



# Mendocino County Water Caucus

**Thursday March 23, 2023**

# Russian River Water Forum (RRWF)

- Designed to build Two Basin Partnership progress.
- Venue for inclusive engagement.
- Comprise parties with interest in water resources in Russian River & Eel River basins.
- Initial focus: identify local solution for maintaining the Eel River to Russian River diversion, potentially a new operator to continue water diversions.
- Addition focus: broader water resiliency and reliability issues .

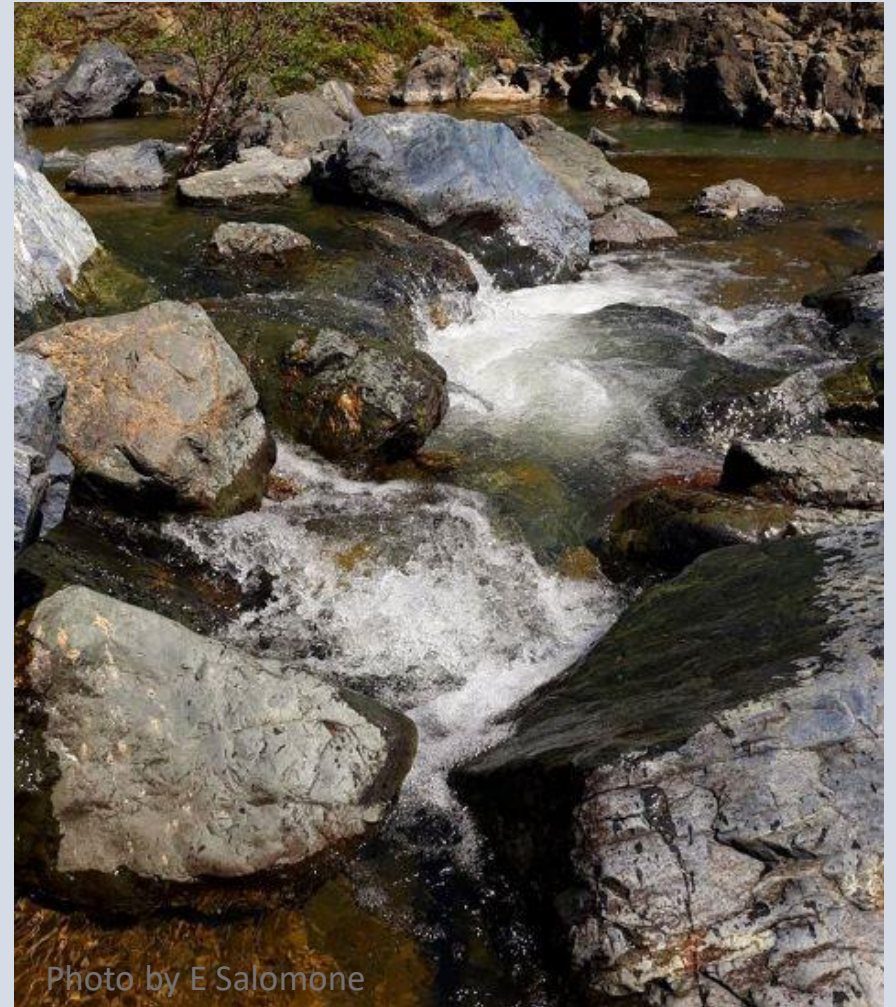


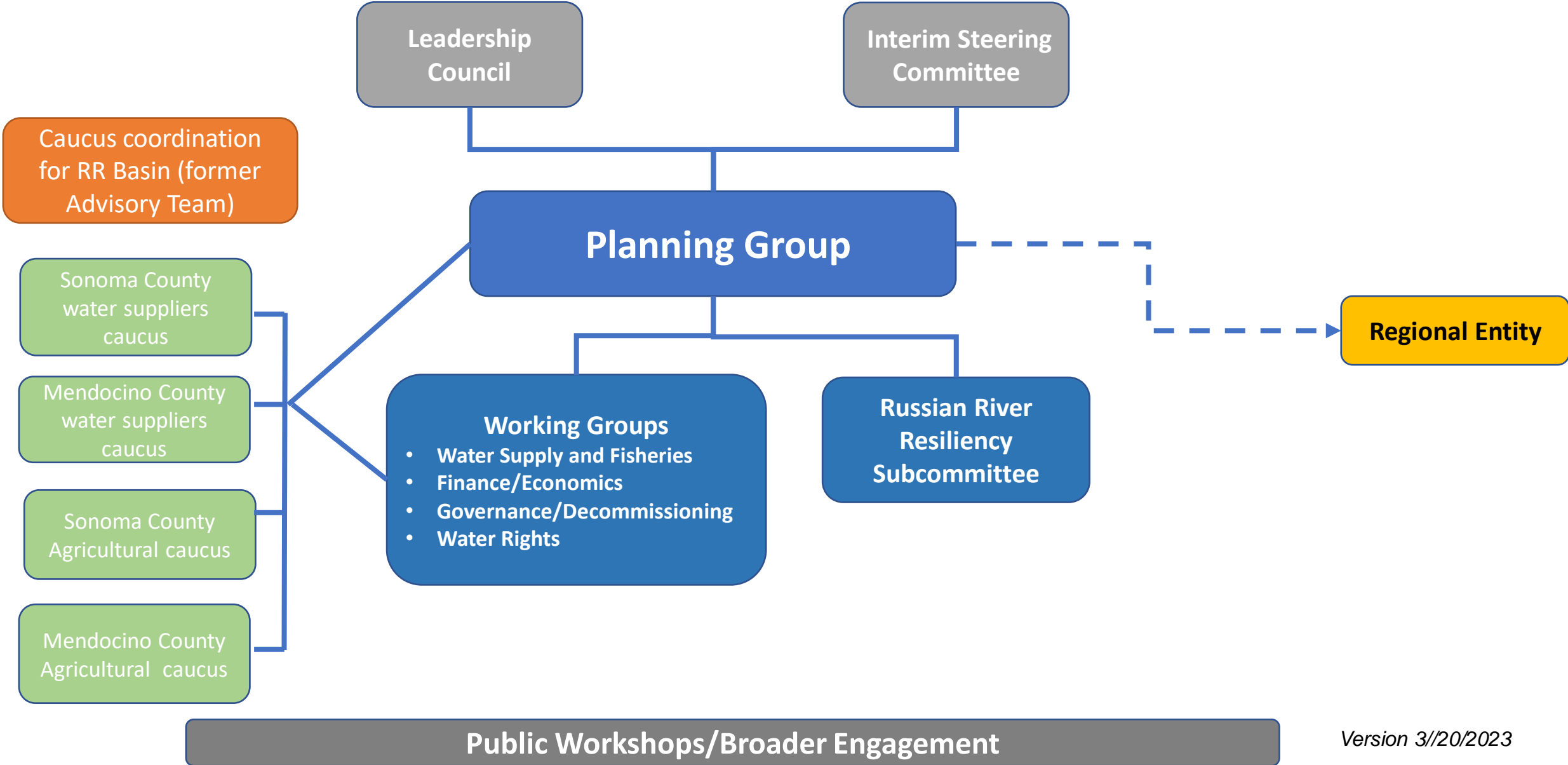
Photo by E Salomone

# Interviews with Interested Parties:

## *Recommendations for Water Forum*

- Broad representation, including Eel River basin and Lake County
- Leadership Council of elected officials
- Seek commitments to the process, working together across interests
- Transparency is critical for success
- Leverage existing groups to extend reach
- Perceived need for basin-wide collaboration beyond PVP diversion
- Interim Steering Committee to oversee Planning Group formation

# DRAFT: Russian River Water Forum Structure with RR Water Caucus



# Leadership Council

- Purpose: consider options and alternatives from the Planning Group.
- Method: receive & share information, build understanding, and strive for consensus.
- Membership: Tribal governance, County (Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt), State, and Federal elected officials and staff.
- Outcome: Provide information and recommendations to their respective governments and constituents.

