SWEETWATER SPRINGS WATER DISTRICT

TO: Board of Directors **AGENDA NO. V-D**

FROM: Steve Mack, General Manager

Meeting Date: March 1, 2012

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION/ACTION RE STATUS OF SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY PERMITS

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive a report from the General Manager on a meeting with Sonoma County Water Agency staff regarding the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) proposed Russian River water rights permit revisions.

FISCAL IMPACT: none

DISCUSSION:

I had a meeting with SCWA staff on February 7, 2012 to discuss the revisions to the SCWA Russian River Permits. The meeting was set up by SCWA General Manager Grant Davis after a meeting I held with him and Supervisor Efren Carrillo on this subject. Attending for SCWA were Jay Jasperse, I believe a deputy or assistant General Manager, Pam Jeane, Operations Manager (or something like that), Don Seymour, Principal Engineer, and Jessica Martini-Lamb, Principal Environmental Specialist. Items discussed included:

- I encouraged them to open up the process to have meetings in the lower river area to explain what is going on, what their intentions are with the permit revisions, and to answer questions. I got no commitment on this.

- SCWA staff said there actually two items for revisions – minimum flows and the Hydrologic Index (Index) for determining minimum flows. There is less attention on the Index. I agreed that revising the Index was a critical aspect of the revisions.

- We talked about my experience with the Cachuma Project permits revisions – a very similar situation but being handled differently.

- The SCWA staff stated that they were still developing alternatives for the EIR. No specific information was shared with me. I believe the EIR is scheduled for completion in 2013. I questioned the ability to stay on that schedule – EIR's are usually take longer than originally expected or planned.

- SCWA staff asked me what I wanted out of the revision process – what kind of revision was I looking for. I repeated my mantra that drought is the measure of a water supply and the revisions need to account for drought. The 2009 year was not that dry yet we were declaring drought emergency. Don Seymour responded that the 2009 year demonstrated a problem with the Russian River system – it's too dependent on Lake Mendocino which has such a small watershed. The 2009 situation will be hard to avoid without greater releases from Lake Sonoma which has plenty of water but restrictions on releases.

- In a later phone conversation with Don Seymour (responding my email thanking him for the meeting and suggesting the idea of a technical advisory committee on which I was interested in serving), he stated that they did have plans for a technical advisory committee and I would be contacted for participation. Currently, the modeling is being developed by Corps of Engineers and U.S. Geological Survey staff.

- I was encouraged by SCWA staff to call them whenever I have any questions about any aspect of their operations and any of the environmental work they are doing.

This meeting went well. SCWA staff are open to responding to questions I may have. They do not seem to be interested in providing more public information or holding public meetings in this area on an important subject that many residents have questions and concerns. There will likely not be more information on this until 2013 at the earliest – when the draft EIR is released. Participation in a technical advisory committee may be helpful in providing information sooner than that.