

Meeting Summary

Russian River Water Forum

Planning Group Meeting #6

Ukiah Valley Conference Center and Zoom

October 5, 2023, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Executive Summary

The Russian River Water Forum Planning Group held its sixth meeting on October 5th, 2023, in-person in Ukiah 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](#).

The meeting objectives outlined in the agenda were as follows:

- Revisit outcomes from August 17 Planning Group meeting and follow up on action items and key discussion topics.
- Provide update on New Eel-Russian Facility Proposal; discuss future coordination with Planning Group.
- Provide updates on recent and upcoming Working Group meetings.
- Provide presentation on Lake County and Lake Pillsbury Alliance interests in relation to Potter Valley Project and New Facility Proposal.
- Provide the opportunity for public comment.

The meeting agenda can be found in Appendix A. The meeting had a total of 88 participants, including 20 Planning Group members, 19 alternates, and 49 other attendees. The list of meeting attendees can be found in Appendix B.

Key takeaways from the Planning Group's deliberations during the meeting, including action items identified and agreements reached, include:

- The proponents of the New Eel-Russian Facility Proposal to PG&E – IWPC, RVIT, and Sonoma Water – provided an update on the proposal and how it fits in to the decommissioning process. Proponents noted that PG&E had agreed to include the proposal concept in the draft Potter Valley Project decommissioning plan, which will likely be released in November 2023.
- Lake Pillsbury Alliance and Lake County presented their interests in relation to the Potter Valley Project and the New Eel-Russian Facility Proposal.
- Public comment was received and documented.

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 members who attended in person, followed by members on Zoom.

Outcomes and Follow-up from August 17 Planning Group Meeting and September 15 Steering Committee Meeting

Ben reviewed outcomes from the August 17 Planning Group meeting, including a review of the discussion around the proponents' proposal. The [proposal link](#) was shared in the chat. Some of the key themes of discussion included:

- Transparent, collaborative process between the Planning Group and the proponents with timely updates, clear requests for information, and satisfaction of mutual interests.
- Inclusion of tribal beneficial uses and increased tribal input.
- Set objectives for each meeting and consider redefining the PG's objectives since the proposal has been submitted.
- Consideration of impacts to fisheries and habitats in the Eel River watershed, and investment to mitigate these impacts and restore the watershed.
- Economic analysis of impacts to both basins, tribal governments, and Lake County.
- Concern around participation being misconstrued as consensus; suggestion that converging and diverging views be captured without implying agreement.

Ben also shared other outcomes from the August Planning Group meeting, including:

- An update was given on the Water Rights & Water Management Working Group.
 - Some members noted that tribal water use predates all legal water rights and that tribal water rights should therefore be included in the Working Group's proceedings.
- Public comment was received and documented.

Then, Ben shared outcomes from the September 15 Steering Committee meeting, including potential future learning topics for the Water Forum, such as tribal connections to the Eel and Russian Rivers, and Russian River ecosystem restoration and health. Ben also shared that the next Planning Group Meeting would include a presentation on the Eel River.

Ben invited Steering Committee members to add their own takeaways and asked for members to share their own learning topics. One member raised questions about the future of the Water Forum and the need for a written plan. Another asked for a repository for shared documents, rather than needing to go through the facilitation team. One member raised the potential for Tule Elk restoration to be included as a topic area. After comments were shared, Ben transitioned to the next topic.

Update on New Eel-Russian Facility Proposal and Coordination with Planning Group

Janet Pauli, Potter Valley Irrigation District and Mendocino Inland Water and Power Commission, gave an update on the proposal and the PG&E decommissioning process. She began by noting that PG&E made a non-binding acceptance in concept of the proposal and agreed to include it in its initial draft decommissioning application, which will likely be released in November 2023. PG&E's proposal will also include plans to remove Cape Horn and Scott Dams. The proponents of the New Eel-Russian Facility are pleased with PG&E's inclusion of their proposal and see it as an important step forward because it helps secure a potential continued diversion and helps listed species on the Eel River by ensuring Cape Horn Dam is removed and replaced with something better for fish passage. One important component moving forward is that the proposal will need support from CDFW, NMFS, and representative governmental and NGO representatives from the Russian and Eel River basins. The proponents are beginning those conversations and will continue with those moving forward. Janet paused to ask for questions. Grant Davis, General Manager of Sonoma Water, helped answer questions as well.