# Planning Group Purpose

- Convene interested parties in Russian River and Eel River basins.
- Improve understanding of water reliability uncertainties in Russian River and Eel River basins.
- Collaboratively problem-solve around future of PVP diversion, water supply resilience, and fisheries in both river basins.
- **Develop an agreed-upon local solution for the continuation of the PVP diversion** that can inform future negotiations with PG&E.
- Create source of funding for continuation of PVP diversion as well as other water supply planning and project implementation efforts in both basins.

# Planning Group Details

- Transparent, public meetings.
- Information sharing.
- Identifying and evaluating water supply options.
- Develop project alternatives.
- Aim for alignment; consensus not required/no voting.
- Document converging and diverging views & rationale.

# Planning Group Membership

- Lake, Humboldt, Mendocino and Sonoma county governments
- Tribal governments in Russian River and Eel River basins
- Water suppliers
- Environmental NGOs
- Agriculture interests
- Resource Conservation Districts
- Public and private recreation interests



# Planning Group Caucusing

- Regular & alternate seats allocated per category.
- Caucusing recommended to nominate individuals for seats.
- Caucus meets as needed to disseminate information and provide feedback to Planning Group representatives.
- Caucus group members to serve on working teams:
  - Water Supply and Fisheries
  - Finance and Economics
  - Governance and Decommissioning
  - Water Rights

# Working Teams Tentative Scope

## Water Supply and Fisheries

- Review existing reports and answer key questions
- Prepare and evaluate solution options for Planning Group discussion
- Present potential solution packages to the Planning Group and Leadership Council

## Finance and Economics

- Evaluate costs of various options developed by the Water Supply and Fisheries Team
- Identify potential funding options for capital modifications and ongoing O&M
- Prepare estimates of water supply reliability rates

# Working Teams Tentative Scope

## Governance and Decommissioning

- Evaluate governance and organizational options for a regional entity
- Engage with PG&E

## Water Rights

- Increase understanding of water rights impacts from PVP changes
- Identify options to address water rights impacts

# Water Supply Work Team Details

- What is the water supply demand on Lake Mendocino?
- Are there more cost-effective water supply options than the Water Diversion Facilities to meet the demand?
- How much water would be available through the Water Diversion Facilities for “run of the river operation” (water supply generated from the diversion of water in excess of required minimum stream flows in the Eel River) and other potential scenarios?
- How reliable is this water supply under different scenarios?
- How much could water conservation reduce water supply demands on Lake Mendocino?

# Fisheries & Environment Work Team Details

- How could the continued operation of the Water Diversion Facilities benefit fisheries and environmental conditions in the Eel River and Russian River?
- What are the risks and liabilities associated with Scott Dam and can it feasibly be modified to provide volitional fish passage in accordance with natural resource agency standards?

# Financing and Economics Work Team Details

- How much would it cost to acquire, modify, own, and operate the Water Diversion Facilities? (per alternative)
- Who would pay the costs for acquisition, ownership, modification, and operation of the Water Diversion Facilities?
- How much would the water cost per acre-foot?
- Could the continued diversion of water to the Russian River provide a source of funding for fisheries improvements on the Eel River and/or mitigation funds for Lake County?
- What would be economic impacts of the PVP decommissioning if the dams were removed and water diversions ceased?

# Governance & Regional Entity Work Team Details

- Should a regional entity be formed to acquire, own, and operate the Water Supply facilities?
- Who would administer and manage the regional entity, and what would be the scope of its responsibilities and powers?
- How could a regional entity (or its proxy) and/or stakeholders inform PG&E's decommissioning plan?
- How would the regional entity work with water users and other stakeholders to acquire the Water Diversion Facilities, engage in water supply resiliency efforts, and/or engage with environmental improvement efforts on both the Eel and Russian River?

# Water Rights Work Team Details

- How will the use of diverted water from the Water Diversion Facilities be monitored, managed, and protected for those who pay for this water supply reliability?
- How would individual water rights holders that are not represented by a public entity be organized?



# Questions and Discussion

- Questions?
- Potential impacts from loss of PVP diversion
- Interest and capacity to participate in the Planning Group and/or on the Working Teams

