



Russian River Water Forum and Regional Water Management

Potter Valley Project

The Eel River is the third-largest watershed in California, traversing Trinity, Lake, Mendocino, and Humboldt Counties. It was once home to some of the West Coast's most productive salmon and steelhead fisheries. The Potter Valley Project, a hydroelectric facility that transfers water from the Eel River into the Russian River was built in the early 20th Century. The project now produces very little power and completely blocks fish passage to the Eel River's headwaters. When PG&E decided to not to pursue a new license from FERC for the Potter Valley Project, it created risk and uncertainty for Eel and Russian River basin communities.

Water needs in the Eel and Russian River Basins include urban and agricultural water supply, fisheries and ecosystem health, recreational uses, aerial wildfire suppression, regional economy, agriculture, recreation/tourism; and Tribal interests related to the Russian and Eel River basins.



Two-Basin Solution Partnership

The Two-Basin Solution Partnership was formed in 2019 as an expansion to an ad hoc effort by Congressman Jared Huffman to protect the region's economy and environment in response to PG&E deciding to not pursue a new license from FERC. It included California Trout, the County of Humboldt, the Mendocino County Inland Water & Power Commission, the Round Valley Indian Tribes, and Sonoma Water. As collaboration and planning efforts have evolved since, the Two-Basin Solution Partnership has evolved and expanded into the Russian River Water Forum.



Russian River Water Forum

In 2023, the Russian River Water Forum was established, building off the work completed by the Two-Basin Solution Partnership, 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 supports ongoing regional collaboration on water supply and watershed restoration initiatives in the Russian River and Eel River basins. The Water Forum is supported by a Planning Group representing a broad cross-section of interests in Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, and Humboldt Counties. Planning Group participants include tribes, municipalities, water/wastewater utilities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), resource conservation districts (RCDs), and agricultural landowners.

Regional Water Management

The Water Forum works collaboratively with existing watershed groups operating in the Eel River and Russian River areas, several of these efforts are listed in the table below.

Group	Purpose	Area
Russian River Watershed Association (RRWA)	Coordinates regional programs for clean water, habitat restoration, and watershed enhancement.	Russian River Watershed
North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP)	Leadership Council (collaboration among Northern California tribes, counties, and diverse stakeholders).	Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, & Sonoma Co.
Russian River Confluence	Bringing together watershed organizations to address environmental goals, focusing on overall watershed health and long-term climate resilience.	Russian River Watershed
Russian River Regional Monitoring Program (R3MP)	A science-based planning effort convened by public agencies and watershed stakeholders to develop a coordinated regional monitoring program for the Russian River watershed	Russian River Watershed
Water Advisory & Technical Advisory Committees (WAC/TAC)	The committees help make decisions regarding water supply issues in Sonoma Water's service area. The WAC consists of elected officials and the TAC of agency staff.	Sonoma Water's restructured Agreement for Water Supply



Sonoma Water Distribution System

Sonoma Water manages and maintains a water transmission system that provides naturally filtered Russian River water to nine cities and special districts that in turn delivers drinking water to more than 600,000 residents in portions of Sonoma and Marin counties, including the following cities and special districts: City of Cotati, Marin Municipal Water District, North Marin Water District, City of Petaluma, City of Rohnert Park, City of Santa Rosa, City of Sonoma, Valley of the Moon Water District, Town of Windsor. Sonoma Water is also responsible for managing the county sanitation zones and districts, which provide wastewater collection/treatment, and recycled water distribution/ disposal services for approximately 22,000 residences and businesses. Sonoma Water provides water to retailers in accordance with the supply Restructured Agreement for Water Supply. The Water Advisory Committee (WAC), comprised of eight elected officials, represents the water contractors, and provides staff for the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The main purpose of the WAC is to advise Sonoma Water's Board of Directors on policy and fiscal matters affecting the Water Contractors, while the TAC focuses on technical matters related to the Water Contractors.