



## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**  
**May 10, 2007**

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### **State Water Board Grants Reduced Flows, Action Intended to Secure Water Supply for Salmon**

(Santa Rosa, CA) —The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) announced today that the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) approved its urgent request to reduce minimum water flow rates in the Russian River this year due to low water storage levels in Lake Mendocino. As of 8 a.m. this morning Water Agency staff began taking actions necessary to implement the reduced river flow rates authorized by the State Board. Flow reductions will be phased in over a period of about three weeks starting immediately.

Water officials in the Sonoma County region are also urging residents, businesses and farmers to take voluntary actions to reduce Russian River water use by 10 to 15% over the summer months. Effective voluntary conservation efforts will further assure adequate supplies for salmon are available and may help avoid the need for more stringent conservation measures later in the year.

“Now is a good time for all of us to consider our water use and look for ways to conserve water now and throughout the year.” said Paul Kelley, Sonoma County Supervisor. “It is critical to save water now so that supplies will be adequate for a thriving salmon run and for urban, agricultural, and recreational needs later in the year.” Kelley added.

The State Board approved reductions in the minimum instream flow required upstream from Healdsburg from 185 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 75 cfs. Required flow downstream of Healdsburg was reduced from 125 cfs to 85 cfs. Water Agency actions will adjust water releases from Lake Mendocino as appropriate to maintain flow rates in the upper Russian River upstream from the City of Healdsburg at rates above 125 cfs through May and 75 cfs after June 1. The flow rates in the lower river near the town of Guerneville will be managed to achieve flows above 85 cfs. The reduced flow rates are comparable to minimum flows normally implemented under dry year conditions in the Russian River watershed.

The Water Agency submitted an urgent request to reduce flow rates to the State Board on April 26th based on projections indicating critically low water levels in Lake Mendocino this fall at the time of the annual chinook salmon migration. Water Agency engineers projected that water levels in Lake Mendocino would drop to levels lower than 10,000 acre-feet which would be the lowest levels recorded since the lake was first opened in 1959. The reduced flow rates allow the Water Agency to retain additional water in storage in Lake Mendocino and improve the likelihood that adequate water supply will be available in the fall to provide for up to 4,500 chinook salmon expected to return to the river to breed.

The Water Agency is the local sponsor for the federal water projects at Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma and has authority to regulate water supply-related releases from these reservoirs to meet

the needs of more than 600,000 people in Sonoma and Marin counties. A decision by the State Board in 1986 requires the Agency to release sufficient water from the reservoirs to maintain flows rates above designated minimum values at certain points along the Russian River. This week's action by the State Board allows the Water Agency to implement river flow rates below the rates normally required under current rainfall conditions.

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