

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

## **General Manager's Report for December 2023**

*Presented at Regular Meeting of Monday, February 5, 2024*

**Priority 1: Security ~ Ensure reliable, resilient, and available sources of water.**

(1: Improved river & reservoir operations. 2: Fair & reliable inter-basin. 3: Expanded water sources. 4: Increased storage capacity)

**1-Eel River Operations:** On December 19, 2023, Lake Pillsbury's storage level exceeded the 36,000 acre-feet threshold, terminating the 2023 Potter Valley variance. PG&E has cancelled future drought working group meetings. No word yet on when PG&E will file the next flow variance for summer 2024 implementation.

**2-Trans Basin Diversion Future:** (1) A proposal was submitted to PG&E by Mendocino County Inland Water & Power Commission (IWPC), Sonoma Water Agency (SW), Sonoma County (SC), and the Round Valley Indian Tribes (RVIT.) Letters were submitted to PG&E by many organizations supporting the efforts of (IWPC), (SW), (SC), and the Round Valley Indian Tribes in taking steps toward a new entity to obtain and maintain the trans basin diversion. (2) Sonoma County issued a press release that a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) was formed by IWPC, SW, and SC called the Eel Russian Project Authority (ERPA.) The first meeting will be in January 2024. (3) Sonoma Water was awarded a \$2 million Bureau of Reclamation grant to continue the studies needed for the future diversion works.

**2-Russian River Water Forum:** The Planning Group met in December and the working groups were all put on pause. There is inadequate funding to move forward as was previously discussed. Some believe the usefulness of the Forum has ended while others hoped the Forum would be about more than just the trans basin diversion acquisition by local entities.

**Priority 2: Collaboration ~ Work with partners to achieve aligned goals for a common benefit.**

(1: Trusted relationships with community partners for regional water security. 2: Improved diversity, equity, and inclusion in the stewardship of water resources. 3: Expanded relationships with non-traditional partners and stakeholders in pursuit of enhanced Environmental Stewardship.)

**Nothing to note.**

**Priority 3: Advocacy ~ Influence outreach, education, funding, regulation, and legislation in support of equitable water resource stewardship.**

(1: Improved public awareness and understanding of the importance of water issues. 2: State and Federal governmental policy and funding support for the region.)

**2-Policy & Funding Support:** The CA Water Data Consortium visited the watershed for a tour and meetings. The Consortium is developing recommendations for the State Water Resources Control Board pilot project to improve data collection and management. The District is being considered for this pilot project and funding.

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**Priority 4: Use ~ Ensure effective and beneficial use of water as a public resource.**

(1: Maximum beneficial use of water under District water right license. 2: Strategic use of water by customers.)

**1-Water Right License Change Petition:** GM and Legal Counsel met with State Water Resources Control Board to discuss potential petition.

**1-Water Right License:** Customers are completing 2023 water use worksheets to the District.

**Priority 5: Administration ~ Foster sustainable leadership and management of agency resources.**

(1: Capable and high quality executive leadership. 2: Engaged, diverse, and knowledgeable Board leadership. 3: Effective systems and human resources to execute the strategic plan. 4: Sound and sustainable management of District finances.)

**1-Executive Leadership:** GM attended the following meetings/webinars: The Evolving Science of Floodplains for Restoring Functional Multi-Benefit Landscapes

**4-Finances:** The 2022-2023 Financial Audit is being drafted.

**Community Meetings**

**Upper Russian River Water Agency (URRWA) (12/6/23):** Most of the meeting comprised of an extended presentation about the Ukiah Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) including the Rate and Fee Study currently being undertaken. URRWA members were encouraged to send in letters of support to PG&E for the local proposal. Regarding the proposed consolidation of water services in the Ukiah Valley, a meeting will be held December 18<sup>th</sup> to review redlined changes to the JPA agreement dealing with joining and leaving the JPA that needed to be done to satisfy the State.

**City of Ukiah (12/6/23):** Water & Wastewater Director White provided an update to the Council on the Trans Basin Diversion, including the proposal and JPA through IWPC. He noted the City is sending a letter of support, which will be in the next City Council meeting packet but will have already been sent out by that time.