Questions and responses are included below:

1. You mentioned PG&E removal of Cape Horn Dam. Does that mean your proposal doesn't include Cape Horn Dam removal?
 - The proposal includes four components, including alternatives to Cape Horn Dam and several objectives required by PG&E: (1) the establishment of a legal, regional entity; (2) the selected design must meet co-equal objectives; this step necessitates the removal of Cape Horn Dam because one of the objectives is free fish passage, which Cape Horn Dam does not allow in its current configuration; (3) a purchase-and-sale agreement; and (4) support from the stakeholders previously mentioned. This is not the end of the story, just a first measure to get more answers from PG&E and keep the option of a diversion on the table.
2. Do you have a list of who you're working with?
 - Currently, we are working with NMFS and CDFW. We have discussed the proposal with some other entities already and are working to expand that list over time. Our hope is that the discussion in the Water Forum will inform our discussions around the proposal as well.
3. What modifications to the proposal is PG&E asking for?
 - Currently, some aspects of this are still to be determined. PG&E has given its non-binding acceptance, which is a good sign. The initial draft decommissioning plan in November will tell us a lot more. There is a lot of work to be done and details to refine between now and May 2024, when PG&E's draft final application will be submitted.
4. When you say that PG&E has accepted the proposal, does that mean the initial proposal from August or the one with changes since then?
 - We don't really know yet. PG&E's current acceptance is of the August 3 proposal in concept, not verbatim. We'll find out more in November when PG&E releases the draft decommissioning plan.
5. Will PG&E consider the proposal's claims about which alternative gains broad support?
 - Ultimately, that will be up to PG&E. For this proposal, there are two leading candidate alternatives to study, both allowing for diversions in winter months and fish passage. There is a technical group led by David Manning and Don Seymour. Right now, the goal is

to bring the two alternatives to 30% design, which takes some time. PG&E plans to release its draft decommissioning plan for public comment in November, so there will be opportunities to provide comment.

6. Is it possible for another alternative to be added later? Is there a PG&E alternative as well? Or are these the only alternatives on the table? How much will they cost?
 - Right now, these are the two alternatives on the table. I'm unaware of other potential alternatives. We don't yet have good cost estimates.
7. We want to start restoration in the Eel River sooner than later.
8. Why is the diversion related to winter months and not flow of the river? Seems like the latter would be better for fish populations.
 - The natural flow is during winter months. We have summer flow right now because of Scott Dam which PG&E intends to remove. With this plan, we could only divert flows during winter when natural flows are available. This is also designed to protect ecological function and fish in Eel River during harder months of year. How we will manage the diversion will be based on what is there naturally.
9. How will proposal partners figure out water rights for the new facility? For example, the rights for instream flow. Do you have any initial thoughts to share?
 - Discussions of water rights will be a focus of how we support both basins. Right now, the flow is significantly reduced. By shifting to run of the river, there will only be so much water that can come in a given year. We will work with NGOs and tribes on this.

Ben closed the conversation by sharing the facilitation team's intention to keep the Planning Group connected to the proponents.

[Working Groups Update: Water Rights & Water Management](#)

Jim Downing, Kearns & West, shared updates from the Water Rights and Water Management Working Group. At the August meeting, the work product was clarified and the drafting and core review teams were identified. At the September meeting, the Working Group reviewed the work product outline. Jim reiterated that this is an information-sharing effort with the goal of clarifying what the water rights scenarios are. Jim also thanked Sam Boland-Brien with the State Water Resource Control Board for helping with support and review. Jim shared the plan for future meetings in October and beyond, then paused for questions.

