# Meeting Summary Russian River Water Forum Planning Group Meeting #3

Ukiah Valley Conference Center and Zoom July 13, 2023, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

#### **Executive Summary**

The Russian River Water Forum Planning Group held its third meeting on July 13, 2023, both in-person at the Ukiah Valley Conference Center and online via Zoom. The meeting was facilitated by Kearns & West (K&W), a neutral third party. Presentation slides and a recording of the meeting are available on the project website at the following links:

- Slides
- Recording

The meeting objectives outlined in the agenda were as follows:

- Revisit outcomes from June 12 Planning Group meeting and follow up on action items and key discussion topics.
- Provide updates on recent technical briefings and upcoming Working Group meetings.
- Discuss current Russian River water supply resiliency efforts and how water resiliency should inform the development of a proposed solution for the Potter Valley Project decommissioning process.
- Provide the opportunity for public comment.

The meeting agenda can be found in Appendix A. The meeting had a total of 79 participants, including 25 Planning Group members, 20 alternates, and 34 other attendees. The list of meeting attendees can be found in Appendix B.

The next section provides a summary of the Planning Group's deliberations during the meeting, including action items identified and agreements reached, and comments provided during public comment. Key take-aways from the meeting included:

- The Planning Group discussed whether Working Group meetings should be public or private and agreed to the Steering Committee's recommendation of a hybrid approach.
- The Planning Group confirmed the charter pending final updates to the resiliency section.
- Various members gave presentations on ongoing resiliency work in the Russian River basin, received question, and participated in discussion.
- The Planning Group generally agreed that the diversion is needed in the short-term with the goal of self-sufficiency in the long-term, while simultaneously pursuing a two-basin solution with Eel River mitigations and fish passage.
- Public comment was received and documented.

#### Action Items included:

- **Kearns & West** will propose revised language for the Resiliency Subcommittee in the charter for the group to consider.
- Planning Group Members interested in co-chairing either Working Group should self-nominate.
- **Kearns & West** will schedule the first Russian River Resiliency Subcommittee meeting within the next two months.

#### **Meeting Summary**

#### Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Ben Gettleman, facilitator with K&W, welcomed Planning Group members, alternates, and other attendees to the meeting and introduced the K&W facilitation team.

Ben shared the meeting objectives, agenda, and the Planning Group's purpose, and reviewed guidelines for participation. Planning Group Members introduced themselves, beginning with those in person, followed by those on Zoom.

#### Outcomes and Follow-up from June 12 Planning Group Kick-off Meeting

Ben reviewed outcomes from the previous meeting, including:

- Added Planning Group members and updated the charter
- Discussed decision-making: Planning Group will strive for consensus with differing views documented and the Steering Committee as a resource, i.e., no voting
- Reviewed Planning Group member interests
- Reviewed clarifying statements from PG&E regarding the decommissioning schedule and project timeline
- Discussed keys to success and challenges facing the Planning Group

Ben reviewed updates to the charter, including the following. Ben asked for final revisions to the charter to be submitted that day, Thursday, July 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Page 1: added language around long-term and sustainable solutions
- Page 3: additional Planning Group seats
  - Hopland Band of Pomo Indians: Orval Elliott, Jr.
  - Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians: Anna FarPorte and Stephanie Hopkins
- Russian River Resiliency Subcommittee: added language around sustainable solutions, demand reduction in the Russian River watershed, and equitable solutions

Ben asked Orval and Stephanie to introduce themselves. Orval was not present at the meeting and Stephanie's microphone did not work, but she provided this written introduction:

I'm Stephanie Hopkins with Sherwood Valley in the EPA Department. I'm new to Sherwood Valley's EPA Department and am a tribal member of Sherwood Valley Rancheria. We are excited to be a part of the Planning Group.

Ben asked Jaime Neary (Russian Riverkeeper) to speak to the proposed updates to the Resiliency Subcommittee language in the charter. The Planning Group discussed the meaning of "beneficial uses," and whether to use the state's definition or a broader one. It was suggested that the group use the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region's definition (see below), but the group did not arrive at consensus.

