

Meeting Summary

Russian River Water Forum

Technical Briefing: Water Supply & Fisheries

Zoom

June 21, 2023, 9:00 am to 10:30 am

Executive Summary

The Russian River Water Forum held a technical briefing on water supply and fisheries via Zoom. The meeting was facilitated by Kearns & West, a neutral third party. Presentation slides and a recording of the meeting are available on the project [website](#) at the following links:

- [Don Seymour's Water Supply Slides](#)
- [David Manning's Fisheries Slides](#)
- [Recording](#)

The meeting objectives were as follows:

- To support a shared understanding among RRWF participants of:
 - Water supply context
 - Fisheries science and regulatory context
 - Related infrastructure issues

The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are in Appendices A and B. The meeting had a total of 37 attendees.

The next section provides a summary of the questions, responses, and discussion during the briefing.

Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Jim provided a welcome to the group and participation guidelines.

Presentation: Fisheries

David Manning, Environmental Resources Manager at Sonoma Water, presented on the fisheries implications of different scenarios and alternatives. David's slides are available [\[here\]](#).

Questions (Q), responses (R), comments (C), and discussion are summarized below.

- (Q) My understanding of the reports (presented by David Manning on fish passage alternatives) is that this is all based on the best modeling available. Obviously, we can't do an experiment to remove all these facilities and then find out what happens. My other understanding is that

there's no guarantee that this will actually be sufficient to increase fish productivity. It will make things better, but will it make things better enough?

- (R) These actions alone are not enough to recover salmon and steelhead in the Eel River or the Russian River. They would promote recovery and improve resiliency, but there are myriad issues that impact these fish all throughout the watershed and beyond including in the ocean. There are studies underway being led by CalTrout and resourced by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife to try to understand the restoration potential of the Eel River. It is clear from the modeling that these improvements will improve the recovery of the fish but won't be sufficient by themselves.
- (Q) My understanding is that during dry years the effects (the benefits to fish associated with dam removal) are indeterminate, given that you won't have cold water coming down. And we will have some complete gaps in the upper Eel River if there isn't a reservoir (Lake Pillsbury) there, is that correct?
 - (R) Certainly, for that reach, for the 12 miles between Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam, that is absolutely true. But there is perennial flow in many of the streams that are upstream above Lake Pillsbury. It's access to those kinds of habitats and the ability for fish to persist in drought conditions that makes gaining access so attractive.
- (Q) So it looks like fish populations didn't decline until the mid-60's, so declines are not likely caused by the dams? Which begs the question, will dam removal actually solve the problem? And if this removal is not likely, or only moderately likely to resolve the issue, shouldn't we concentrate on other solutions that are less damaging to human health and welfare?
 - (R) It would be impossible to identify all the factors that have led to the decline of salmonids, including agriculture, development, forestry practices, and more. There is still valuable habitat above Scott Dam, and it's important to get fish into those habitats if they're going to have any chance of recovery. The dams are not the only contributor, there are many contributors, but actions that can allow these fisheries to persist are important in their long-term recovery.
- (Q) What year were supplemental hatchery plants curtailed in both of the systems for Coho and Steelhead?
 - (R) In the Eel River, I believe it was the early 90s for Steelhead. For Coho Salmon, I'm not sure. In both basins, there have been efforts to propagate both species myriad times. There is still ongoing hatch reproduction in the Russian River for Steelhead and Coho Salmon. The Coho hatchery program has been very successful.

Presentation: Water Supply and Fisheries

Don Seymour, Chief Engineer at Sonoma Water, presented on water supply in the Russian River basin; Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations at Lake Mendocino; and the results of water supply modeling (conducted as part of the Huffman Ad-Hoc Committee's work) evaluating a run-of-the-river interbasin transfer scenario. Slides are available [[here](#)].

Questions (Q), responses (R), comments (C), and discussion are summarized below.

- (Q) I want to ensure my interpretation is correct that Lake Mendocino drains in about half the years without a diversion. Does this include climate change modeling?

- (R) There were climate change scenarios run, I showed the results for historical hydrology. We don't assume any interventions in the model for trying to reduce minimum stream flow requirements or curtailments to reduce demand.
- (Q) What percent of Eel River flows were diverted pre-2006 and post-2006?
 - (R) 2% of the flows pre-2006, and maybe marginally less post, on the order of 1.85%.

Next Steps, Future Meetings, and Action Items

Jim discussed some next steps, including upcoming technical briefings and scheduling for the first Water Supply working group meeting. Jim adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic	Presenter
9:00 am	Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jim Downing, K&W
9:10 am	Eel River Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Manning, Sonoma Water
9:45 am	Eel River Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Manning, Sonoma Water• Jim Downing, K&W
9:50 am	Russian River Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don Seymour, Sonoma Water
10:20 am	Russian River Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don Seymour, Sonoma Water• Jim Downing, K&W
10:25 am	Final remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jim Downing, K&W
10:30 am	Adjourn	

Appendix B: All Attendees, Alphabetized

Name	Membership	Affiliation
Ed Ballman	Other WG	Russian River FC&WCID
A. Marc Commandatore	Other	Department of Water Resources
Henry DeRuff	Facilitation Team	Kearns & West
Jim Downing	Facilitation Team	Kearns & West
Tom Fischer	Facilitation Team	Kearns & West
Adriane Garayalde	PG Member or Alternate	RRC/Agriculture
Adam Gaska	PG Member or Alternate	RVCWD
Scott Greacen	Other	Friends of the Eel River
Alicia Hamann	PG Member or Alternate	Friends of the Eel River
Monica Huettl	Public	Mendo Fever
Andy Jahn	WG Member	River Estates Mutual Water Corp.
Pam Jeane	WG Member	Sonoma Water
Tom Johnson	Other WG	IWPC Consultant
Bree Klotter	PG Member or Alternate	RVCWD/Water Supplier
David Koball	WG Member	Atlas Vineyard Management/Mendocino County Farm Bureau
Frank Lynch	WG Member	Lake Pillsbury Alliance
Peter Martin	WG Member	City of Santa Rosa Water
Ann Marie Ore	Other	DWR
David Manning	Presenter	Sonoma Water
John Mendoza	Other	Sonoma Water
Cathy Monroe	WG Member	Mendocino County Resource Conservation District
Dennis Murphy	PG Member or Alternate	Sonoma Agriculture
Jaime Neary	WG Member	Russian Riverkeeper
Janet Pauli	WG Member	PVID/MCIWPC
Elizabeth Salomone	WG Member	Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District
Charlie Schneider	WG Member	California Trout
Todd Schram	Other WG	Sonoma Water
Hank Seemann	WG Member	County of Humboldt
Don Seymour	Presenter	Sonoma Water

Gail Seymour	Other	California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Retired)
Wyatt Smith	PG Member or Alternate	Round Valley Indian Tribes
Matt St John	WG Member	North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
David Taber	WG Member	Palomino Lakes Mutual Water Company
Michael Thompson	PG Member or Alternate	Sonoma County Water Agency
Sean White	WG Member	City of Ukiah
Gregg Young	PG Member or Alternate	Potter Valley Tribe
Jeanne Zolezzi	Other WG	Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District