One participant sought clarification of the work product's focus. Jim reiterated that the focus was on water rights scenarios based on the Two Basin Solution alternatives. One participant asked about the intended audience, which Jim clarified is water rights holders, with a broader goal of educating other interested parties and sharing publicly. One participant asked about the water rights related to increased flows on the Eel River, which Jim committed to raise with the Working Group, while noting that the group is not a decision-making body.

[Working Group update: Resiliency Subcommittee](#)

Ben gave a brief update on the Resiliency Subcommittee, which met on September 26 for the first time. He reviewed the evolution of the group, which emerged from interest from the Planning Group. The focus of the first meeting was defining the vision, focus, challenges, potential work products, and co-chairs. Ben shared an interest in supporting existing efforts and avoiding redundancy. Some of the themes that emerged from discussion were:

- Vision: sustainable, healthy ecosystem; reliable water supply; equitable, efficient distribution of water; effective metering and monitoring; beyond resiliency → proactive approach
- Challenges: data availability; funding; water demand exceeds supply; lack of cross-jurisdiction coordination; complicated water rights and weak enforcement
- Potential Role: forum for information sharing, education, and collaboration on regional and basin-wide solutions; pursue funding

The Planning Group took a five-minute break until 11:15 am.

Lake Pillsbury Alliance Presentation

Frank Lynch and Carol Cinquini presented on behalf of the Lake Pillsbury Alliance (LPA). Their presentation focused on the impacts of Scott Dam's removal on year-round cold-water availability, fire protection, recreation, Lake Pillsbury's ecosystem, the regional economy, and long-time communities around the lake. Their interests in the event of dam removal include:

- Fire protection and a comprehensive fire management plan based on the area's needs.
- A study to understand the impacts of dam removal on water supply, groundwater, aquifer replenishment, wells and developed spring heads, and water availability to fight fire.
- Public involvement to identify the best replacement recreational opportunities.
- Ecological restoration and long-term ecosystem health.

Lake Pillsbury's presentation and a recording are available on the Planning Group [webpage](#).

Lake County Video and Presentation

Lake County Supervisors Eddie Crandell and Bruno Sabatier then presented, beginning with a video, which is available on [YouTube](#). Their presentation focused on the impacts of Scott Dam's removal and their interests in the event of dam removal, which include:

- A tax backfill and economic plan for the region
- Full ecological restoration and cleanup
- Fire mitigation
- Cold water for fish

Lake Pillsbury Discussion

After the presentations, Ben asked for questions, comments, and requests related to the presentations and Lake County and LPA's interests.

A number of members affirmed the value and impact of the presentation and shared support for the county and Lake Pillsbury community's interests being met. Several members shared interests in PG&E meeting Lake County and LPA's interests as well as supporting ecological restoration of the Eel River ecosystem, and one member raised the Klamath River as an example, where a restoration committee is responsible for restoring the basin, the lakebed, and the headwaters. One member raised the issue that Scott Dam is inherently bad for fish and questioned the value of Lake Pillsbury to Tule Elk, suggesting that several smaller storage solutions combine to replace Lake Pillsbury and meet the community and county's needs.

Ben thanked the Supervisors and LPA for the presentation and the Planning Group for the respectful discussion.

Public Comment

Ben opened public comment.

John Almida: My first comment is that I align with Lake County and the problems they've faced from this deal. The silt from the dam is going to wreck a lot of spawning habitat and is going to need to be removed. Why can't Scott Dam be retrofitted like other infrastructure? Being as Lake County's there today, I don't live there, but I'm behind you. I live in Mendocino County and family's been here over 100 years. What happens if water can't flow year round into the Russian River? If we can't fill Lake Mendocino with high flows in wintertime, there are going to be issues for Redwood Valley, Ukiah, Hopland, Cloverdale, and Geyserville. It is unbelievable that the environmental community is so keen about fish passage but won't remove the dammed reservoir near Eureka and Arcata. That's their water source. If I were you, I'd watch *River's Last Chance*. My last two items are illegal cannabis grows and the invasive fish that are destroying salmon habitat. Let's look deeper before destroying the habitat we have.