"Beneficial uses" of the waters of the state that may be protected against water quality degradation include, but are not necessarily limited to, domestic, municipal, agricultural, and industrial supply; power generation; recreation; aesthetic enjoyment; navigation; and preservation and enhancement of fish, wildlife, and other aquatic resources or preserves.

Chapter 2, Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region

**Action:** Kearns & West will propose revised language for the Resiliency Subcommittee in the charter for the group to consider.

#### Steering Committee Recommendation on Working Groups

The Planning Group supported the Steering Committee recommendation that Working Groups use a hybrid model with an open session and private discussions as needed, the balance to be determined by co-chairs with the facilitation team on a case-by-case basis. It was recommended that the co-chairs represent both watersheds. **Action:** Kearns & West to update the charter to reflect these recommendations.

#### Keys to Success for the Planning Group

Ben reviewed the discussion and Miro virtual whiteboard from the previous meeting, noting the following themes. Keys to success identified by the Planning Group included:

- Take advantage of previous work (Ad Hoc Committee/Two-Basin Partnership)
- Creative solutions and willingness to work across interests; find middle ground
- Mutual gains: water supply, ecological function/fisheries, economies consider both basins
- Common understanding of facts (what water is available, costs, etc.)
- Recognize impacts of PVP on Eel River, and that RR water supply resiliency will include some continued Eel River diversions
- Think about long-term, different future climate

Ben asked for questions and comments. One member asked what studies are available that don't require dam removal. A discussion began around whether the diversion is needed. Interests included: optimal fish flows on the Eel River; diversions only when Eel River water is abundant; desire to influence PG&E's draft surrender application so as not to preclude diversions; ecological restoration on the Eel River; tribal access to consumable water; and preventing economic fallout in both basins. Sonoma Water shared that they are working with IWPC to engage with PG&E in looking at different diversion alternatives. Multiple Planning Group Members shared the desire to come to a common understanding and middle ground.

#### Technical Briefings Update

Jim shared updates from the two technical briefings.

The Water Supply & Fisheries Technical Briefing was held via Zoom on June 21. Briefing slides, recording, and discussion summary are posted on the Working Groups page of the <u>Water Forum website</u>. Topics covered included:

- Listing and status of salmonids in the Eel and Russian river basins
- Studies conducted as part of the Huffman Ad Hoc process; alternatives evaluated
- Update on Van Arsdale / Cape Horn Diversion Facility Assessment
- Review of Lake Mendocino operations, priority of releases
- Review of Huffman Ad Hoc modeling of Lake Mendocino storage under alternatives: a) run-ofthe-river operations + FIRO; b) decommissioned PVP.
- Water rights and water mgmt.

The Water Rights & Water Management Technical Briefing was held via Zoom on June 22. Briefing slides, recording, and discussion summary are posted on the Working Groups page of the <a href="Water Forum">Water Forum</a> <a href="Website">Website</a>. Topics covered included:

- Categories of water rights in the Russian River
- Rights to "abandoned" PVP water
- Rights to water stored in Lake Mendocino, including the 10,000-acre-foot reservation
- Potential effects of changes to the PVP
- Water rights in the Eel River basin
- Federal Indian reserved water rights
- RVIT water and fishing rights in the Eel River basin

There were no questions about the Technical Briefings.

**Action:** Ben requested that any Planning Group members interested in co-chairing either Working Group self-nominate.

#### Russian River Water Supply Resiliency, Part 1

The group transitioned into the first round of presentations on Russian River water supply resiliency. Ben introduced the speakers and asked people to hold their questions and comments until the end of each section. All slides shared are part of the meeting slide deck on the <u>Water Forum website</u>.

#### Upper Russian River Voluntary Sharing Agreement (John Nagle, Sonoma RCD)

This agreement was developed during the drought state of emergency by junior and senior water rights holders on the Upper Russian River. In 2022, the program made possible five additional weeks of irrigation. The program is being used as a model for other water sharing agreements in the state.