**Willow Water District (12/11/23):** RRFC Board meeting same night – no one able to attend.

**Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) (12/4/23):** The meeting was cancelled.

**Mendocino County Inland Water & Power Commission (12/14/23):** City of Ukiah Water Rights Legal Counsel Phil Williams told IWPC he would be speaking at the Ukiah Unified School District board meeting about the new Eel Russian facility proposal and asked for the blessing of the commission – IWPC Chair Janet Pauli obliged. Supervisor Glenn McGourty spoke about rate and fee study for Groundwater Sustainability Agency and getting grants to store excess water underground. New Eel Russian Project facility proposal support letter to be prepared and signed by all project proponents. First JPA meeting in January to elect officers, set calendar, and talk about funding. Along with recommended alternative for new facility. A lot of work is being done through new facility DWR grant funded work to complete design alternatives and work on future funding requests.

**Hopland Public Utility District (12/14/23):** No one from the District attended.

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**Millview Water District (12/19/23):** Tank refurbishing moving along. Dropping LAFCo annexation request because consolidation efforts make it unnecessary. Removed intakes at treatment plant for the winter. Meter change-outs ongoing. Willow district: South State/Plant Road housing development phase 1 (60 houses) aiming for next spring. Rehabilitation of well 6 was successful; 800 gpm restored - will operate at 600 gpm as before. Consolidation efforts: Ad Hoc meeting reviewed modification to the agreement to prohibit leaving once money is granted. State will require annexation if money is spent. Meeting with state in January. Approved support letter for new Eel-Russian facility in PG&E's Initial Draft Surrender Application. Approved letter to DWR re Waltufel water right requesting they take the reporting done on a new number to the old number. Not expecting much, just adding to the record.

**City of Ukiah (12/20/23):** Cancelled

**Calpella Water District (12/20/23):** Cancelled

**Redwood Valley Water District (12/21/23):** Board decided to hold off contribution to Ukiah Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (via URRWA membership.)

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Prepared and submitted to the Board of Trustees by: *Elizabeth Salomone, General Manager*

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

## **General Manager's Report for January 2024**

*Presented at Regular Meeting of Monday, February 5, 2024*

**Priority 1: Security ~ Ensure reliable, resilient, and available sources of water.**

(1: Improved river & reservoir operations. 2: Fair & reliable inter-basin. 3: Expanded water sources. 4: Increased storage capacity)

**1-Russian River & Reservoir Operations:** Sonoma Water's Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) was approved on December 27, 2023. More information can be found on Sonoma Water's TUCP webpage.

**2-Trans Basin Diversion Future:** Governor Gavin Newsom released a strategy to restore salmon populations in the face of hotter and drier weather exacerbated by climate change, the first such strategy to protect salmon on a generational scale in the state. The "California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future: Restoring Aquatic Ecosystems in the Age of Climate Change" document outlines six priorities and 71 specific actions to build healthier, thriving salmon populations. The Russian River Water Sharing Program and the proposed changes to the Potter Valley Project are both mentioned in the report.

**2-Eel Russian Project Authority (ERPA):** A new website has been created to host information for the Eel-Russian Project Authority. The website can be viewed at [www.eelrussianauthority.org](http://www.eelrussianauthority.org). Authority agendas, minutes and presentations will be posted on this website. The first meeting was held, appointing Sonoma County Supervisor David Rabbit as Chair and MC Inland Water & Power Commission Chair Janet Pauli as Vice Chair. Sonoma Water Agency is acting as the interim Secretary. Sonoma Water fisheries expert David Manning reviewed the Eel River diversion options including why 2 of the 4 options were eliminated. A large consent calendar addressing the business of the Authority was passed unanimously.

**Priority 2: Collaboration ~ Work with partners to achieve aligned goals for a common benefit.**

(1: Trusted relationships with community partners for regional water security. 2: Improved diversity, equity, and inclusion in the stewardship of water resources. 3: Expanded relationships with non-traditional partners and stakeholders in pursuit of enhanced Environmental Stewardship.)

**1-Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA):** (1) At the GSA Board meeting, the newly appointed advisor from UC Extension Program introduced herself – Laura Garcia-Diaz, Ph.D. in Hydrologic Sciences and water management researcher specialist. Budget adjustments & contract amendments were approved. A rate & fee study workshop was held. Board members and the public voiced concern over the proposed projects & management actions (costs) in the presentation materials. They noted the GSA intent has been to address only mandatory actions, improve data collection for the model, and identify if/what deficiencies exist in the sustainability. The staff & consultants were given direction to reduce the proposed expenses and present refined options at the next workshop. (2) A Public Workshop on the rate and fee process was held in Redwood Valley. Approximately 50-60 people attended the presentation that reviewed SGMA, the Ukiah Valley Basin GSA, the Groundwater Sustainability Plan, the GSA budget, and an introduction to the rate & fee study process. Some members of the public voiced concerns but overall, it was reported the workshop went well.

