

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

General Manager's Report for October 2024
Presented at Regular Meeting of Monday, November 4, 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 Flows: The State Water Resources Control Board Order approving Sonoma Water's April 2024 temporary urgency change petitions expired October 15th and the new order has not yet been approved. Minimum instream flows on the Upper Russian River increased from 125 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 150 cfs and on the Lower Russian River from 70 cfs to 125 cfs. For more information: <https://www.sonomawater.org/tucp>

2-Eel River Flows: The Federal Energy Resources Commission (FERC) approved the 2024 Flow Variance submitted by PG&E in late June 2024. As of October 1, 2024, the Potter Valley Project 2024 Flow Variance ended when Lake Pillsbury storage exceeded 36,000 acre feet threshold following (per the exit clause in the variance). Minimum instream flows in the East Branch Russian River increased from 5 cfs to 35 cfs.

2-PG&E Potter Valley Project Long Term Flow Variance/License Amendment: In July 2023, PG&E filed a request for a long term flow variance however, FERC responded several months later that the request constitutes a license amendment – a different administrative process. In September 2024, The State Water Board sent a letter to FERC urging PG&E contact them for further work on the amendment application. See: <https://rrfc.specialdistrict.org/potter-valley-project-license-amendment>

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-Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo): A draft Municipal Service Review (MSR) and Sphere of Influence Update (SOI) prepared by the GM was sent to LAFCo in September. It is expected that an annexation application will be filed to coincide with the MSR/SOI update. This District and the Redwood Valley County Water District have both formed Ad Hoc Committees to support the application development and liaise with LACO, the consultants preparing the application. The current focus is work on the required written boundary descriptions and analyzing potential annexation areas. For more information: <https://rrfc.specialdistrict.org/lafco-msr-soi-update-annexation-application-2024>

1-Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA): The GSA Board held a meeting on October 10, 2024. The Board received a presentation from GSA member City of Ukiah regarding the proposal to transition GSA staffing from a consultant to the City. The Board approved an expanded scope for consultants working on the Well Inventory Study. The GSA was awarded \$1,359,000 by CA Fish and Wildlife for the Upper Russian River Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem and Interconnected Surface Water Study. The project will study surface water-groundwater interconnection and groundwater-dependent ecosystems that support Chinook salmon and steelhead in the upper Russian River and its tributaries. The Board directed staff to prepare a Request for Proposals. An update was provided on the implementation of the rates and fees. Several Board members volunteered to assist with public inquiries. For more information on the meeting: <https://mendofever.com/2024/10/27/ukiah-set-to-take-over-groundwater-agency-promising-40-cost-savings/>

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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-Congressmember Huffman’s Office: Upon invitation GM attended a roundtable with Congressman Huffman’s staff to discuss local water issues hosted by CSDA. Topics included a “two basin solution” in the future of the trans basin diversion, Coyote Valley Dam modernization, and continued support and funding for the Russian River watershed to adapt to the expected changes in water supply.

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 Year 2024 Reporting: Meters are being downloaded by staff, data shared with customers, and project is on track to meet State Water Board deadlines.

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: Attended: (1) Legal training: “General Counsel Roles and Responsibilities Part 2 – Who is the Client?” (2) SWRCB staff workshop on Flood Diversions for Groundwater Recharge. (3) California Water Data Consortium Town Hall introducing the new CEO Robyn Grimm (4) PPIC’s Statewide Survey webinar Californians and Their Government. (5) A Legal Tune-Up to Help You Stay in Peak Legal Shape by CSDA.

2- Trustee Election: The County of Mendocino confirmed new terms for Rodrigue and Koball starting December 6, 2024 for 4 years.

Community Meetings

Note: District Board members and GM will no longer be attending all community meetings and reporting here. Please contact the individual organizations for more information on public meetings and updates.

Ukiah Valley Water Authority (UVWA) (10/1/24): Staff briefed Executive Water Committee on the revised and restated Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Agreement to address additional members, wastewater, and rates. Willow Water District did vote to join the UVWA JPA in September. Communications went out to inform water district customers on the billing and service changes. More information:

<https://mendofever.com/2024/10/14/ukiah-valley-water-authority-pushes-forward-with-district-integration/>

City of Ukiah (10/2/24): Staff presented Item F: Consideration of Execution of Amended and Restated Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for the Ukiah Valley Water Authority and Reaffirm the Continued Appointment of Vice-Mayor Crane and Councilmember Orozco as the Two Representatives to the Ukiah Valley Water Authority. The amendment includes provisions for Willow Water to joining the JPA and adding sewer services to potentially accommodate additional members Calpella Water District and the Sanitation District. The Council approved the item.

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Mendocino County Inland Water & Power Commission (10/10/24): A closed session with no reportable action was held. Member updates included a report of the progress on the Ukiah Valley Water Authority consolidation of services, an update was provided on the October Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board meeting, and a progress report on the RRFC Annexation of mostly the Redwood Valley area. Chair Pauli reported that ‘the partnership’ continues to meet with PG&E on a weekly basis. PG&E must publish the license surrender plan public draft by January 2025 and submitted by July 2025 file the final license surrender plan to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC.) Discussions continue regarding timing of building the new diversion facility with the decommissioning of Scott Dam and Van Arsdale Dam, the expected flows from Eel to Russian River under the run-of-the-river diversion, permitting, and funding. Pauli also reported on the 2024 Flow Variance which has now ended. No update on the Eel Russian Project Authority, though negotiations on how an entity will own, operate, and maintain a diversion will begin at some point. Regarding IWPC funding, an IWPC special workshop meeting has been discussed to assess financial needs for the continued work of IWPC attorneys and consultants. Pauli thanked the City of Ukiah for supporting marketing efforts including a revamp of the website. IWPC asked the Army Corp of Engineers for an extension signing the cost share agreement for Coyote Valley Dam modernization feasibility study and has kept Congressman Huffman’s office updated on the process.

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