

FILE:CF/42-0.19-9 CORRESPONDENCE RELATED TO SWRCB  
ORDER APPROVING TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE IN  
PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950 & 16596  
(ORDER WR 2009-0027-DWR)

April 18, 2011

Barbara Evoy, Deputy Director of Water Rights  
State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Rights  
P.O. Box 2000  
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

**RE: Petition for Temporary Urgency Change—Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950, and 16596**

Dear Ms. Evoy:

Enclosed is a Petition for Temporary Urgency Change to modify the minimum instream flow requirements for the Russian River as established by Decision 1610 for Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950 and 16596. Accompanying the petition are the following:

- 1) A supporting analysis document: *Instream Flow Analysis for 2011 Temporary Urgency Change Petition.*
- 2) Notice of Exemption
- 3) California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Review Fee Payment
- 4) State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Petition Fee Payment

The petition is being submitted as required by the Russian River Biological Opinion issued by NOAA National Marine Fisheries in September 2008. The Sonoma County Water Agency requests that the Division of Water Rights act expeditiously to approve the requested changes to minimum instream flows as identified in the Russian River Biological Opinion.

I look forward to working with the State Water Resources Control Board and Division of Water Rights staff on this important conservation effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Grant Davis".

Grant Davis  
General Manager

c D. Butler, W. Hearn – National Marine Fisheries Service

RW\\files\server\Data\CL\pinksw\week 04-18-11\TUCP transmittal to SWRCB apr2011.docx

404 Aviation Boulevard - Santa Rosa, CA 95403-9019 • (707) 526-5370 - Fax (707) 544-6123 - [www.sonomacountywater.org/](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/)

**PETITION FOR TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE**  
(Water Code 1435)

  X   Change in Instream Flow Requirements

Applications # 12919A, 15736, 15737, 19351 Permits # 12947A, 12949, 12950, 16596

I (we) Sonoma County Water Agency hereby petition for a temporary urgency change(s) noted above  
(Water Right Holders Name)  
and described as follows:

The Sonoma County Water Agency requests that the State Water Resources Control Board make the following temporary changes to the Decision 1610 (D-1610) instream flow requirements for the period from May 1 through October 15: (a) reduce the D-1610 requirements in the Upper Russian River (from its confluence with the East Fork to its confluence with Dry Creek) to 125 cfs for Normal and Normal—Dry Spring 1 water supply conditions; (b) reduce the D-1610 requirements in the Lower Russian River (downstream of its confluence with Dry Creek) to 70 cfs for Normal and Dry water supply conditions.

These temporary changes are requested to comply with the National Marine Fisheries Service's *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed* (September 24, 2008).

The Water Agency also requests that the minimum instream flow requirement as it pertains to the Upper Russian River be specified as a 5-day running average of average daily streamflow measurements, with the stipulation that instantaneous flows will not be less than 110 cfs. This will allow the Water Agency to manage streamflows with a smaller operational buffer, thereby facilitating the attainment of flow conditions determined by NMFS and DFG to be conducive to the enhancement of salmonid habitat.

**Point of Diversion or Rediversion** (Give coordinate distances from section corner or California Coordinates, and the 40-acre subdivision in which the present and proposed points lie.)

Present see permits Proposed no change

**Place of Use** (If irrigation, then state number of acres to be irrigated within each 40-acre tract.)

Present see permits Proposed no change

**Purpose of Use**

Present see permits Proposed no change

Does the proposed use serve to preserve or enhance wetlands habitat, fish and wildlife resources, or recreation in or on the water (See WC 1707)? No (yes/no)

*\*\*\*This question was answered 'No' because this petition is not being filed under Water Code section 1707. However, the requested temporary changes will benefit fish resources, for the reasons stated in NMFS's Biological Opinion.*

The temporary urgency change(s) is to be effective from May 1, 2011 to October 15, 2011  
(Cannot exceed 180 days)

Will this temporary urgency change be made without injury to any lawful user of water? Yes (yes/no)

Will this temporary urgency change be made without unreasonable effect upon fish, wildlife, and other instream beneficial uses? Yes (yes/no)

State the "Urgent Need" (Water Code 1435(c)) that is the basis of this temporary urgency change petition (attach additional information as necessary):

see attachment *Instream Flow Analysis for 2011 Temporary Urgency Change Petition*

If the point of diversion or rediversion is being changed, is any person(s) taking water from the stream between the old point of diversion or rediversion and the proposed point?

Not Applicable (yes/no)

Are there any persons taking water from the stream between the old point of return flow and the new point of return flow? Not Applicable (yes/no)

If yes, give name and address, as well as any other person(s) known to you who may be affected by the proposed change.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I (we) consulted the California Department of Fish and Game concerning this proposed temporary change. Yes (yes/no)

If yes, state the name and phone number of the person contacted and the opinion concerning the potential effects of your proposed temporary urgency change on fish and wildlife and state the measures required for mitigation.

The Agency has been coordinating activities related to the Biological Opinion and DFG's Consistency Determination with Richard Fitzgerald (707-944-5568) and Eric Larson (707-944-5528) of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

Contacts at NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service for the Biological Opinion are Dr. William Hearn (707-575-6062) and Dick Butler (707-575-6058).

**THIS TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE DOES NOT INVOLVE AN INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF THE APPROPRIATION OR SEASON OF USE. THIS TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE IS REQUESTED FOR A PERIOD OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY DAYS OR LESS.**

I (we) declare under penalty of perjury that the above is true and correct to the best of my (our) knowledge and belief.

Dated April 18, 2011 at Santa Rosa, California



Signature(s)

(707) 521-6210

Telephone No.

404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-9019  
(Address)

**NOTE:** All petitions must be accompanied by the **filing fee**, (see fee schedule at [www.waterrights.ca.gov](http://www.waterrights.ca.gov)) made payable to the State Water Resources Control Board and an **\$850 fee** made payable to the Department of Fish and Game must accompany this petition. Separate petitions are required for each water right.

**April 2011**

**Sonoma County Water Agency**

**Instream Flow Analysis for 2011 Temporary Urgency Change  
Petition**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) controls and coordinates water supply releases from the Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam projects in accordance with the provisions of Decision 1610, which the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopted on April 17, 1986. Decision 1610 specifies the minimum flow requirements for the Russian River and Dry Creek. These minimum flow requirements vary based on water supply conditions, which are also specified by Decision 1610.

