



of California



US Army Corps
Of Engineers
San Francisco District



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To All Interested Parties:

Mendocino and Sonoma Counties, the California Resources Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers want to thank the almost 300 people who attended the June 26th meeting aimed at developing a community-based and locally-led program to restore, protect, and enhance the environmental and economic values of the Russian River watershed.

The community's comments, suggestions, and concerns were recorded, and each participant was invited to list his or her observations and remarks on comment sheets during and after the meeting. These comments are listed on the attached pages for your information.

As a sizable majority of the participants believed that a second meeting is warranted to discuss this effort further, we shall next meet on Saturday, August 1 at the Ukiah Valley Conference Center, 200 South School Street, Ukiah. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m.

Most of the suggestions and concerns raised last month centered on what a community-based organization's authority would entail and how the organization should be structured. We plan to address those two issues specifically at the meeting on August 1st. At that meeting, the facilitator will review the results of the June 26 meeting, lead a general discussion, and ask for additional input from the attendees.

Regarding the organization's authority, some have suggested that each member of this community-based organization – public or private – sign an agreement that would require the members to review and comment on actions that will affect the health of the watershed. Others suggest that the body review all CEQA documents for projects that could affect the watershed. In any event, we envision that this organization would become a voluntary coordinating and planning body, which will enable the community to have a more effective and timely voice in the watershed recovery and planning effort. This will allow federal, state and local agencies to use their own existing authorities more effectively. While public agencies cannot suborn their authorities without statute, this regional cooperative planning effort gives the community a powerful voice in agency decision making.

To ensure watershed-wide involvement in the organization, we shall ask participants at the next meeting to work in smaller (randomly-selected) "breakout" groups. Each breakout group will select organizations, public agencies, and/or individual stakeholders who will meet to jump-start the locally-led process. For example, stakeholder categories could include homeowners; fishing interests; tourism and/or recreational interests; water quality interests; development interests; etc. After each breakout group identifies stakeholder categories, it is the responsibility of each breakout group to list organizations or individuals that they believe should represent the varying interests of the Russian River watershed.

We shall ask many of these organizations and/or non-affiliated individuals to become the initial members of the organization and to begin involving the community in watershed-based planning and decision-making. Our only limiting factors will be the organization's size (generally under 40 representatives and individuals, including public agencies) and a sense of fair play (we don't want any interest group to attempt to "stack the deck").

The organization's first meeting will be on August 22nd. We shall suggest that its members focus on agreeing to its mission, its near-term and long-term goals, and its structure and size. We hope that the organization will work hard to guarantee that members of the community will have many opportunities to work with, and serve on, the organization.

In sum, we believe that this organization will be able to act as a voluntary and regional consensus-building, planning, and advisory body to devise solutions to problems affecting the communities within the watershed. The organization could also take significant actions on issues, implement projects, and influence local, state, and federal policymakers. Most important, each public and private concern has an incentive to cooperate in this effort to ensure that the residents in the watershed are making decisions on their own behalf.

We look forward to continuing this community-based effort at the next meeting of the Russian River Watershed Council, 9:00 A.M., August 1, 1998 at the Ukiah Valley Conference Center.

Sincerely,



Richard Shoemaker, Supervisor
County of Mendocino



Mike Reilly, Supervisor
County of Sonoma



Douglas P. Wheeler, Secretary
Resources Agency



Peter T. Grass
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District Engineer