Hollie Smith: I'm just wondering who is responsible for what happens if funding for retrofitting Cape Horn Dam doesn't materialize.

Ray Tote: I'm a resident of Lake Pillsbury. I've lived through both fires in the area. I've seen the recreational value, the wildlife, and it's my lifestyle. The reason the lake was put up in the first place was to replace seasonal flow, which wasn't there. I live on Salmon Creek, which is a Lake Pillsbury tributary. It is bone dry.

Next Steps, Future Meetings, and Action Items

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

Ben shared the upcoming schedule of meetings:

- **Planning Group:** First Thursdays of the month from 10 am – 1 pm in Ukiah and on Zoom (November 2 and December 7)
- **Water Rights & Water Management Working Group:** Monday, October 16, 10 – 11 am
- **Russian Resiliency Subcommittee:** TBD
- **Steering Committee:** October 20.

Ben thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic	Presenter
9:00 am	<i>Optional Networking Time; arrive early to meet other members!</i>	
9:50 am	<i>Please arrive by 9:50 am to ensure the meeting can begin promptly at 10:00 am.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All
10:00 am	Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Gettleman, Kearns & West
10:15 am	Outcomes and Follow-up from August 17 Planning Group Meeting and Steering Committee Report-Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Gettleman, Kearns & West
10:45 am	Update on New Eel-Russian Facility Proposal and Future Coordination with Planning Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
11:15 am	Update on Working Group Process and Upcoming Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jim Downing, Kearns & West Henry DeRuff, Kearns & West
11:45 am	Lake County and Lake Pillsbury Alliance Presentations and Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lake Co. Supervisors Crandell and Sabatier Carol Cinquini and Frank Lynch, LPA
12:30 pm	Public Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of public
12:55 pm	Recap of Meeting and Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Gettleman, Kearns & West
1:00 pm	<i>Adjourn; the room will be open until 2:00 pm for optional networking time.</i>	

Appendix B: Meeting Attendance

Planning Group Members, Alphabetized

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?	Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?
Alicia Hamann	Friends of the Eel River	✓	Hank Seemann	Humboldt County	✓
Allan Nelson	Agriculture Landowner	✓	Jaime Neary	Russian Riverkeeper	✓
Anna FarPorte	Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians	✓	Janet Pauli	PVID; IWPC	✓
Bert Whitaker	Sonoma County Regional Parks		Jennifer Burke	City of Santa Rosa Water	✓
Brandon Axell	Mendocino County Farm Bureau	✓	John Mack	Permit Sonoma	
Bree Klotter	Redwood Valley County Water District	✓	John Nagle	Sonoma RCD	
Brenda L. Tomaras	Lytton Band of Pomo Indians	✓	President Lewis Whipple	Round Valley Indian Tribes	
Vice Chair Brian Mead	Wiyot Tribe		Luis Santana	Robinson Rancheria	
Carol Cinquini	Lake Pillsbury Alliance	✓	Matt Clifford	Trout Unlimited	✓
Cathy Monroe	Mendocino County RCD	✓	Nikcole Whipple	Save California Salmon	
Charlie Schneider	CalTrout	✓	Orval Elliott Jr.	Hopland Band of Pomo Indians	
Dennis Murphy	Agriculture Landowner, Sonoma RCD		Sean White	City of Ukiah	
Supervisor Eddie Crandell	Lake County	✓	Shannon Cotulla	Town of Windsor	
Elizabeth Salomone	RRFCWCID	✓	Terri McCartney	Pinoleville Pomo Nation	✓
Gary Helfrich	Camp Meeker Rec. & Park District		Terry Crowley	City of Healdsburg	
Sup. Glenn McGourty	Mendocino County		Tony Williams	North Marin Water District	✓
Grant Davis	Sonoma Water	✓	Sgt.-at-Arms Tyrone Mitchell	Yokayo Tribe of Indians	
Gregg Young	Potter Valley Tribe		Vivian Helliwell	PCFFA; IFR	✓
Total Planning Group Member Attendance					20/36