**1.1 Minimum Flow Requirements**

Decision 1610 requires a minimum flow of 25 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the East Fork of the Russian River from Coyote Valley Dam to the confluence with the West Fork of the Russian River under all water supply conditions. From this point to Dry Creek, the Decision 1610 required minimum Russian River flows are 185 cfs from April through August and 150 cfs from September through March during *Normal* water supply conditions, 75 cfs during *Dry* conditions and 25 cfs during *Critical* conditions. Decision 1610 further specifies two variations of the *Normal* water supply condition, commonly known as *Dry Spring 1* and *Dry Spring 2*. These conditions provide for lower required minimum flows in the Upper Russian River during times when the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury (owned and operated by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company) and Lake Mendocino on May 31 is unusually low. *Dry Spring 1* conditions exist if the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino is less than 150,000 acre-feet on May 31. Under *Dry Spring 1* conditions, the required minimum flow in the Upper Russian River between the confluence of the East Fork and West Fork and Healdsburg is 150 cfs from June through March, with a reduction to 75 cfs during October through December if Lake Mendocino storage is less than 30,000 acre-feet during those months. *Dry Spring 2* conditions exist if the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino is less

than 130,000 acre-feet on May 31. Under *Dry Spring 2* conditions, the required minimum flows in the Upper Russian River are 75 cfs from June through December and 150 cfs from January through March.

From Dry Creek to the Pacific Ocean, the required minimum flows in the Lower Russian River are 125 cfs during *Normal* water supply conditions, 85 cfs during *Dry* conditions and 35 cfs during *Critical* conditions.

In Dry Creek below Warm Springs Dam, the required minimum flows are 75 cfs from January through April, 80 cfs from May through October and 105 cfs in November and December during *Normal* water supply conditions. During *Dry* and *Critical* conditions, these required minimum flows are 25 cfs from April through October and 75 cfs from November through March.

Figure 1 shows all of the required minimum instream flows specified in Decision 1610 by river reach, the gaging stations used to monitor compliance, and the definitions of the various water supply conditions.

## **1.2 Water Supply Conditions**

There are three main water supply conditions that are defined in Decision 1610, which set the minimum instream flow requirements based on the hydrologic conditions for the Russian River system. These water supply conditions are determined based on criteria for the calculated cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury from October 1 to the first day of each month from January to June. Decision 1610 defines cumulative inflow for Lake Pillsbury as the algebraic sum of releases from Lake Pillsbury, change in storage and lake evaporation.

*Dry* water supply conditions exist when cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury from October 1 to the date specified below is less than:

- 8,000 acre-feet as of January 1;
- 39,200 acre-feet as of February 1;
- 65,700 acre-feet as of March 1;
- 114,500 acre-feet as of April 1;
- 145,600 acre-feet as of May 1; and
- 160,000 acre-feet as of June 1.

*Critical* water supply conditions exist when cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury from October 1 to the date specified below is less than:

- 4,000 acre-feet as of January 1;
- 20,000 acre-feet as of February 1;
- 45,000 acre-feet as of March 1;
- 50,000 acre-feet as of April 1;
- 70,000 acre-feet as of May 1; and
- 75,000 acre-feet as of June 1.

*Normal* water supply conditions exist whenever a *Dry* or *Critical* water supply condition is not present. As indicated above, Decision 1610 further specifies three variations of the *Normal* water supply condition based on the combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31. These three variations of the *Normal* water supply condition determine the required minimum instream flows for the Upper Russian River from the confluence of the East Fork and the West Fork to the Russian River’s confluence with Dry Creek. This provision of Decision 1610 does not provide for any changes in the required minimum instream flows in Dry Creek or the Lower Russian River (the Russian River between its confluence with Dry Creek and the Pacific Ocean). A summary of the required minimum flows in the Russian River for *Normal*, *Normal — Dry Spring 1* and *Normal — Dry Spring 2* water supply conditions is provided here:

1. Normal: When the combined water in storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 of any year exceeds 150,000 acre-feet or 90 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less:

From June 1 through August 31	185 cfs
From September 1 through March 31	150 cfs
From April 1 through May 31	185 cfs

2. Normal—Dry Spring 1: When the combined water in storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 of any year is between 150,000 acre-feet or 90 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less, and 130,000 acre-feet or 80 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less:

From June 1 through March 31	150 cfs
From April 1 through May 31	185 cfs
If from October 1 through December 31, storage in Lake	

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Mendocino is less than 30,000 acre-feet	75 cfs
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3. Normal—Dry Spring 2: When the combined water in storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 of any year is less than 130,000 acre-feet or 80 percent of the estimated water supply storage capacity of the reservoirs, whichever is less:

From June 1 through December 31	75 cfs
From January 1 through March 31	150 cfs
From April 1 through May 31	185 cfs

## 2.0 PROJECTED WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS

From October 1, 2010 to April 1, 2011, the cumulative inflow into Lake Pillsbury was 410,944 acre-feet. Consequently, the water supply conditions for this year will be categorized as *Normal*. Based on this designation, the Decision 1610 required minimum instream flows in the Upper Russian River (from the East Fork Russian River to the Russian River's confluence of Dry Creek) will remain at 185 cfs until at least May 31. The required minimum instream flows starting June 1 will be determined based on the combined storage of Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31. At this time, the combined storage amount is difficult to predict because it is heavily dependent on late spring precipitation. However, based on the current combined storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino, the Water Agency anticipates either *Normal* water supply conditions or *Normal — Dry Spring 1 starting* June 1. Consequently, the Decision 1610 required minimum instream flows in the Upper Russian River will likely be either 185 cfs or 150 cfs.

## 3.0 RUSSIAN RIVER BIOLOGICAL OPINION

Under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), coho salmon in the Russian River watershed are listed as an endangered species, and steelhead and Chinook salmon are listed as threatened species. Additionally, coho salmon are listed as an endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). In September 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued the Russian River Biological Opinion (Biological Opinion). This Biological Opinion was the culmination of more than a decade of consultation under Section 7 of the ESA by the Water Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) with NMFS regarding the impacts of the Water Agency's and Corps'

water supply and flood control operations in the Russian River watershed on the survival of these listed fish species.

Studies conducted during the consultation period that ultimately led to this Biological Opinion led NMFS to conclude that the summer flows in the Upper Russian River and Dry Creek required by Decision 1610 are too high for optimal juvenile salmonid habitat. NMFS also concluded in the Biological Opinion that the historical practice of breaching the sandbar that builds up and frequently closes the mouth of the Russian River during the summer and fall may adversely affect the listed species. NMFS concluded in the Biological Opinion that it might be better for juvenile steelhead and salmon if the sandbar is kept closed during these times, to allow for the formation of a seasonal freshwater lagoon in the estuary. However, the minimum instream flows required by Decision 1610 result in flows into the estuary that are so high that it is difficult to maintain a freshwater lagoon while preventing flooding of adjacent properties.

