
EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM REALIZES THAT IN THE  
LONG RUN, A HEALTHY ECONOMY DEPENDS ON  
A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

OUR PURPOSE IS TO GET ANSWERS TO ONE  
MAJOR QUESTION: **WILL THIS PLAN REALLY**

**WORK? WILL IT SIGNIFICANTLY HELP TO  
RESTORE THE RUSSIAN RIVER'S THREATENED  
SALMON AND STEELHEAD FISHERY?**

I REALIZE THAT THE STAKES ARE ENORMOUS. A  
HEALTHY RUSSIAN RIVER WILL ENSURE THE  
SURVIVAL OF THREE GREAT SPECIES OF FISH,  
ENHANCE THE RIVER'S RECREATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITIES, AND SAFEGUARD THE WATER  
SUPPLY FOR **500,000** PEOPLE IN THREE COUNTIES.

BUT, IF THIS PLAN IS FLAWED, SOME SAY WE  
COULD LOSE OUR REMAINING RUNS OF **COHO**  
AND **CHINOOK SALMON** AND THE RIVER'S  
FAMED **STEELHEAD**, AND PERHAPS MANY  
OTHER SPECIES AS WELL. AND IT CAN BE

ARGUED THAT THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND A WAY OF LIFE THAT DEPENDS ON IT IS ALSO AT RISK.

WE CAN ILL AFFORD TO EXPERIMENT. WE CAN ILL-AFFORD TO MAKE MISTAKES.

AS WITH DEALING WITH OTHER ENDANGERED SPECIES LIKE THE TIGER SALAMANDER, WE NEED THE BEST POSSIBLE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION.

I KNOW THAT EVERYONE IN THIS AUDIENCE HAS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FLOW REDUCTION PLAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

I THINK THAT MANY OF YOU WILL WANT TO KNOW IF IT MAKES SENSE TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK ON THE RUSSIAN RIVER TO MIMIC ITS HISTORICAL FLOWS WITHOUT DEALING WITH OTHER HUMAN IMPACTS OF THE LAST 50 TO 100 YEARS.

DO WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, IF REDUCING FLOWS IN OTHER SIMILAR RIVERS HAS HAD BENEFICIAL RESULTS FOR WILDLIFE? WILL A LOW FLOW RIVER BE COOL ENOUGH FOR SALMON WHEN MUCH OF ITS RIPARIAN SHADE IS GONE AND ITS CREEKS ARE TEMPERATURE IMPAIRED? CAN WE EXPECT POLLUTANTS AND NUTRIENTS OOZING OUT OF THE **LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA** TO DILUTE HARMLESSLY IN THE

RIVER'S SUMMER TRICKLE? WILL SKIM GRAVEL  
MINING CLOUD THE RIVER WITH SEDIMENTS?

WE MUST ALSO CONSIDER THE PLAN'S EFFECTS  
ON THOSE WHO LIVE AND WORK HERE. WHAT  
WILL HAPPEN TO THE TOURIST ECONOMY IF  
CANOERS AND BOATERS CAN NO LONGER  
NAVIGATE THE RIVER? WILL THERE BE  
INCREASING SPIKES OF BACTERIA ON FAVORITE  
BEACHES RESULTING IN CLOSURES? WILL LOW  
FLOWS AFFECT WELLS THAT DRAW WATER  
FROM BENEATH THE RIVER'S GRAVEL BED? IF  
THE TOURIST ECONOMY DOES A BELLY FLOP,  
WILL THE LOWER RIVER AREA BECOME JUST  
ANOTHER SUBURB, MAKING MORE DEMANDS ON

THE RIVER -- AND HOW WILL THAT AFFECT THE FISH?

AGAIN, IT IS NOT A BLACK AND WHITE ISSUE OF FISH SURVIVAL VS. THE LOCAL ECONOMY. BUT WE HAVE TO ASK IF THERE ARE OTHER ALTERNATIVES THAT MAY DO A BETTER JOB TO RESTORE THE RIVER'S FISHERY WITH LESS RISK TO BOTH THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY?

