

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

STAFF REPORT

To: Board of Trustees
From: E. Salomone, General Manager
Meeting: Monday, January 9, 2023
RE: Agenda Item 4: Water Supply Conditions Update & District Response

The Strategic Plan relevant priorities are: **Security** through ensuring reliable, resilient, and available sources of water; **Advocacy** in support of equitable water resource stewardship; and **Use** of water in effective and beneficial ways as a public resource, all in alignment with the District's Mission to steward water resources for the benefit of people and environment.

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

PG&E continued operating the Eel River to Russian River diversion through Potter Valley Project (PVP) under a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Flow Variance Order until December 27, 2022, when the storage in Lake Pillsbury reached 36,000 acre feet (af) and the Order ended. The Order had required PG&E to convene the Drought Working Group (DWG) every two weeks to report on conditions and receive any DWG member requests to increase the East Branch Russian River flow from 5 cubic feet per second (cfs) up to 25 cfs. All requests to increase were blocked through lack of consensus among DWG members. Flows will now be increased to 45 cfs in the East Branch Russian River, except during high flows in the Eel River that prevent diversions. DWG members have requested meetings continue to prepare a new Variance application for 2023 and PG&E is considering this request.

In mid-December 2022, PG&E notified FERC it is reconsidering repairs to the Potter Valley Project (PVP) transformer. Hydropower generation requires diversions from the Eel River through the PVP after which the water is released into the East Branch Russian River. The State Water Resources Control Board has issued numerous appropriative water rights based on this water supply and during drought conditions over the last two years, curtailments were enacted based on the cessation of these power generating water transfers. In 2021, PG&E notified stakeholders that the transformer was no longer functional and eventually committed to developing plans for repair. It would now seem PG&E is reconsidering. Without the power generation option, water diversions from the Eel River through the PVP will likely remain at or close to the minimum stream flow requirements for the East Branch Russian River, reducing available summer flows for appropriative water rights in the Upper Russian River.

Additionally, PG&E is operating the Potter Valley Project (PVP) on an annual license post-expiration of its operating license and terms of that annual license are under scrutiny. A collective of organizations has noticed an intent to sue over alleged the Endangered Species Act (ESA) violations. FERC responded by issuing a notice of consideration to re-open PG&E's annual operating license and comment letters and Motions to Intervene were filed by numerous organizations. On December 16, 2022, PG&E filed a protest to FERC stating there is insufficient cause to reopen the annual license to require changes to the project works or operations to protect federally listed species. FERC has yet to respond, however opening the annual license could have impact on the water diversions through the PVP to the Russian River.

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Lake Mendocino and the Mainstem Upper Russian River

Lake Mendocino storage level on was 55,338 acre feet (af) on January 5, 2023 (and rising), up from 36,962 af November 27, 2022. Increase in storage is due to low water supply demand, significant precipitation and runoff, as well as increased East Fork Russian River minimum instream flow requirements once the FERC variance order expired and allowed by flows in the Eel River. Lake Mendocino storage levels and projections can be found on pages 3 & 4 of this report.

Sonoma Water filed a new Temporary Urgency Change Petition to the State Water Resources Control Board which was approved and is now in effect. Russian River minimum flow requirements are set based on Lake Mendocino storage conditions and more information can be found on Sonoma Water's website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/tucp>

As required by Term 15 of the October 11, 2022 Temporary Urgency Change Order, Sonoma Water submitted the Technical Memorandum 'Lake Mendocino Storage and Russian River Water Supply Planning for 2022/2023', prepared as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding Between Sonoma County Water Agency and Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District Concerning Lake Mendocino Storage Planning and Russian River Management dated March 21, 2022. The technical memorandum is a documentation of the approach to assessing reservoir storage and water supply conditions in the upper Russian River for 2022 and 2023. District and Sonoma Water staff will begin meeting in early 2023 to update the Technical Memo which will provide a tool for District water supply planning.

Curtailments in the Upper Russian River

The State Water Resources Control Board has continued the temporary watershed-wide curtailment suspensions until January 31, 2023, with a further extension expected based on weather forecast.

The Upper Russian River Voluntary Water Sharing Agreement Program

The Water Sharing Program has concluded for 2022. The first annual implementation report will be available soon and improvements are being made for the 2023 operational year, if needed. Find out more on the District's website: <https://www.rrfc.net/upper-russian-river-voluntary-water-sharing-program>

District 2023 Water Supply & District Response:

The District is currently operating under Declaration #22-01 Stage III: Water Warning, passed by the Board on October 3, 2022, and available on the District website.