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**1-Upper Russian River Water Managers (URRWM) meeting:** This group was originally formed after the 2015/16 drought, was morphed into the RR Drought Response Group (Water Sharing Program.) It was reconvened so the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) staff could present an update to the Supply and Demand Assessment (SDA) tool which can be found on the SWRCB website <https://waterboards.ca.gov/sda/> (scroll to the “Modeling in the RR Watershed”). They are inviting the public to work with the tool and provide comments, suggestions, questions to inform refinements. This tool is what will be used if Emergency Regulations are needed in the future, so now is a good time to work out the kinks. This is providing improved public accessibility to the data SWRCB has been using, and again, opening a channel for feedback from stakeholders. Future URRWM meetings will be held quarterly on zoom.

**3-North Coast Resource Partnership Quarterly meeting (1/29/24):** Presentations were given, roundtables held, and the Leadership Committee voted on several matters. More can be found on the website: <https://northcoastresourcepartnership.org/>

**Priority 3: Advocacy ~ Influence outreach, education, funding, regulation, and legislation in support of equitable water resource stewardship.**

(1: Improved public awareness and understanding of the importance of water issues. 2: State and Federal governmental policy and funding support for the region.)

**2-Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA):** (1) The statewide ACWA Board met online to finalize ACWA Committee appointments. (2) The SGMA Implementation Subcommittee of the Groundwater Committee was held and discussed the DWR guidance documents that have been recently published or are expected to be soon. Updates from the GSAs that are involved in the ongoing probationary hearings at the SWRCB were heard. Early cost estimates are very high but still being refined. (3) The Statewide ACWA Board met for an orientation workshop, a Board meeting, and an open house at the new ACWA offices.

**2-Strategic Use of Water:** As a District consultant, LACO submitted a funding application to the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) discretionary grant program for the Upper Russian River Demand Management Plan Development Project that LACO developed with District.

**Priority 4: Use ~ Ensure effective and beneficial use of water as a public resource.**

(1: Maximum beneficial use of water under District water right license. 2: Strategic use of water by customers.)

**1-Water Right License:** The annual water rights reporting was completed and submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board by the deadline.

**1-Change Petition:** Gathering data, tracking, and mapping continues and legal counsel is developing a proposal as requested by State Water Resources Control Board. An intent to file a temporary transfer was submitted to the SWRCB, as well. It does not commit to anything but does make the District eligible for a streamlined process for a temporary transfer in 2024. This would allow the District to ‘transfer’ water to those who are waiting for the change petition to be filed and approved.

**Priority 5: Administration ~ Foster sustainable leadership and management of agency resources.**

(1: Capable and high quality executive leadership. 2: Engaged, diverse, and knowledgeable Board leadership. 3: Effective systems and human resources to execute the strategic plan. 4: Sound and sustainable management of District finances.)

**1-Executive Leadership:** GM attended the following meetings/webinars: Keeping up with the Brown Act: An Overview of the Public Meeting Law, Indicators of Climate Change Symposium: Bridging Science and Action, a webinar on nature based solutions, NOAA update meeting on the upcoming ARs, 2024 Annual Employment Law updates, virtual office hours with DWR's Paul Gosselin on groundwater sustainability plans and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation. Attended the two day ACWA Board meeting, workshop with orientation, and open house.

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**4-Finances:** The 2022-2023 Financial Audit is being drafted.

### Community Meetings

**Upper Russian River Water Agency (URRWA) (1/3/24):** Discussion was held on the Groundwater Sustainability Agency. The desire is for all member boards to give advice before their representative can commit to anything related to costs. Water District updates: Calpella is moving along with their rate study, Millview tank refurbishing moving along. Trans Basin Diversion: All members Boards submitted letters to PG&E supporting continuation of the Eel Russian Facility and continued trans basin diversions. Consolidation efforts URRWA/City of Ukiah: In order to satisfy the State, when any grant money exceeding one million dollars that benefits more than one member, that triggers an application for annexation. There is agreement on the goal of combining the agencies, but not on how to get there. They are on the 4th project manager for the SAFER program (the funding source for the consolidation.) It has not yet been decided if there will be an independent JPA or under the City. The ad hoc members want the boards to give them a definite yes or no on going forward.

