



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sonoma County launches regional initiative to protect Russian River watershed

SANTA ROSA, CA – The County of Sonoma launched a regional initiative today to unite government agencies, nonprofits, tribal partners and businesses around a set of common goals to protect the health of the Russian River and its surrounding watershed.

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors today approved an agreement formally creating the [Russian River Confluence](#), an umbrella organization to promote collaboration among stakeholders along the 110-mile river that runs through Sonoma and Mendocino counties.

Fed by 238 streams and creeks, the Russian River watershed is a vital environmental and economic resource. It provides drinking water to more than 600,000 people, draws nearly a million recreational visitors annually, and plays a critical role in supporting the region's agricultural sector. It also supports a rich habitat for wildlife, including 63 different species of fish.

Efforts to address issues revolving around the health of the river, the supply of water that flows through it, and the impacts of climate change have been fragmented among county, state and federal agencies as well as tribes and nonprofits. The Confluence will serve as a hub where stakeholders can work collaboratively to share information and obtain resources to preserve and restore the Russian River watershed.

"The Russian River watershed is a critical resource for all of us, and it is time for all of us to work together to ensure it remains vibrant, not just for current residents but for future generations," said District 5 Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, who represents the lower Russian River.

"The Confluence will amplify and empower the voices of all stakeholders who rely on this precious river, increasing our cumulative impact by joining forces on common problems and opportunities rather than working alone," said

District 4 Supervisor James Gore, who represents the upper stretch of the Russian River in Sonoma County.

Toward that end, the Confluence today launched “Respect Russian River,” a marketing campaign to create awareness about the health of the river and spark an active community of stewards. Similar to the “Keep Tahoe Blue” initiative that has galvanized efforts to protect and restore the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Respect Russian River campaign will call on visitors, residents and businesses to clean up pollution, remove invasive species, recharge groundwater and learn more about the importance of the watershed. Bumper stickers, T-shirts, water bottles, tote bags, pins and other branded merchandise go on sale this week at local stores. A portion of the sales will go to the Confluence and its efforts to revitalize the Russian River. Merchandise and a list of retailers can be viewed at russianriverconfluence.org/respectrussianriver

Efforts to create the Confluence began in 2017 with a series of events and experiences to engage communities in the watershed. Last year, the County of Sonoma revived the concept and began hosting regular meetings with stakeholders in Mendocino and Sonoma counties to develop a shared vision, create a marketing campaign and draft a memorandum of understanding outlining the role of the Confluence.

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors signed the [memorandum of understanding](#) today, becoming the first stakeholder to approve the agreement. The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors and other partners will consider adopting the agreement in the coming weeks, including the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Boards, three conservation districts in Sonoma and Mendocino counties, the Russian River Watershed Association, Russian Riverkeeper, Sonoma Land Trust, LandPaths, Conservation Works and Visit Mendocino County. A full list of partners can be viewed at russianriverconfluence.org.

Confluence partners are developing plans for enhanced mapping of the watershed with GIS functionality for open source data projects. An annual stakeholders conference is envisioned in the spring or summer of 2024 with workshops on a range of topics including the [Russian River Regional Monitoring Program](#), which was established in 2019 to provide scientific information that will aid decisions to manage the long-term health of the river.

[Conservation Works](#), a Windsor nonprofit, will serve as the initial fiscal sponsor for the Confluence, providing financial management and administrative services.

NOTE: A media kit with high-resolution images of the Respect Russian River logo, merchandise and other materials is available at <https://tinyurl.com/4nw43pu5>.



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