To address these issues, NMFS's Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency and Corps to implement a series of actions to modify existing water supply and flood control activities that, in concert with habitat enhancement measures, are intended to minimize impacts to listed salmon species and enhance their habitats in the Russian River and its tributaries. The Water Agency is responsible for the following actions under the Biological Opinion:

- Petitioning the State Water Board to modify permanently the requirements for minimum instream flows in the Russian River and Dry Creek (filed 9/23/2009);
- Enhancing salmonid habitat in Dry Creek and its tributaries;
- Developing a bypass pipeline around Dry Creek, if habitat enhancement is unsuccessful;
- Changing Russian River estuary management;
- Improving water diversion infrastructure at the Water Agency's Wohler and Mirabel facilities;
- Modifying flood control maintenance activities on the mainstem Russian River and its tributaries; and
- Continuing to participate in the Coho Broodstock program.

The Biological Opinion acknowledges that implementing permanent changes to the minimum instream flow requirements for the Russian River and Dry Creek will take several years, including the time needed for review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and compliance with state and federal regulations. Consequently, the Biological Opinion requires that, starting in 2010, the Water Agency file annual petitions with the State Water Board for temporary changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements in the mainstem Russian River until the State Water Board has issued an order on the Agency's petition for permanent changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow

requirements.<sup>1</sup> The Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency to request that the mainstem minimum instream flow requirements be temporarily changed to the following values:

- 70 cfs between May 1 and October 15 at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) gage located at Hacienda Bridge (with the understanding that an operational buffer typically will result in flows of approximately 85 cfs)
- 125 cfs between May 1 and October 15 at the USGS gage located at Healdsburg

The temporary changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flows specified in the Biological Opinion are summarized in Figure 2. (The Biological Opinion does not require the Water Agency to seek any temporary changes to the minimum instream flow requirements for Dry Creek.)

#### **4.0 CRITERIA FOR APPROVING TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE TO PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950, 16596**

As required by Water Code section 1435, subdivision (b), the Board must make the following findings before issuing a temporary change order:

1. The permittee or licensee has an urgent need to make the proposed change;
2. The proposed change may be made without injury to any other lawful user of water;
3. The proposed change may be made without unreasonable effect upon fish, wildlife, or other instream beneficial uses; and
4. The proposed change is in the public interest.

##### **4.1 Urgency of the Proposed Change**

Decision 1610 set the minimum instream flow requirements that the State Water Board concluded, in 1986, would benefit both fishery and recreation uses, and would “preserve the fishery and recreation in the river and in Lake Mendocino to the greatest extent possible while serving the needs of the agricultural, municipal, domestic, and industrial uses which are dependent upon the water” (D 1610, § 13.2, page 21). The State Water Board also concluded in Decision 1610 that additional fishery studies should be done (D 1610, § 14.3.1, pages 26-27).

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<sup>1</sup> The Water Agency filed its first annual petition on April 6, 2010 and the State Board issued a temporary urgency change order (Order WR 2010-0018-DWR) for 2010 on May 24, 2010.

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Twenty-five years later, it appears that the flows set by Decision 1610 no longer benefit both fishery and recreation uses. To the contrary, the Biological Opinion concludes that summertime flows in the Russian River, at the levels required by Decision 1610, are higher than the optimal levels for the listed fish species. The Biological Opinion contains an extensive analysis of the impacts of these required minimum instream flows on listed fish species. The Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency to file a petition with the State Water Board to improve conditions for listed species by seeking permanent reductions in the minimum instream flow requirements contained in Water Agency's existing water rights permits. The Biological Opinion also contains the following requirement:

“To help restore freshwater habitats for listed salmon and steelhead in the Russian River estuary, SCWA will pursue interim relief from D1610 minimum flow requirements by petitioning the SWRCB for changes to D1610 beginning in 2010 and for each year prior to the permanent change to D1610. These petitions will request that minimum bypass flows of 70 cfs be implemented at the USGS gage at the Hacienda Bridge between May 1 and October 15, with the understanding that for compliance purposes SCWA will typically maintain about 85 cfs at the Hacienda gage. For purposes of enhancing steelhead rearing habitats between the East Fork and Hopland, these petitions will request a minimum bypass flow of 125 cfs at the Healdsburg gage between May 1 and October 15. NMFS will support SCWA's petitions for these changes to D1610 in presentations before the SWRCB.”

(Biological Opinion, page 247.)

One of the species listed under the federal ESA (coho salmon) is also listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has issued a consistency determination in which it determined that the incidental take statement issued to Water Agency by NMFS in connection with the Biological Opinion is consistent with the provisions and requirements of CESA.

In light of this background, an urgent need exists for the proposed change. As discussed in the Biological Opinion, the temporary changes that are requested in this petition will improve habitat for the listed species by reducing instream flows and by increasing storage for later fishery use, without unreasonably impairing other beneficial uses, thus maximizing the use of Russian River water resources. Moreover, given the listings of Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead under the federal ESA, there is a need for prompt action. As demonstrated by the Biological Opinion, there has been an extensive analysis of the needs of the fishery, and fishery experts agree that the Decision 1610 instream flows appear to be too high.

#### **4.2 No Injury to Any Other Lawful User of Water**

If this petition is granted, the Water Agency still will be required to maintain specified

minimum flows in the Russian River. Because these minimum flows will be present, all other legal users of water still will be able to divert and use the amounts of water that they legally may divert and use. Accordingly, granting this petition will not result in any injury to any other lawful user of water.

#### **4.3 No Unreasonable Effect upon Fish, Wildlife, or Other Instream Beneficial Uses**

This petition is based upon the analysis contained in the 2008 Biological Opinion, which was issued primarily to improve conditions for fish resources in the Russian River system. Two types of improved conditions will result from an order approving this petition. First, the Biological Opinion concludes that stream flows that are required by Decision 1610 are too high for optimum fish habitat. If this petition is granted, then lower stream flows, which will result in better fish habitat, will occur. Second, lowering the required minimum instream flows will result in higher fall storage levels in Lake Mendocino. The resulting conservation of water in Lake Mendocino will allow enhanced management of Russian River flows in early fall for the benefit of fish migration.

It is possible that reduced flows in the Russian River may impair some instream beneficial uses, principally recreation uses. However, although some recreation uses may be affected by these reduced flows, any such impacts on recreation this summer will be reasonable in light of the impacts to fish that could occur if the petition were not approved.

#### **4.4 The Proposed Change is in the Public Interest**

As discussed above, the sole purpose of this petition is to improve conditions for listed Russian River salmonid species, as determined by NMFS and DFG. Approval of the Water Agency's petition to reduce instream flows to benefit the fishery will also result in higher fall storage levels in Lake Mendocino, which will make more water available in the fall for fishery purposes. Under these circumstances, it is in the public interest to temporarily change the Decision 1610 minimum required instream flows.

