

September, 2008

Dear Russian River Supporter:

Water and wastewater issues are all converging now, some more imminent than others. Our little mailer letter can't begin to address them all, let alone in depth. But we take pride in our ability to squeeze the essence of many local water issues into a compact two pages. We are always available to provide more detail to those who request it, but for now we will give you the rundown on a few of the most important developments.

Santa Rosa's wastewater decisions coming up.....

The latest in Santa Rosa's wastewater saga includes serious and imminent consideration of direct discharge facilities to release as much as 69 million gallons a day in the Russian River at Forestville or Healdsburg. The Healdsburg location is above the City's own drinking water supply, and because of much lower flows there, would cause greater water quality impacts. Therefore, we do not think Healdsburg is the preferred option. The Forestville location would be at Steelhead Beach and is the location we have suspected for many years as being the City's preferred discharge site.

RRWPC, along with numerous local citizens, river lovers, and beach advocates, has been waging a campaign against approval of the Steelhead Beach site. The County Parks Department, manager of the Park, is adamantly opposed to the development of this sewer project. That alone will not save the day however. We developed a brochure giving details on the issue, which we include with this letter. Please read the brochure for more information. We also include the petition currently being circulated.

We ask that you sign the petition and help us collect signatures if you can. **Anyone who can write their name can sign; there are no age or residence requirements.** It's okay to return a partially filled petition. We just ask that you sign your name on the bottom as the person collecting the signatures, along with signing above to show your support. You can mail it back to RRWPC in the window envelope provided (use card for address). You are also welcome to copy the petition and ask friends and relatives if they would like to help out as well. Our goal is 10,000 signatures and we have almost 2000 already. Please help us show the City that this project is unacceptable!

We must have petitions returned by November 1, 2008. The City will hold three important meetings, two before our next mailer goes out. If you live locally, please try to attend, because we need a big turnout. On Nov. 6th at 1:30, the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) will hold a study session on project selection. On Nov. 18th the City Council will review their findings around 5 PM. Then on Dec. 4th, it is expected that the BPU will select a project. We need to get a big turnout at these meetings, the last one is the most important. Please plan to attend. They are held in the City Council Chambers at 100 Santa Rosa Ave. Since plans can change, please call the BPU at (707) 543-3930 or City Council at (707) 543-3010 for the meeting agenda and times a few days in advance.

State Water Board's Water Recycling Policy....

The State of California is facing a serious water crisis, and is promoting a program to greatly expand the use of recycled wastewater statewide to offset the use of potable supplies. Application of treated wastewater to land is safer than discharge into waterways, although only if done in a way that prohibits runoff into streams. And that's the hard part. Northern California environmental groups objected to the State's proposed plan, stating that all incidental discharges must be regulated like winter treatment plant discharges, UNDER PERMIT, since the toxic constituents are the same.

Even then, discharge permits only regulate about 126 of the 80,000 chemicals on the market. Currently, no regulations exist to monitor and limit the discharge of either personal care and cleaning products or pharmaceuticals, especially hormones, steroids, and anti-bacterial products, recently accused of causing bacterial illnesses to become more resistant to treatment.

Recent studies have shown the existence of trace amounts of cancer causing and endocrine disrupting chemicals in national rivers and streams and drinking water supplies. Even more alarming are the latest reports indicating that at least 46 million Americans are known to be exposed to drug-contaminated drinking water supplies. The tests have not been done in our area, so we don't know if we are part of that group.

A revised draft policy was presented to the Water Board in early September by a study committee representing environmental, agricultural, and business interests. The group agreed on all points but one, and that was management of "incidental runoff". That term is not clearly defined; but is intended to mean runoff that is accidentally spilled, small in amount, and considered to have inconsequential impacts. The committee left it to the State Board to define. Concurrently, our local Regional Board is considering a Basin Plan Amendment to legalize runoff and the City of Santa Rosa has stated they will not develop their Urban Irrigation Project unless runoff is allowed. Needless to say, RRWPC is very concerned about such an amendment and we are tracking it closely.

The problem of defining, successfully and consistently monitoring and regulating these "incidental" events is daunting. No one has addressed the possible impacts if numerous, cumulative impacts occur at the same time. Extensive carelessness with irrigation water has been regularly observed, and most people really aren't aware of the difference between potable and treated wastewater. Irrigation should only be allowed on large publicly owned parcels that are carefully monitored and regulated and discharge permits should be required. Furthermore, irrigation should not be allowed near creeks, especially where pesticide use occurs.

Vote for Rue Furch for Sonoma County Fifth District Supervisor...

RRWPC has never endorsed a political candidate, but for the first time in our 28-year history, we are doing so now. Rue is very experienced and has proven herself to be a good friend of the Russian River. The other candidate is only 27, has limited experience, and has never worked on water and/or Russian River issues. Worst of all, his financial supporters include many of the same people who have, for years, supported the dumping of vast amounts of wastewater in the Russian River. If you vote in Sonoma County's Fifth District, please give Rue your support. Also tell your friends and relatives to support her as well. For more information, her web site is www/ruefurchforsupervisor.com

RRWPC really needs your help!

Donations to RRWPC have diminished greatly of late, possibly due to economic uncertainty. But funds are urgently needed for us to continue our award winning work and long-term efforts to protect water quality and quantity in the Russian River.

This has been an extremely active time for us and we are almost out of funds. Please consider donating at this time, especially if you have not given in awhile. The date next to your name represents your most recent contribution according to our records. Remember, we do not sell or loan our list to anyone. Please give as generously as you can. We are a small group, but we carry a big voice and your contributions are the sole source of our fiscal survival. Thank you!