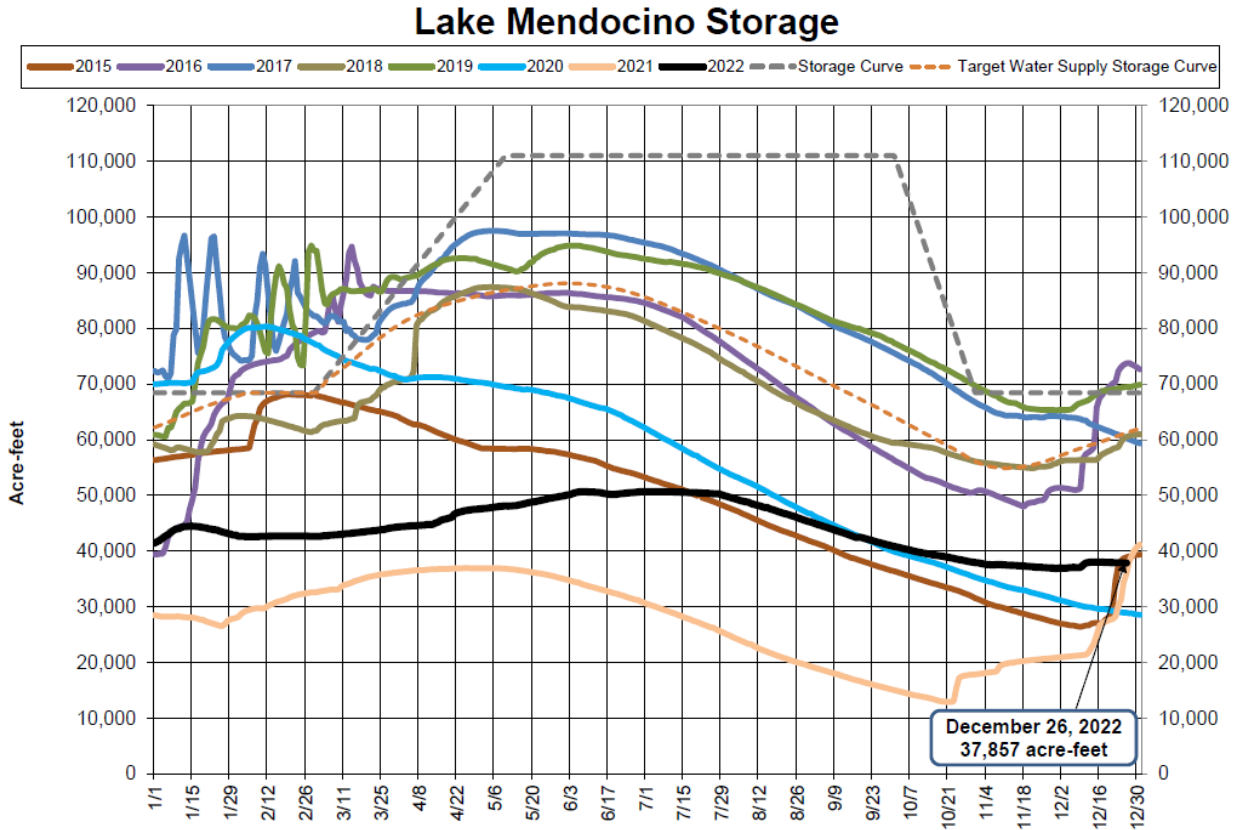
On January 5, 2023, Sonoma Water Agency hosted a zoom update with Dr. Marty Ralph of the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes at Scripps Oceanography. Dr. Ralph provided an atmospheric river (AR) report and forecasts including impacts to the Russian River basin and water supply system. See <https://cw3e.ucsd.edu/> for presentation slides.

Dr. Ralph reported that as of January 5th, over 10 inches of precipitation has been observed in the Russian River basin within one week. With at least three additional Atmospheric Rivers forecasted, an additional 13 inches of rain in the basin is expected within a 10 day period. Dr. Ralph stated that Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma are likely to fully recover, reaching or exceeding their respective water supply curves. Sonoma Water General Manager Grant Davis reported on planning discussions between Sonoma Water and the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) for potential flood releases from Lake Mendocino. There are currently no threats or actual shortages in the District's water supply.