#### City of Ukiah Water Resiliency Program (Sean White, City of Ukiah)

The city relies on four water sources: surface water, ground water, recycled water, and groundwater recharge. By building recharge ponds and water recycling programs, the city lowered water usage from an average of 3000 acre-feet per year to net usage of 289 acre-feet in 2022. A fourth phase of construction for the water recycling program is set to be completed in 2024. The goal is net zero usage.

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#### Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership (Claire Nordlie, Santa Rosa Water)

This collaboration includes 13 utilities in Sonoma and Marin counties and has decreased residential and commercial water use by almost half between 1995 and 2022. The partnership provides a variety of educational efforts, goalsetting initiatives, and messaging resources for its participants and residents.

#### **Discussion Summary**

Discussion began with a question on the long-term potential for water conservation; the presenters acknowledged that although the region is leading the state in water conservation, more needed to be done. It was also noted that Sonoma Water has reduced deliveries from 66,000 acre-feet in 2004 to 37,000 in 2022. There was a question about whether these programs include agriculture; while Sonoma Water doesn't supply agriculture, agricultural users have mostly transitioned to recycled water and drip irrigation to reduce their water use; the City of Ukiah's program does include agricultural water users. A question was raised about priorities for water in Lake Mendocino and confirmed that the first priority was instream flows for fish, followed by community health and safety, and then agriculture; several people raised that disadvantaged communities and tribal communities often still do not have access to water for health and safety. There was a question about how instream flows are determined; the State Water Board passed Decision 1610, which dictates what needs to be available in the Russian River based on historical flows; additionally, NMFS' Biological Opinion requires summertime flows, which necessitates water storage in Lake Mendocino.

#### Russian River Water Supply Resiliency Presentations, Part 2

The group transitioned into the second round of presentations on Russian River water supply resiliency. Ben introduced the speakers and asked people to hold their questions and comments until the end of each section. All slides shared are part of the meeting slide deck on the <u>Water Forum website</u>.

# Alexander Valley and Dry Creek Rancheria Recharge Project (Adriane Garayalde, Russian River Confluence)

The goal of the project is to capture high flows to recharge groundwater. The Alexander Valley is working on a diversion water right to aid with this project, with the goals of replenishing the upper and lower groundwater basins, increasing soil moisture, and increasing baseflow back to the Russian River. Dry Creek Rancheria is applying for a DWR grant to assist with this project.

#### Evaluating Water Resiliency Options for Potter Valley Irrigation District (Janet Pauli, PVID)

Janet detailed the system of canals and laterals in Potter Valley, which has been in place since the diversion began in 1922. The district has reduced system losses since 2014 by about 25%, and is voluntarily engaged in demand-based diversion, taking less than their water right, which has saved 6340 acre-feet in 2023. PVID is engaged in demand reduction and exploring new water storage options, including above- and below-ground storage in Potter Valley. (note: Janet's presentation did not include slides)

# Russian River Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (Don Seymour and Jay Jasperse, Sonoma Water)

Lake Mendocino was the first FIRO (Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations) pilot site in the country. This program allows the owner (US Army Corps of Engineers for Lake Mendocino) to use forecasting to decide when to make releases and how much to release. In 2020, this program saved 19% more water than the previous program would have. The goal is to introduce FIRO at Lake Sonoma as well.

#### **Discussion Summary**

Discussion began with an appreciation of the impressive water savings of the programs. It was noted that a program to move water from Lake Sonoma to Lake Mendocino is currently being explored. The Potter Valley Tribe representative offered to help PVID as a partner.

#### Lunch

The Planning Group broke for lunch for 30 minutes at 1:00.

Discussion: How should water resiliency inform the identification of a proposed solution for the PVP?

Ben welcomed people back from lunch and began by framing the discussion question around the topic of water resiliency. He read from the State Water Board's 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio (Slide 78). Ben framed the questions for the group. Discussion proceeded, one question at a time.

**Question 1:** How can water resiliency be pursued aggressively in the Russian River basin? What does Russian River resiliency look like? What should be the Russian River resiliency goals in the near- and long-term?