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## **5.0 REQUESTED TEMPORARY URGENCY CHANGE TO PERMITS 12947A, 12949, 12950, 16596**

The Temporary Urgency Change Petitions (TUCP) that the Water Agency filed in 2004, 2007 and 2009 requested reductions in the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements to address low storage levels in Lake Mendocino. In contrast, this petition, like the TUCP filed in 2010, is required by the Biological Opinion, to provide improved conditions for threatened and endangered fish species. Water supply storage in Lake Mendocino as of April 1, 2011 was approximately 87,104 acre-feet, which is significantly higher than the April 1 levels observed in 2007 (71,406 acre-feet) and 2009 (56,666 acre-feet).

The proposed changes in the Decision 1610 Russian River minimum instream flows that are requested by this petition will not result in unusual circumstances. The proposed changes to minimum instream flows are within the range of those that already occur during the *Dry* and *Critical* water supply conditions specified by Decision 1610. Due to low rainfall and other hydrologic factors, flows in the Russian River from June through October for the three-year period from 2007 through 2009 have been similar to or lower than the minimum flows that will be authorized by the proposed changes.

Because the requested changes are not driven by low storage levels in Lake Mendocino, reductions in summertime diversions by the Water Agency would not be beneficial. Under expected conditions, reducing the Water Agency's summertime diversions at Wohler-Mirabel would increase flows in the lower Russian River downstream of Wohler-Mirabel, which would exceed the minimum flows recommended in the Biological Opinion.

Last year under the TUCP minimum instream flow requirement conditions (May 1 – Oct 15), flows in the Lower Russian River averaged 422 cfs and were never lower than 94 cfs as measured at Hacienda Bridge. The high average for river flows occurred because there was significant late spring rainfall and lower than average air temperatures, which suppressed irrigation demands. To improve our efforts to achieve optimal habitat conditions in the Lower Russian River, as well as the Upper Russian River, the Water Agency requests in this petition that the minimum instream flow requirement for the Upper Russian River be specified as a 5-day running average of average daily streamflow measurements with the stipulation that instantaneous flows will not be less than 110 cfs. This will allow the Water Agency to manage streamflows with a lower operational buffer, thereby facilitating attainment of the conditions that are conducive to the enhancement of salmonid habitat.

The potential need to make changes after 1986 to the minimum instream flow requirements specified in Decision 1610 was contemplated by Decision 1610. Decision 1610 states: "Our decision will be subject to a reservation of jurisdiction to amend the minimum flow requirements if future studies show that amendments might benefit the

fisheries or if operating the project under the terms and conditions herein causes unforeseen adverse impacts to the fisheries.” As discussed in this petition, fisheries studies conducted during the last decade, which ultimately led to NMFS’ Biological Opinion, now indicate the need to amend the Decision 1610 minimum flow requirements. The Water Agency therefore requests that the State Water Board approve this petition.

Cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury (acre-feet) from Oct 1 through						
	1/1	2/1	3/1	4/1	5/1	6/1
<b>NORMAL</b>	≥8,000	≥39,200	≥65,700	≥114,500	≥145,600	≥160,000
<b>DRY</b>	<8,000	<39,200	<65,700	<114,500	<145,600	<160,000
<b>CRITICAL</b>	<4,000	<20,000	<45,000	<50,000	<70,000	<75,000

Water Supply Conditions Prevailing on 6/1 Apply Through 12/31

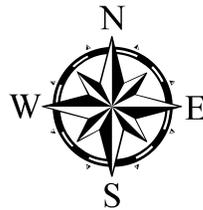
**LEGEND**

All flows are minimums, expressed in cubic feet per second.

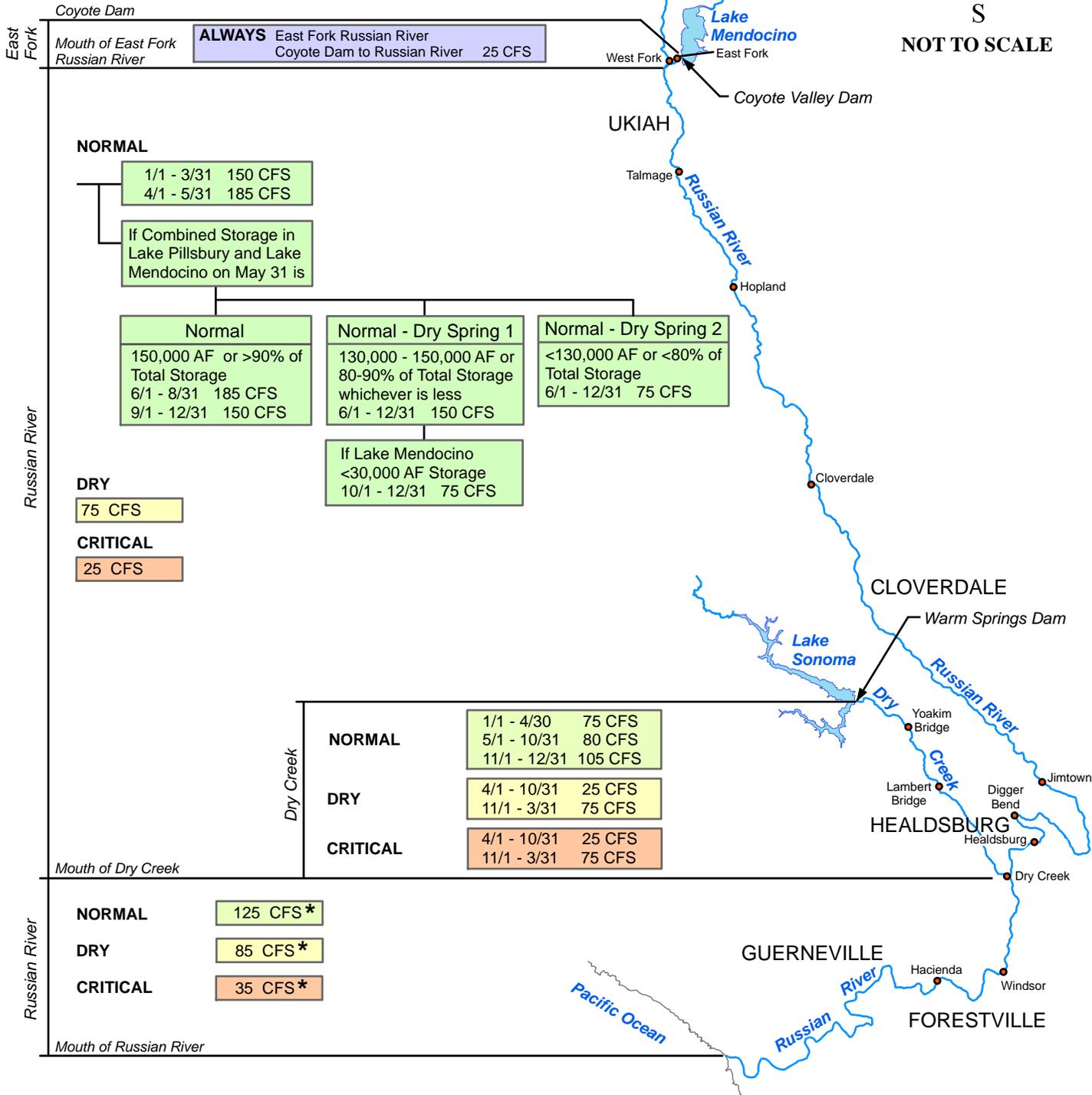
\* - Unless Lake Sonoma elevation is below 292.0, or if prohibited by the United States Government.