**Willow Water District (1/8/24):** GM Walker reported on issues with new meter purchased by RRFC for installation at Hopland PUD and appreciated RRFC's flexibility. Board approved LACO contract for planning, engineering, and grant/project management for water main replacement. Approximately \$500k grant was received for water main steel line replacement. Board discussed scope of project and need for additional funding. Willows' scheduled rate increase goes into effect on next bill. No update on Potter Valley Project/Trans Basin Diversion future. District service agreement updates will be issued this month. Proposed consolidation: ad hoc committee met Dec 18th, first meeting in several months. Talked about one major change to JPA agreement related to grant funding awarded to an individual District and City initiating annexation. State hasn't seen revisions. \$55M of State funding is still on table for project. City interested being lead on consolidation and state supports that direction. Groundwater Sustainability Agency invoice: Includes an additional \$30k for rate study. Discussion about beneficiaries of plan not paying their share - private water company, environmental and tribal interests. No decision to pay the invoice was made by the Board. Adopted Resolution to increase service connection fees based on CPI thru 2022 since last increase. 1-inch meter goes from \$3500 to over \$4700.

**Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) (1/8/24):** The meeting was cancelled.

**Mendocino County Inland Water & Power Commission (1/12/24):** County Supervisor Glenn McGourty reported on the GSA and a discussion ensued. First Eel-Russian Project Authority (ERPA) JPA meeting is January 31, in Sonoma County. It is anticipated that this meeting will be mostly taken up with procedural issues like election of officers, funding, audits, etc. Next meeting, if not in February, will most likely be just ahead of March 15 as that is PGE's next deadline to ERPA for a selection of one of the two Cape Horn diversion proposals. PGE will most likely not make public the responses of support or objections from last month. There will probably be a \$25k ask by ERPA of IWPC for initial funding.

**Hopland PUD (1/12/24):** No one from the District attended.

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**Millview Water District (1/16/24):** Consolidation: Willow GM Walker will meet with City representatives Sean White and attorney Phil Williams tomorrow to talk about plan B (if some URRWA members don't want to join new entity.) Walker needs guidance from the URRWA member Boards if each District supports consolidation or not. Millview Board indicated support by consensus. Projects: tank rehabs slowed by weather; meter change-outs moving along slowly. Well 6 pump house taken off the table because homeless problems have abated and no need to spend several hundred thousand dollars at this time. GSA: Voted to pay the GSA invoice for additional contributions (pre-paying part of year 5 committed payment.)

**City of Ukiah (1/1/24):** City staff responded to questions regarding the consent calendar item approving a grant with CA Land Stewardship Institute (CLSI) for groundwater development. It was reported that CLSI is receiving the grant and the City is partnering with a project for work the City is planning to do regardless of grant funding; this helped make the CLSI grant application successful. Work will help better understand the surface water/ground water interaction. City is funding \$2 million for this project. The well is already in the Capital Improvement Plan and will happen regardless of grant. This \$2 mil includes the cost of drilling. An RFP for site selection is going out in the next week or two, to further on previous site identification studies done in 2012. Staff reported sufficient groundwater and recycled water supplies and this project is not really about additional supply but more about providing redundancy of services. In the 2021 drought, all facilities were running 24/7 at full capacity – any mechanical problems would have been difficult. Questions regarding conservation were asked of staff who reported moving away from behavioral conservation from consumers, which are difficult to influence and maintain, to structural conservation through management actions and projects. A potential water workshop for council members was discussed.

**Calpella Water District (1/17/24):** Cancelled

**Redwood Valley Water District (1/18/24):** Groundwater Sustainability: the RV Board voted to pay their share of the requested additional contributions (approx. \$9k). A discussion was held regarding annexation into RRF, however, when Board members suggested a RV Board Ad Hoc committee be formed to explore annexation, Willow GM Walker did not see the need and it was not formed.

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Prepared and submitted to the Board of Trustees by: *Elizabeth Salomone, General Manager*