Question 1 Discussion Summary: Multiple participants in the discussion mentioned the importance of the diversion for near-term water supply, with the goal of Russian River self-sufficiency in the longer term. Different participants noted the ways the watershed is already adapting, while acknowledging the importance of continuing to reduce demand, increase recharge and recycling, and eventually eliminating reliance on the diversion, with a plan and specific benchmarks for progress. Several participants noted that this process of adaptation is difficult and will require time and resources. Other suggestions included the importance of education, of learning to live within the water budget, land budget and the carrying capacity of the environment, the use of regenerative land management practices such as prescribed burning and planting native plants, and the value of water storage, both at Lake Mendocino and Lake Pillsbury. It was also suggested that the basin work proactively to get away from the constant need to be "resilient" in the face of disaster.

**Question 2:** Is the PVP diversion needed to address Russian River water demand in the near-term? If so, how can it be pursued while most effectively addressing the interests of parties in both basins?

Question 2 Discussion Summary: The Planning Group generally agreed that the diversion is needed in the short-term with the goal of self-sufficiency in the long-term, while also pursuing a two-basin solution with Eel River mitigations and fish passage all at the same time. The goal of self-sufficiency in the long-term while keeping the diversion in the near term, with planned and benchmarked adaptation over time, was raised. One participant asked about what flows are needed in the Eel River; another participant shared that NMFS sets RPA (reasonable and prudent alternative) flows for the river and is currently reconsidering what those flows should be; a third participant noted that minimum flows are not great for fish and that they would prefer optimal flows; a fourth participant noted that the benefit to the Eel River of dam removal and reduced diversions would not be the volume of water flowing so much as the habitat opening up.

**Question 3:** How can the Resiliency Subcommittee support achieving the resiliency goals? What should it focus on?

Question 3 Discussion Summary: The most common theme from this discussion was a need to understand what other resiliency efforts are underway, where the data gaps are, and what water is available through a complete and precise water accounting. One member noted an opportunity to collaborate across the region and identify potential new projects and programs that could help address the region's water needs. Several members specifically mentioned understanding shortcomings in dry years, which they noted would be worse without the diversion, so that the basin can better adapt to that shortfall. Others mentioned looking at ways the Russian River basin can be proactive with its water supply and move from emergency water sharing agreements to agreements that can be used all the time. One participant asked what the costs and benefits would be of new infrastructure compared against refurbishing and improving existing infrastructure.

**Action:** Kearns & West will schedule the first Russian River Resiliency Subcommittee meeting within the next two months.

#### **Public Comment**

- **David Taber**, *Palomino Lake Mutual Water Company*: I heard many goals, some in conflict with one another. We need to recognize that no one will get exactly what they want; everyone will need to yield to get what they need. We all need to have a spirit of building, not contesting, and we need to stop grandstanding.
- **George Cinquini**, Lake Pillsbury Alliance, Russian River Sportsman's Club: We need more fish in both rivers and in all rivers along the West Coast. The runs this year were terrible. Hatchery programs have been studied but not used; what if instead of using millions of dollars destroying infrastructure, we used it to help fish? Lake Pillsbury has helped save more fish than its hurt. The area above Lake Pillsbury and Scott Dam is only about 8% of the Eel River watershed has that really caused the destruction of the Eel River watershed? I think not. We should take our money and fix the Potter Valley Project, then pay PG&E to manage it. My hope is to find an entity to take it over, fix it, and make it work for everyone involved.
- Glen Spain, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association, Institute for Fisheries Resources:
  I am struck by the delta between supply and demand. If there is a continuous delta, then that's a sign that the water is over-appropriated. Supply is limited. Demand is unlimited. So, our biggest strategy needs to be demand reduction. I am very impressed with programs in Ukiah to meet the needs (not demands) of people and environment. The problem with the studies showing Lake Mendocino going dry is that they assume a continued level of demand. Coyote Valley Dam was designed to be built 36 feet higher than today, which could store an additional 75,000 acre-feet, about twice the diversion from the Eel. This has already been detailed in engineering studies for more than 50 years. If we're looking to meet the gap between supply and demand, that's one of the few things we can do to improve supply. In 2015, there was a study for that. It would be nice to have that study on the table.
- Frank Lynch, Lake Pillsbury Alliance: Whether Lake Mendocino's capacity is increased, the diversion is needed to fill it. These will be unbelievably expensive projects to get water to Potter Valley. A fish ladder around Scott Dam would cost less. The water does not belong to anyone in particular. We need a regional solution.