AF - Acre-Feet

● - USGS Stream Gage Compliance Points



NOT TO SCALE



Coyote Dam	<b>ALWAYS</b> East Fork Russian River Coyote Dam to Russian River 25 CFS
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**NORMAL**

1/1 - 3/31	150 CFS
4/1 - 5/31	185 CFS

If Combined Storage in Lake Pillsbury and Lake Mendocino on May 31 is

<b>Normal</b>	150,000 AF or >90% of Total Storage
6/1 - 8/31	185 CFS
9/1 - 12/31	150 CFS

<b>Normal - Dry Spring 1</b>	130,000 - 150,000 AF or 80-90% of Total Storage whichever is less
6/1 - 12/31	150 CFS

<b>Normal - Dry Spring 2</b>	<130,000 AF or <80% of Total Storage
6/1 - 12/31	75 CFS

<b>If Lake Mendocino &lt;30,000 AF Storage</b>	10/1 - 12/31 75 CFS
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**DRY**

75 CFS
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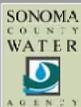
**CRITICAL**

25 CFS
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<b>Dry Creek</b>	<b>NORMAL</b>	1/1 - 4/30 75 CFS 5/1 - 10/31 80 CFS 11/1 - 12/31 105 CFS
	<b>DRY</b>	4/1 - 10/31 25 CFS 11/1 - 3/31 75 CFS
	<b>CRITICAL</b>	4/1 - 10/31 25 CFS 11/1 - 3/31 75 CFS

<b>Russian River</b>	<b>NORMAL</b>	125 CFS *
	<b>DRY</b>	85 CFS *
	<b>CRITICAL</b>	35 CFS *

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**Russian River Basin Streamflow Requirements**

Per State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1610, April 1986

Figure 1

**LEGEND**

- AF - Acre-Feet
- - USGS Stream Gage Compliance Points



Mouth of East Fork Russian River

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	125	May 1 - Oct 15	125	Jun 1 - Oct 31	185	Apr 1 - Aug 31
					150	Sep 1 - Oct 31
Normal - Dry Spring 1	125	May 1 - Oct 15	125	Jun 1 - Oct 31	185	Apr 1 - May 31
					150	Jun 1 - Mar 31

Upper Russian River

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	-	-	40	May 1 - Oct 31	80	May 1 - Oct 31

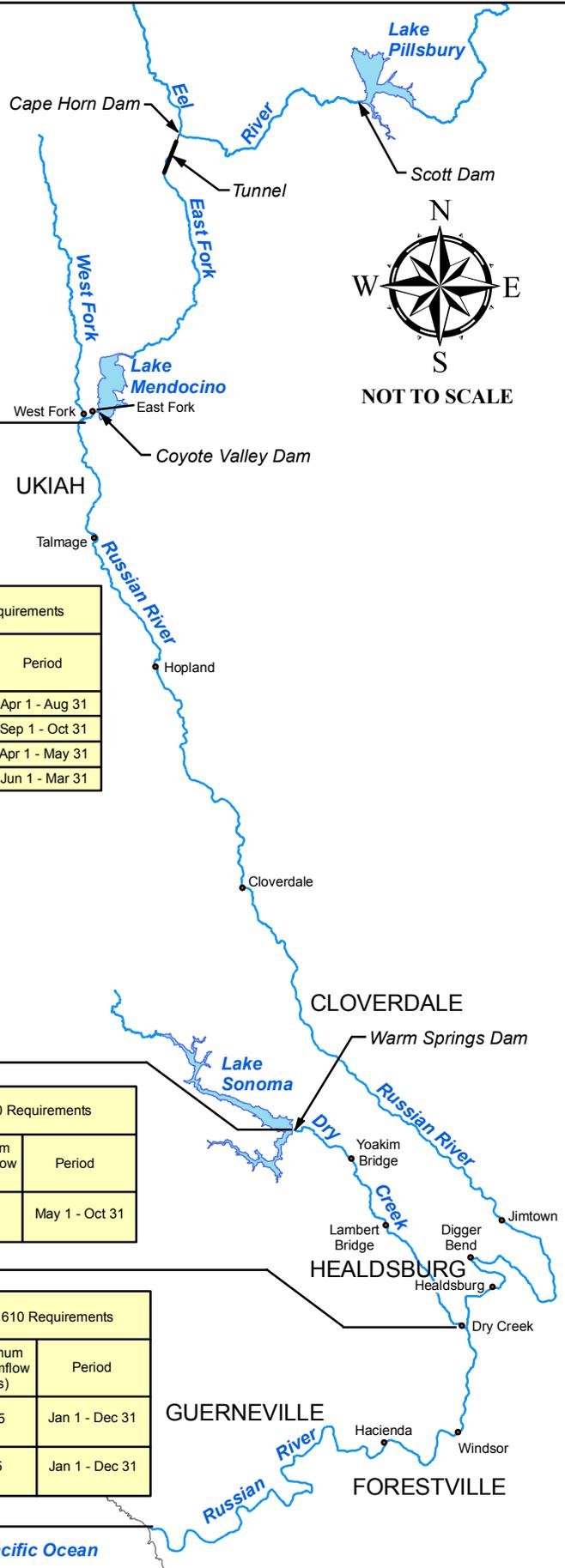
Dry Creek

Mouth of Dry Creek

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	70	May 1 - Oct 15	70	Jan 1 - Dec 31	125	Jan 1 - Dec 31
Dry	-	-	70	Jan 1 - Dec 31	85	Jan 1 - Dec 31

Lower Russian River

Mouth of Russian River



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**Russian River Biological Opinion  
Proposed Minimum Instream Flow Changes**  
Per National Marine Fisheries Service's Biological Opinion Issued September 24, 2008

Figure 2

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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To: X Office of Planning & Research  
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Boulevard  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

X County Clerk  
County of Sonoma  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

X County Clerk  
County of Mendocino  
Ukiah, CA 95482

**Project Title:** Petition by Sonoma County Water Agency Requesting Approval of a Temporary Urgency Change in Permits 12947A, 12949, 12950, and 16596 in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties (Applications 12919A, 15736, 15737, and 19351): 2011 Temporary Changes to Minimum Instream Flow Requirements of Decision 1610

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**Project Location:** The proposed action is to temporarily change the required minimum instream flows in the Russian River in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. Figure 1 shows the minimum instream-flow requirements in the water-right permits of the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) for its Russian River Project that are in effect now and that will remain in effect if the proposed action is not approved. The proposed action is to temporarily change some of these requirements, to the “Temporary Changes” shown in Figure 2, for the period from May 1, 2011 through October 15, 2011. Communities and cities along the Russian River include Ukiah, Hopland, Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg, Forestville, Mirabel Park, Rio Nido, Guerneville, Monte Rio, Duncans Mills, and Jenner.