WE ALSO NEED TO KNOW IF THE LOW FLOW PROPOSAL IS BEING CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER MAJOR CHANGES IN THE WATERSHED? HOW WILL LOW FLOWS AFFECT RESTORATION EFFORTS; PLANS TO INCREASE

STORAGE AT COYOTE DAM; AND PROPOSALS TO  
DRAW MORE WATER FROM THE WATERSHED  
AND RELEASE MORE WASTEWATER INTO IT?

AND, I THINK THAT ALL RESIDENTS OF SONOMA  
COUNTY DESERVE TO KNOW IF THE EXTRA  
WATER THAT WOULD BE STORED BEHIND WARM  
SPRINGS DAM WILL BE USED FOR ADDITIONAL  
GROWTH.

I'M NOT SECOND-GUESSING THE ENDANGERED  
SPECIES ACT ... I KNOW THAT THIS PROPOSAL  
HAS A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE IT IS EVER  
IMPLEMENTED. IT MUST PASS THE SCRUTINY OF  
AT LEAST THREE FEDERAL AGENCIES, (NMFS,  
USEPA AND USACE), BE SUBJECT TO PUBLIC

COMMENT, AND THEN BE APPROVED BY THE  
**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD.**

TONIGHT, OUR PANELISTS AND THOSE IN THE  
AUDIENCE, HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME  
PART OF THIS PROCESS. YOU WILL BE ASKING  
AND ANSWERING SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT  
I POSE AND MANY MORE.

NOW LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I, AS YOUR  
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS, EXPECT AS THIS  
PROCESS GOES FORWARD:

- FIRST, I EXPECT THOROUGH, SCIENCE-  
BASED ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS. IF  
THE ANSWER IS NOT AT HAND, THERE

MUST BE AN OPPORTUNITY IN THE FUTURE  
TO PROVIDE ANSWERS.

- IF FURTHER RESEARCH IS NEEDED TO  
PROVIDE ANSWERS TO SIGNIFICANT  
SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS, THEN  
PROponents OF THE LOW FLOW PLAN  
HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO DO IT.
  
- TRANSPARENCY MUST BE ADHERED TO  
THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS AND ALL  
DECISION-MAKING MEETINGS SHOULD BE  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

➤ FINALLY, AN INDEPENDENT AND  
UNBIASED PANEL OF SCIENTIST MUST  
REVIEW ALL INFORMATION LEADING TO  
A DECISION. THIS IS THE PROCESS THAT  
HAS BEGUN WITH THE REDEVELOPMENT  
DISTRICT STUDY, AND IT MUST  
CONTINUE AS NEW INFORMATION IS  
BROUGHT FORWARD.

LET ME PLEDGE TONIGHT THAT I WILL BE DOING  
AS MUCH AS I CAN TO ENSURE THAT THIS WILL  
BE THE CRITERION BY WHICH THE LOW FLOW  
PROPOSAL IS JUDGED.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO IN WASHINGTON, D.C., I WAS INVITED TO SAY A FEW WORDS ON THE OCCASION OF THE RUSSIAN RIVER BEING NAMED BY **AMERICAN RIVERS** AS ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST THREATENED RIVERS. I SAID THEN, "WE HAVE TAKEN SO MUCH FROM THIS RIVER, AND NOW WE MUST ALL GIVE SOMETHING BACK."

THOSE WORDS REMAIN TRUE TODAY. I HONOR THE WORK OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS; WATERSHED GROUPS; ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS; AGRICULTURE AND GOVERNMENT WHO ARE VOLUNTEERING THOUSANDS OF HOURS TO RESTORE THE RIVER AND ITS WATERSHED. THEY KNOW THAT SAVING THE RUSSIAN RIVER

INVOLVES COMMITMENT, SACRIFICES, AND  
PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT.

ANYONE WHO HAS WORKED TO RESTORE THIS  
RIVER KNOWS THAT THE WAY WE MANAGE IT  
MUST CHANGE, SO THAT ITS HUMAN USES ARE IN  
HARMONY WITH ITS NATURAL FUNCTIONS.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE MUST JOURNEY  
BACK TO THE NATURAL, PRISTINE RIVER OF THE  
PRIMEVAL PAST. BUT I'M CONFIDENT THAT THE  
BEST SCIENCE COMBINED WITH OUR BEST  
EFFORTS CAN RESULT IN A CLEAN, HEALTHY  
RUSSIAN RIVER THRIVING WITH LIFE.

THANK YOU.