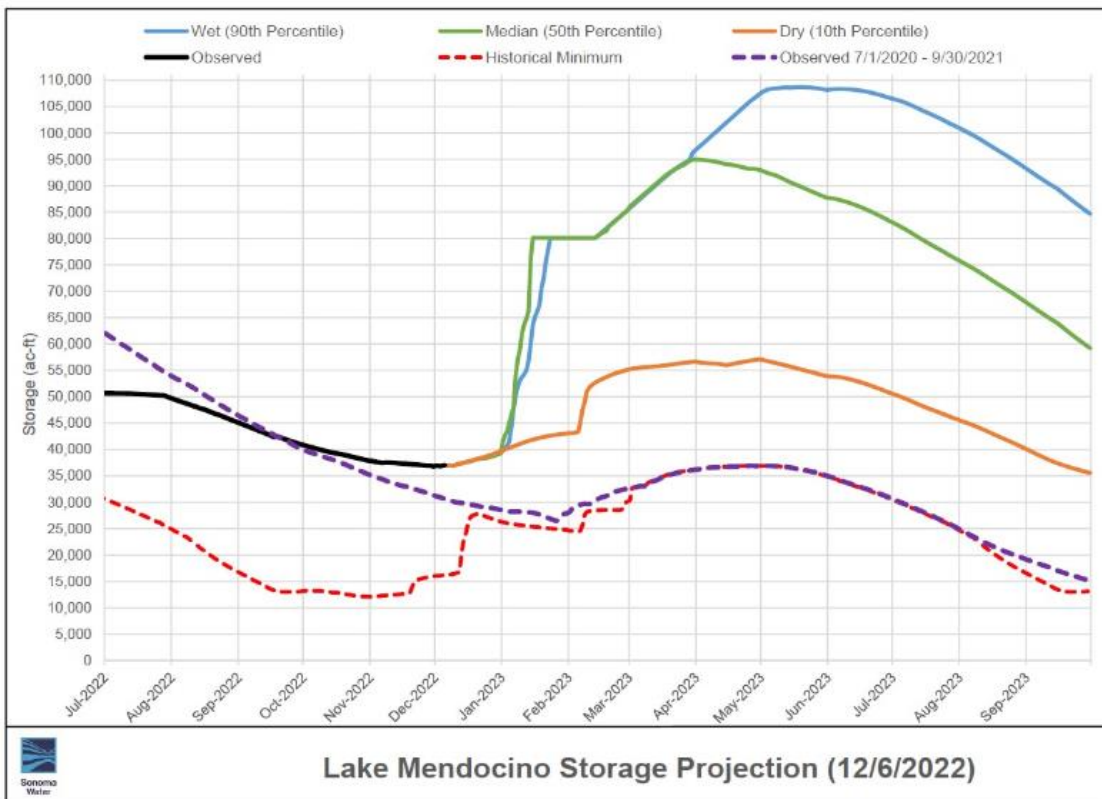
Recommended Board Action:

- Move to repeal Declaration #22-01, Stage III: Water Warning

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Prepared by Sonoma Water. Additional information: <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-water-supply-levels>



From Sonoma Water's website: <https://www.sonomawater.org/WaterSupplyProjections>

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From the State Water Board meeting of January 4, 2023:

Russian River



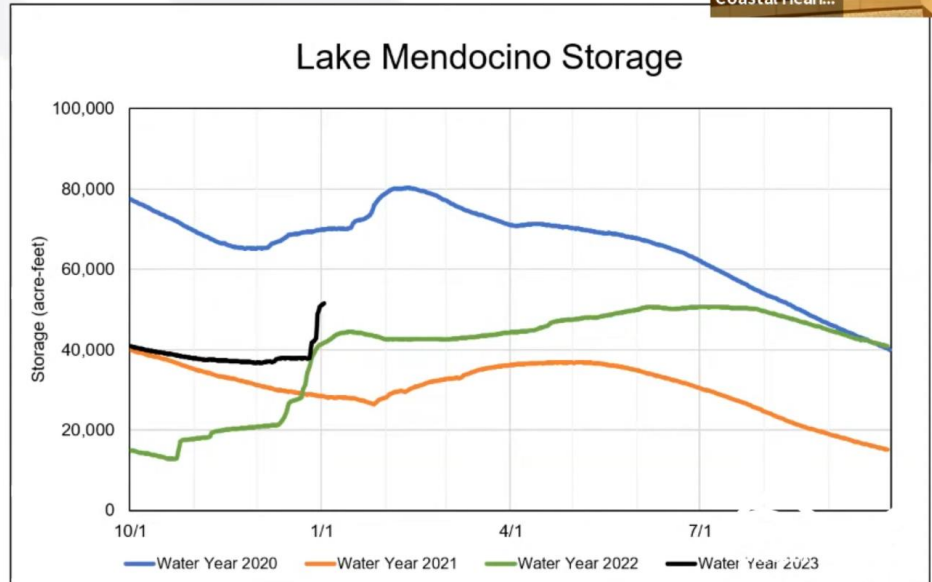
Flows as of 1/2/2023

Lake Mendocino Storage
51,553 AF

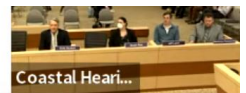
Lake Mendocino Outflow
27 cfs

Calpella Flow
203 cfs

Healdsburg Flow
2,630 cfs



Russian River



- **Curtailment Status for January**
 - No Curtailments through January 16, 2023.
 - Curtailment Status List is published online at: www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/russian_river/
- **Voluntary Water Sharing Program**
 - Program expired December 31, 2022 (per timeline defined in the Voluntary Water Sharing Agreement).
 - Steering Committee is preparing a retrospective report and discussing improvements for 2023.
 - FERC variance ended as Lake Pillsbury has recovered to above 36,000 acre-feet of storage.