**Project Background:** The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued its *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed* (Russian River Biological Opinion) on September 24, 2008.<sup>1</sup> NMFS concluded in the Russian River Biological Opinion that the continued operations of Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Water Agency in a manner similar to recent historic practices, together with the Water Agency’s stream channel maintenance activities and estuary management, are likely to jeopardize and adversely modify critical habitat for endangered Central California Coast coho salmon and threatened Central California Coast steelhead.

The Water Agency controls and coordinates water supply releases from the Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam projects in accordance with the requirements of Decision 1610, adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) in 1986. NMFS’ Russian River Biological Opinion states that changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements will enable alternative flow management scenarios that will increase available rearing habitat in Dry Creek and the upper Russian River, and provide a lower, closer to natural inflow to the estuary between late spring and early fall, thereby

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<sup>1</sup> NMFS’ Russian River Biological Opinion may be accessed online at [www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org) and may be reviewed at the Water Agency’s office at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA.

enhancing the potential for maintaining a seasonal freshwater lagoon that will likely support increased production of juvenile steelhead and salmon.<sup>2</sup>

As required by NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion, in September 2009 the Water Agency filed a petition with the SWRCB to make permanent changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements. This petition presently is pending before the SWRCB. The SWRCB will not act on this petition until the necessary environmental impact report is prepared and the water-rights issues associated with this petition are resolved. This process is expected to take several years.

Until the SWRCB issues an order on this petition, the Water Agency must maintain the minimum instream flows specified in Decision 1610, with resulting impacts to listed salmonids, unless temporary changes to these requirements are authorized by the SWRCB. To help restore freshwater habitats for listed salmon and steelhead in the upper mainstem Russian River and the estuary, NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion requires that the Water Agency petition the SWRCB for temporary changes to minimum instream flow requirements beginning in 2010 and for each year thereafter until the SWRCB issues an order on the Water Agency's petition for the permanent changes to the Decision 1610 minimum instream flow requirements. The temporary changes include a reduction in the minimum instream flow to 70 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the lower Russian River between May 1 and October 15, with the understanding that, because of the need to maintain an operational buffer above this minimum requirement, the Water Agency typically will maintain a flow of about 85 cfs at this point. Additionally, for the purposes of enhancing steelhead rearing habitat between the East Fork and Hopland, the temporary changes include a reduction in the minimum instream flow to 125 cfs in the upper Russian River between May 1 and October 15.<sup>3</sup> NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion only requires petitions for temporary changes to minimum streamflows on the mainstem Russian River, and not on Dry Creek. This petition therefore does not seek changes in required Dry Creek flows, which will be maintained at the levels currently required by Decision 1610.

The permanent and temporary changes to Decision 1610 minimum instream flows specified by NMFS in the Russian River Biological Opinion are summarized in Figure 2. NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion states that, in addition to providing the expected fishery benefits, the revised minimum instream flow requirements should promote water conservation and seek to limit effects on in-stream river recreation.<sup>4</sup>

**Description of Project:** To comply with the requirements of NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion, the Water Agency is filing a temporary urgency change petition with the SWRCB that asks the SWRCB to make the following changes in the instream flow requirements for the Russian River mainstem that are specified in Decision 1610 and the Water Agency's water right permits between May 1 through October 15, 2011: (a) a minimum instream flow requirement of 125 cfs in the upper Russian River (upstream of the confluence with Dry Creek and downstream of the confluence of the East and West Forks) measured as a 5-day running average of average daily streamflow measurements with the stipulation that instantaneous flows will not be less than 110 cfs. and (b) 70 cfs in the lower Russian River (downstream

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<sup>2</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 243. September 2008.

<sup>3</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p 247. September 2008.

<sup>4</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 244. September 2008.

of its confluence with Dry Creek), with the understanding that for compliance purposes the Water Agency will typically maintain a flow of about 85 cfs at this location.

Decision 1610 specifies the minimum instream flow requirements for Dry Creek and the Russian River (see Figure 1). These requirements vary based on defined hydrologic conditions. If approved, the requested reductions in Russian River instream flow requirements will be in effect May 1 through October 15, 2011. Under Normal water supply conditions, minimum flows during this time period could be as high as 185 cfs in the upper Russian River, 125 cfs in the lower Russian River, and 80 cfs in Dry Creek. Under the proposed change, minimum flows could be as low as 125 cfs in the upper Russian River and 70 cfs in the lower Russian River. No change in the Dry Creek requirements is required by the Biological Opinion or proposed and the minimum flow requirement in Dry Creek will remain at 80 cfs. The proposed changes in Russian River instream flow requirements will not result in any unusual circumstances, because the proposed minimum instream flow requirements are within the range of those that already occur during Dry and Critical water supply conditions under Decision 1610. In addition, due to low rainfall and other factors, flows in the river in recent years have been similar to or lower than the proposed changes. For example, compared to summer 2009, the requested minimum flows are slightly higher for the lower Russian River and substantially higher for the upper Russian River.

During the period that the proposed temporary flow changes are in effect, the Water Agency will also monitor water quality and fish, and collect and report information and data related to monitoring activities, as required by NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion. This information will assist with the study and development of required future permanent minimum instream flow changes.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** State Water Resources Control Board- Division of Water Rights

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Sonoma County Water Agency

**Exempt Status:** (Check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268) \_\_\_\_\_
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)); \_\_\_\_\_
- Emergency Project (Sec.21080 (b)(4); 15269(b)(c)); \_\_\_\_\_
- X** Categorical Exemption. State type and section number:
  - State CEQA Guidelines 15307: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources \_\_\_\_\_
  - State CEQA Guidelines 15308: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment \_\_\_\_\_
  - State CEQA Guidelines 15301(i): Existing Facilities \_\_\_\_\_
  - State CEQA Guidelines 15306: Information Collection \_\_\_\_\_
- Statutory Exemptions. State Code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The proposed action is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under the State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15307, 15308, 15301(i), and 15306.