#### Next Steps, Future Meetings, and Action Items

Ben summarized the meeting discussions and how they related to the objectives.

Planning Group Meeting #3 Summary Version: July 31, 2023 Ben shared the upcoming schedule of meetings:

- **Planning Group**: First Thursdays of the month from 10 am 3 pm (August 3, September 7, October 5, November 2, December 7)
- Water Supply & Fisheries Working Group: Wednesday, July 19, 9 11 am
- Water Rights & Water Management Working Group: Tuesday, July 25, 9 11 am

Ben thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

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## Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic	Presenter	
10:00 am	Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review	Ben Gettleman, Kearns     West	
10:15 am	Outcomes and Follow-up from June 12 Planning Group Meeting Revisions to Planning Group charter Steering Committee recommendation re: Working Group participation	Ben Gettleman, Kearns     West	
10:35 am	Update on Technical Briefings and Working Group Meetings	Jim Downing, Kearns & West	
10:45 am	<ul> <li>Russian River Water Supply Resiliency Part 1</li> <li>Upper Russian River Water Sharing         Program     </li> <li>City of Ukiah resiliency programs</li> <li>Sonoma-Marin Water Saving Partnership</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>John Nagle, Sonoma RCD</li> <li>Sean White, City of Ukiah</li> <li>Claire Nordlie, City of Santa Rosa Water</li> </ul>	
11:30 am	<ul> <li>Russian River Water Supply Resiliency Part 2</li> <li>On-farm groundwater recharge program</li> <li>Evaluating water resiliency options for Potter Valley Irrigation District</li> <li>Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations at Lake Mendocino, regional water resiliency study</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Adriane Garayalde,         Russian River         Confluence</li> <li>Janet Pauli, Potter Valley         Irrigation District</li> <li>Don Seymour, Sonoma         Water</li> </ul>	
12:30 pm	Lunch		
1:00 pm	Discussion of How Water Resiliency Should Inform the Identification of a Proposed Solution for PVP	Ben Gettleman, Kearns     & West	
2:30 pm	Public Comment	Members of public	
2:55 pm	Recap of Meeting and Next Steps	Ben Gettleman, Kearns     West	
3:00 pm	Adjourn		

## Appendix B: Meeting Attendance

Planning Group Members, Alphabetized

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?	Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?
Alicia Hamann	Friends of the Eel River	٧	Jaime Neary	Russian Riverkeeper	٧
Allan Nelson	Agriculture Landowner		Janet Pauli	PVID; IWPC	٧
Anna FarPorte	Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians		Jennifer Burke	City of Santa Rosa Water	٧
Bert Whitaker	Sonoma County Regional Parks		John Mack	Permit Sonoma	
Brandon Axell	Mendocino County Farm Bureau	٧	John Nagle	Sonoma RCD	٧
Bree Klotter	Redwood Valley County Water District	٧	President Lewis Whipple	Round Valley Indian Tribes	
Brenda L. Tomaras	Lytton Band of Pomo Indians	٧	Luis Santana	Robinson Rancheria	
Vice Chair Brian Mead	Wiyot Tribe		Matt Clifford	Trout Unlimited	
Carol Cinquini	Lake Pillsbury Alliance	٧	Mike Thompson	Sonoma Water	٧
Cathy Monroe	Mendocino County RCD	٧	Nikcole Whipple	Save California Salmon	٧
Charlie Schneider	CalTrout	٧	Orval Elliott Jr.	Hopland Band of Pomo Indians	
Dennis Murphy	Agriculture Landowner, Sonoma RCD	٧	Sean White	City of Ukiah	٧
Supervisor Eddie Crandell	Lake County		Shannon Cotulla	Town of Windsor	٧
Elizabeth Salomone	RRFCWCID	٧	Terri McCartney	Pinoleville Pomo Nation	٧
Gary Helfrich	Camp Meeker Rec. & Park District	٧	Terry Crowley	City of Healdsburg	٧
Supervisor Glenn McGourty	Mendocino County	٧	Tony Williams	North Marin Water District	٧
Gregg Young	Potter Valley Tribe		Sgtat-Arms Tyrone Mitchell	Yokayo Tribe of Indians	٧
Hank Seemann	Humboldt County	٧	Vivian Helliwell	PCFFA; IFR	٧
Total Planning Group Member Attendance					25/36

