

***Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control
& Water Conservation Improvement District***

STAFF REPORT

To: Board of Trustees
From: E. Salomone, General Manager
Meeting: Monday, August 8, 2022
RE: Agenda Item 5: Water Supply Conditions Update & District Response

The Strategic Plan relevant priorities are: (a) **Secure** (b) **Use** (c) **Advocate** & (d) **Administer** water resources in alignment with the District's Mission Statement to proactively manage the water resources of the upper Russian River for the benefit of the people and environment of Mendocino County.

Inter-Basin Transfer of Water Through PG&E Owned "Potter Valley Project"

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) **has issued a flow variance to PG&E.**

Main points:

- **East Fork RR flows reduced initially from 75 cfs to 5 cfs with no buffer on 7/28/22.**
- **Potter Valley Irrigation District contract deliveries from PG&E will operate on a demand based schedule and no more than 50 cfs**
- **Lake Pillsbury is to maintain at least 30,000 acre feet in storage through September 15.**
- **The Variance is effective immediately upon approval (7/27/22).**
- **The State Water Board is expected to respond with further curtailments and a pause on the Voluntary Water Sharing Program, details to follow when known.**

Among other determinations, the Variance sets the inter-basin transfer of water diverted from the Eel River to the Russian River through the Potter Valley Project. The required flow for the East Fork Russian River above Lake Mendocino was 75 cfs, which allowed the Upper Russian River Voluntary Water Sharing Program to be implemented and very limited curtailments issued by the State Water Board through July.

However, the Variance reduced that required flow in the East Fork to 5 cfs with a note that target release can be adjusted between 5 cfs and 25 cfs based on storage projections. No buffer (extra) water will be released to prevent flows from dropping below 5 cfs.

This target release does not include water that is delivered to Potter Valley Irrigation District (PVID) under its contract with PG&E. PVID will operate on a demand based schedule. PG&E will provide PVID only with what is needed and no more than 50 cfs. Per the water sale contract, PG&E has discretion to limit deliveries, and will do so as needed to maintain Lake Pillsbury storage above the 30,000 acre feet target. Some return flow from PVID use is expected but is not significant to the majority of the Upper Russian River water users. The Variance is effective upon its issue on July 27, 2022 and remains in effect until Lake Pillsbury storage exceeds 36,000 acre-feet after October 1, 2022.

Lake Mendocino and the Mainstem Upper Russian River

Lake Mendocino storage level had an overall decrease from 50,643 acre feet (af) on July 5, 2022 to 49,769 af on August 1, 2022. Minimum instream flows continue at 25 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the Upper Russian River under the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) approved Temporary Urgency Change Petition filed by Sonoma Water.

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Curtailments in the Upper Russian River

The State Water Board enacted some curtailments in July 2022 in response to low natural flows. Further curtailment notices are expected to be released just prior to the Board Meeting and GM will provide an update. These further curtailments are in response to the FERC approval of a flow variance reducing releases into the East Fork of the Russian River above Lake Mendocino as described above. The inter-basin transfers through Potter Valley Project is the source of water for Appropriative rights in the Upper Russian River (above the confluence with Dry Creek at Healdsburg) at this time of year when natural flows have dropped. This year, water right holders are required to monitor a Curtailment Status List on the State Water Board’s website and stop or reduce diversions when the list shows their water right is curtailed.

The Upper Russian River Voluntary Water Sharing Agreement Program

The Program has been in effect since July 1, 2022 and has been successful in reaching its goals. Due to the reduction in inter-basin transfers described above, the Program will be suspended by the SWRCB until sufficient flow is reestablished through precipitation and/or increased inter-basin transfers.

	<u>Currently contracted</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>July-Oct Totals</u>
TOTAL CUSTOMER PROJECTIONS FOR 2022 UNDER MCRRFC&WCID LICENSE:	7424.15	921.194	931.478	809.19	610.438	3272.3
VSA Allocation:		992.43	1228.91	833.22	522.38	

District 2022 Water Supply

As a participant in the Upper Russian River Voluntary Water Sharing Agreement Program, the District was issued a direct diversion water supply allocation for July 2022 that covered most customer water use. Any use in excess of the allocation was from stored water supplies in Lake Mendocino.

The District’s January 1949 Appropriative Water Right License is expected to be curtailed of direct diversion use (inter-basin transfer) and all further use of water under this right will be from water previously stored in Lake Mendocino. Customers have been asked to recognize the requests from Governor Newsom and the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors to reduce overall water use by at least 20% in recognition of a third consecutive year of drought conditions and reduced water supply.

The District remains under Declaration #21-03: Water Shortage Emergency passed on May 17, 2021. The Board may wish to update the Declaration for 2022 conditions and provide further clarity to customers, constituents, and the public.

Notes:

The Declaration can be found on the District’s website: <https://www.rRFC.net/>

Water supply storage graphs and additional information can be found on Sonoma Water’s website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-water-supply-levels>