*A. Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources and the Environment*

Guidelines Sections 15307 and 15308 provide that actions taken by regulatory agencies to assure the maintenance, restoration or enhancement of a natural resource and the environment are categorically

exempt from CEQA. If approved, the proposed changes in Russian River minimum instream flow requirements will increase available rearing habitat in the upper Russian River and provide a lower, closer to natural inflow to the estuary between late spring and early fall, thereby enhancing the potential for maintaining a seasonal freshwater lagoon that could support increased production of juvenile steelhead. NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion states that these changes are necessary to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of the listed species.<sup>5</sup> The proposed changes also will conserve water in Lake Mendocino to benefit adult Chinook salmon migrating upstream in the fall.

*B. Existing Facilities*

Guidelines Section 15301(i) provides, generally, that the operation of existing facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination is categorically exempt from CEQA. Subdivision (i) of Section 15301 specifically includes maintenance of streamflows to protect fish and wildlife resources. The Water Agency's petition to the SWRCB to change to the instream flow requirements specified in NMFS' Russian River Biological Opinion does not request and will not expand Water Agency use or increase the water supply available to the Water Agency for consumptive purposes. The proposed change in Russian River minimum instream flow requirements still will be within the existing operational parameters established by Decision 1610.

*C. Information Collection*

Guidelines Section 15306 provides that basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource are categorically exempt from CEQA. These activities may be part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted or funded. The water quality and fishery information and data collected during the period that the proposed temporary flow changes are in effect will assist with the study and development of the required future permanent minimum instream flow changes.

**Lead Agency Contact Person:** Jessica Martini-Lamb Area Code/Telephone: 707-547-1903

Signature:  Date: 04/18/2011 Title: General Manager

Lead Agency  Applicant  
Date Received for filing at OPR:

<sup>5</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service. Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed. p. 247. September 2008.

Cumulative inflow to Lake Pillsbury (acre-feet) from Oct 1 through						
	1/1	2/1	3/1	4/1	5/1	6/1
<b>NORMAL</b>	≥8,000	≥39,200	≥65,700	≥114,500	≥145,600	≥160,000
<b>DRY</b>	<8,000	<39,200	<65,700	<114,500	<145,600	<160,000
<b>CRITICAL</b>	<4,000	<20,000	<45,000	<50,000	<70,000	<75,000

Water Supply Conditions Prevailing on 6/1 Apply Through 12/31

**LEGEND**

All flows are minimums, expressed in cubic feet per second.

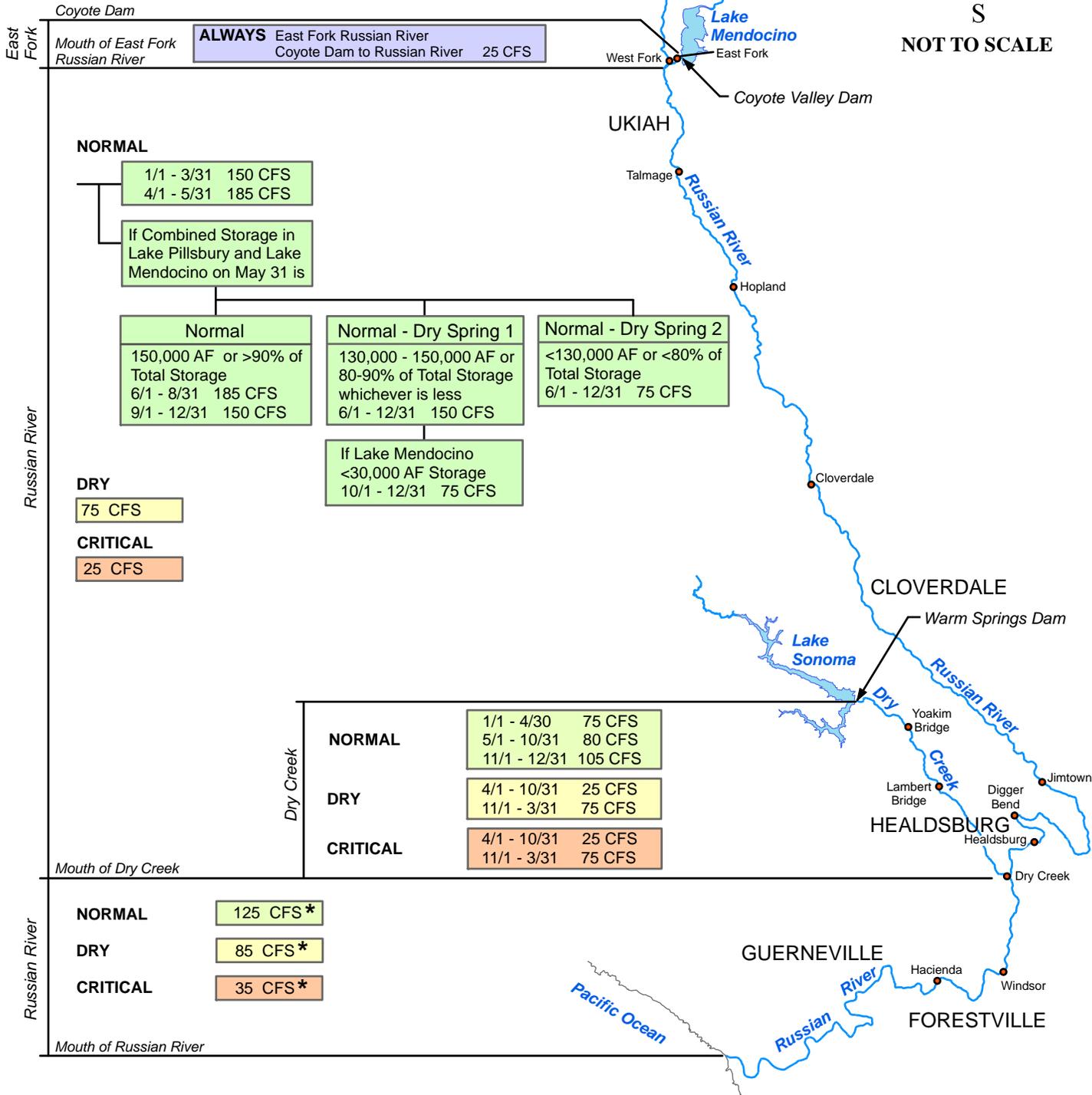
\* - Unless Lake Sonoma elevation is below 292.0, or if prohibited by the United States Government.