## Planning Group Alternates, Alphabetized

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?	Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?
Adam Gaska	Redwood Valley County Water District	٧	Frank Lynch	Lake Pillsbury Alliance	٧
Adriane Garayalde	Agriculture Landowner; RR Confluence	٧	Glen Spain	PCFFA; IFR	٧
Alicia Beecher	Hopland Band of Pomo Indians	٧	Guinness McFadden	PVID; IWPC	٧
Andy Colonna	PCFFA; IFR	٧	Javier Silva	Yokayo Tribe of Indians	
Bill Ricioli	Agriculture Landowner	٧	Mari Rodin	City of Ukiah	
Supervisor Bruno Sabatier	Lake County		Mary Grace Pawson	City of Rohnert Park	
Chris Shutes	California Sportfishing Protection Alliance		Maureen Mulheren	Mendocino County	٧
Chris Watt	RRFCWCID		Meghan Quinn	American Rivers	٧
Craig Tucker	Humboldt County		Michael Makdisi	Sonoma County Administrator's Office	٧
Dakota Perez	Pinoleville Pomo Nation		Mike Shaver	Potter Valley Tribe	٧
Dan Herrera	City of Petaluma		Pam Bacigalupi	Agriculture Landowner	٧
David Kelley	City of Cloverdale		Paul Sellier	Marin Municipal Water District	
David Manning	Sonoma Water	٧	Redgie Collins	CalTrout	٧
Denise Woods	Mendocino County RCD	٧	Stephanie Hopkins	Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians	٧
Don McEnhill	Russian Riverkeeper	٧	Chair Ted Hernandez	Wiyot Tribe	
Don Seymour	Sonoma Water	٧	Tyler Rodrique	RRFCWCID	
Eric Schanz	Sweetwater Springs Water District	٧	Wyatt Smith	Round Valley Indian Tribes	
Total Planning Group Alternate Attendance					20/34

## Other Attendees, Alphabetized

Name	Affiliation
Angle Slater	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Ann DuBay	Sonoma Water
Bob Anderson	
Candace Horsley	Inland Water & Power Commission
Carrie Shattuck	Mendocino County District 1 Candidate for Supervisor
Claire Nordlie	City of Santa Rosa Water
David Taber	Palomino Lakes Mutual Water Company
Devon Boer	Mendocino County Farm Bureau
Doris Eraldi	
George Cinquini	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Hollie Smith	Sierra Club
Jared Walker	Redwood Valley County Water District
Jason Liles	
Jay Jasperse	Sonoma Water
Jenni	
John Driscoll	Office of Congressman Jared Huffman
John Mendoza	Sonoma Water
Karen Rifkin	Ukiah Daily Journal
Laurel Marcus	California Land Stewardship Institute
Lindsey Cain	Sonoma Water
Madeline Cline	Mendocino County Farm Bureau
Martha Barra	Redwood Valley Vineyards
Monica Hueltl	Mendofever.com
Nancy Horton	
Pam Jeane	Sonoma Water
Paula Whealen	Wagner & Bonsignore
Peter Kiel	Law Office of Peter Kiel
Rue Furch	Sierra Club
Ryan Long	Data Instincts
Scott Greacen	Friends of the Eel River
Steven Elliott	Potter Valley Irrigation District
Theresa Ryan	
Tom Johnson	Inland Water & Power Commission
Trevor Mockel	Mendocino County District 1 Candidate for Supervisor