Planning Group Alternates, Alphabetized

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?	Name	Organization/Affiliation	Present?
Adam Gaska	Redwood Valley County Water District	✓	Frank Lynch	Lake Pillsbury Alliance	✓
Adriane Garayalde	Agriculture Landowner; RR Confluence	✓	Glen Spain	PCFFA; IFR	✓
Alicia Beecher	Hopland Band of Pomo Indians		Guinness McFadden	PVID; IWPC	✓
Andy Colonna	PCFFA; IFR	✓	Javier Silva	Yokayo Tribe of Indians	✓
Bill Ricioli	Agriculture Landowner		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	✓
Chris Watt	RRFCWCID		Meghan Quinn	American Rivers	
Craig Tucker	Humboldt County		Michael Makdisi	Sonoma County Administrator's Office	✓
Dakota Perez	Pinoleville Pomo Nation		Mike Shaver	Potter Valley Tribe	✓
Dan Herrera	City of Petaluma		Pam Bacigalupi	Agriculture Landowner	
David Kelley	City of Cloverdale		Paul Sellier	Marin Municipal Water District	
David Manning	Sonoma Water	✓	Redgie Collins	CalTrout	✓
Denise Woods	Mendocino County RCD	✓	Shayna Williams	Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians	✓
Don McEnhill	Russian Riverkeeper		Chair Ted Hernandez	Wiyot Tribe	
Don Seymour	Sonoma Water	✓	Tyler Rodrique	RRFCWCID	
Eric Schanz	Sweetwater Springs Water District	✓	Wyatt Smith	Round Valley Indian Tribes	✓
Total Planning Group Alternate Attendance					19/34

Other In-Person and Virtual Attendees, Alphabetized

Name	Affiliation
Angle Slater	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Ann DuBay	Sonoma Water
Ann Marie Ore	
Bob Anderson	
Brendan Sweeney	Field Representative for Congressman Mike Thompson
Bryan McFadin	NCRWQCB
Clayton Creager	Russian River Confluence
Danny Wind	
Dayna Ghirardelli	Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Debbie Hanssen	
Debbie Heald	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Dori Teicheira	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Erika Stone	
Henry DeRuff	Kearns & West
Hollie Smith	Sierra Club
Holly Killion	Gallo Winery
Jim Downing	Kearns & West
Joe Del Querra	
John Almida	
John Mendoza	Sonoma Water
Joshua Fuller	National Marine Fisheries Service
Kelley Lincoln	
Madeline Cline	Mendocino County Farm Bureau
Marc Commandatore	Department of Water Resources
Mary Ann Schupbach	
Matt Colwell	
Matthew Rothstein	Lake County
Michael Thompson	Sonoma County Water Agency
Mike Berger	City of Sonoma
Monica Hueltl	Mendofever.com
Nancy Horton	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Pam Jeane	Sonoma County Water Agency
Peggy Templer	
Peter Kiel	Law Office of Peter Kiel
Randy Dorn	Redwood Valley
Richard Cummings	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Robert Meyer	
Rue Furch	Russian River WC, Sierra Club
Samuel Euston	
Santiago Garcia Vazquez	Kearns & West
Scott Greacen	Friends of the Eel River

Shannon Cotulla	Town of Windsor
Susanne Zechiel	Jackson Family Wines
Tim Schraeder	
Todd Lands	City of Cloverdale
Todd Schram	Sonoma Water
Tom Fischer	Kearns & West
Tom Johnson	Inland Water and Power Commission
Tom Schoeneman	Redwood Valley County Water District/Mendocino County Inland Water & Power Commission