AF - Acre-Feet

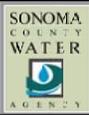
● - USGS Stream Gage Compliance Points



NOT TO SCALE



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# Russian River Basin Streamflow Requirements

Per State Water Resources Control Board Decision 1610, April 1986

Figure 1

**LEGEND**

- AF - Acre-Feet
- - USGS Stream Gage Compliance Points



Mouth of East Fork Russian River

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	125	May 1 - Oct 15	125	Jun 1 - Oct 31	185	Apr 1 - Aug 31
					150	Sep 1 - Oct 31
Normal - Dry Spring 1	125	May 1 - Oct 15	125	Jun 1 - Oct 31	185	Apr 1 - May 31
					150	Jun 1 - Mar 31

Upper Russian River

Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	-	-	40	May 1 - Oct 31	80	May 1 - Oct 31

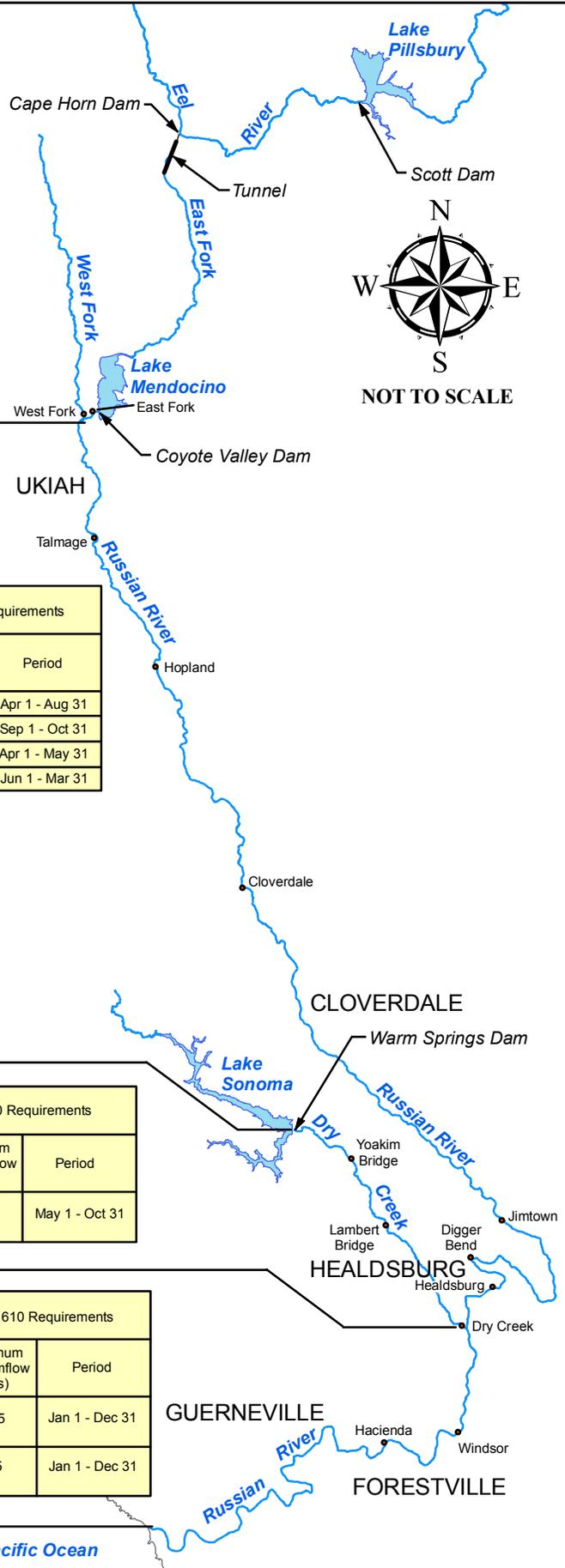
Dry Creek

Mouth of Dry Creek

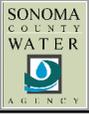
Water Supply Conditions	NMFS Biological Opinion Proposed Changes				D1610 Requirements	
	Temporary Changes		Permanent Changes		Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period
	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period	Minimum Streamflow (cfs)	Period		
Normal	70	May 1 - Oct 15	70	Jan 1 - Dec 31	125	Jan 1 - Dec 31
Dry	-	-	70	Jan 1 - Dec 31	85	Jan 1 - Dec 31

Lower Russian River

Mouth of Russian River



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**Russian River Biological Opinion  
Proposed Minimum Instream Flow Changes**  
Per National Marine Fisheries Service's Biological Opinion Issued September 24, 2008

Figure 2



TO THE TREASURER OF THE  
**COUNTY OF SONOMA**  
 SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA  
 OR ANY BANK OR BANKER

**CLAIMS WARRANT**  
 REVOLVING FUND 10-052-000

WARRANT NO.  
 1190266

11-35  
 1210

DATE 03/28/2011  
 VOID AFTER SIX MONTHS

PAY THIS AMOUNT
****\$22,479.80

PAY *Twenty two thousand four hundred seventy nine and 80/100 Dollars*

To The  
 Order  
 Of

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
 DIVISION WATER QUALITY  
 STORM WATER SECTION  
 P O BOX 1977  
 SACRAMENTO CA 95812-1977

*[Signature]*  
 RODNEY A. DOLE  
 AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

SIGNATURE AREA CONTAINS A KNIGHT & FINGERPRINT CHECK WORDING

⑈0001190266⑈ ⑆121000358⑆ 00439⑈80050⑈

ABSENCE OF PINK U.S. PATENT NUMBERS UNDER SIGNATURE INDICATES CHECK IS FRAUDULENT. PATENT NUMBERS ARE PRINTED WITH HEAT SENSITIVE INK & WILL DISAPPEAR WHEN BLOWING OR RUBBING

**THIS CHECK IS VOID WITHOUT A GREEN & BLUE BORDER AND BACKGROUND PLUS A KNIGHT & FINGERPRINT WATERMARK ON THE BACK - HOLD AT ANGLE TO VIEW**



TO THE TREASURER OF THE  
**COUNTY OF SONOMA**  
 SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA  
 OR ANY BANK OR BANKER

**CLAIMS WARRANT**  
 REVOLVING FUND 10-052-000

WARRANT NO.  
 1190269

11-35  
 1210

DATE 03/28/2011  
 VOID AFTER SIX MONTHS

PAY THIS AMOUNT
*****\$850.00

PAY *Eight hundred fifty and 00/100 Dollars*

To The  
 Order  
 Of

CA ST DEPT-FISH & GAME  
 P O BOX 944209  
 SACRAMENTO CA 94244-2090

*[Signature]*  
 RODNEY A. DOLE  
 AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

SIGNATURE AREA CONTAINS A KNIGHT & FINGERPRINT CHECK WORDING

⑈0001190269⑈ ⑆121000358⑆ 00439⑈80050⑈

ABSENCE OF PINK U.S. PATENT NUMBERS UNDER SIGNATURE INDICATES CHECK IS FRAUDULENT. PATENT NUMBERS ARE PRINTED WITH HEAT SENSITIVE INK & WILL DISAPPEAR WHEN BLOWING OR RUBBING