

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

**STAFF REPORT**

To: Board of Trustees  
From: E. Salomone, General Manager  
Meeting: Monday, May 1, 2023  
RE: Agenda Item 6: Russian River Water Forum Update

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The Strategic Plan relevant priority is (1) **Security** through fair and reliable inter-basin diversions from the Eel River by engaging with stakeholders and consultants in the formation of the Russian River Water Forum; and (2) **Collaboration** through building trusted relationships with community partners for regional water security to build the Russian River Water Forum. <https://russianriverwaterforum.org/>



Background

The Water Forum Planning Group is being convened to discuss and evaluate options for a local solution that responds to the planned decommissioning of the Potter Valley Project and can inform future negotiations with PG&E.

The Planning Group is currently scheduled to Wednesday, May 17, 2023 and will be comprised of approximately 30 members representing a cross-section of interests in Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, and Humboldt Counties. Planning Group meetings will be open to the public and meeting materials will be archived on the website.

Goals for the Planning Group include:

- Bring together interested parties in the Russian River and Eel River basins in a collaborative, solutions-oriented process.
- Improve understanding of water reliability uncertainties in the Russian River and Eel River basins.
- Problem-solve around the future of the Potter Valley Project, water supply resilience, and fisheries in both river basins.
- Identify funding sources to support water supply resiliency solutions and environment benefits in response to the planned decommissioning of the Potter Valley Project.

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Discussion

The following are the [Two Basin Solution](#) objectives as discussion points in preparation for Forum Planning Group and potential caucusing meetings:

The [Partnership](#) seeks to explore terms for a new license that will materially benefit both basins by advancing the following shared objectives:

1. Minimize or avoid adverse impacts to water supply reliability, fisheries, water quality and recreation in the Russian River and Eel River basins;
2. Improve fish passage and habitat on the Eel River sufficient to support recovery of naturally reproducing, self-sustaining and harvestable native anadromous fish populations including migratory access upstream and downstream at current project dam locations;
3. Reliance on best available science and engineering analyses as the basis for evaluating options for restoration, water delivery, and hydroelectric generation pursuant to a new license;
4. Collaboration on funding;
5. Active participation of tribes and other stakeholders who are willing to support the other Shared Objectives;
6. Economic welfare of both basins;
7. Continued hydroelectric generation; and
8. Protecting tribal cultural, economic, and other interests in both the Eel and Russian River basins.

In 2018, Congressman Jared Huffman convened a diverse stakeholder group in a collaborative Ad Hoc process designed to develop recommendations to inform the FERC relicensing process for the Potter Valley Project. The Two-Basin Partnership is a direct outgrowth of that collaborative effort, which brought together diverse stakeholders to develop a compromise solution for the future of this aging hydroelectric project.

Attachments

- Russian River Water Forum 1 page overview



## Russian River Water Forum



Photo credit: BOURNE Photography

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*The Russian River Water Forum is a collaborative effort initiated by Sonoma Water and a collection of regional partners with funding from the California Department of Water Resources.*

The Water Forum will seek to identify water-supply resiliency solutions that respond to PG&E's planned decommissioning of the Potter Valley Project while protecting Tribal interests and supporting the stewardship of fisheries, water quality, and recreation in the Russian River and Eel River basins. More broadly, the Water Forum will support ongoing regional collaboration on water supply and watershed restoration issues in the Russian River and Eel River basins.

The Water Forum will be supported by a Planning Group representing a cross-section of interests in Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, and Humboldt Counties.

The Water Forum will also serve as a venue for inclusive community engagement, outreach, and education on these topics. Visit <https://russianriverwaterforum.org/> for more information.