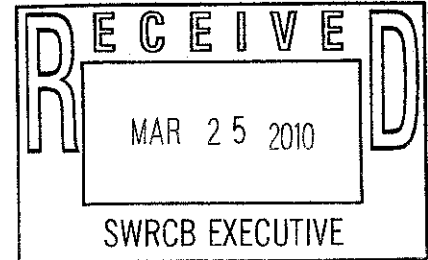


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State Water Resources Control Board
Jeanine Townsend, Clerk of the Board
101 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA, 95814

Subject: Comment Letter—AB2121-Instream Flow Policy

The Sea Ranch is a Planned Unit Development of approximately 1700 homes located on the Sonoma County Coast. We receive our water supply from the Gualala River and its expansive watershed. The Sea Ranch has been in existence for approximately 35-40 years. Custom homes are built as the economic cycle permits. We are almost at the point of "build out." Under AB2121 most people thought we "qualified for old diversion" of water from the Gualala River. Now the issue of water rights for The Sea Ranch has been raised by several people who act like "Chicken Little going around yelling 'the sky is falling, the sky is falling.'"

I understand that the purpose of AB2121 is for the protection of water flows of the Gualala River and other Northern California Rivers to enhance fish, fowl, mammals and other animal life and biological diversity. Many studies have identified problems in the Gualala River as excessive sedimentation and the rise of the water temperature which impacts the zoology and biology of the ecosystem.

The philosophy of the development of The Sea Ranch is "live lightly upon the land." We have natural foliage for our yards. There is no significant irrigation at The Sea Ranch unless it is in small entryway courtyards of some homes. Our water use from the Gualala River does not impact the "in-stream flow" to cause increased sedimentation or the water temperature.

The major culprit of sediment impacts and rising water temperature of the Gualala River watershed is the accelerated harvesting of Redwood Forest which threatens the delicate balance of nature. The Coho salmon and Steelhead have been greatly diminished by cutting techniques of the harvesting of our Redwood Forest.

The largest timberland owner in the watershed is Gualala Redwoods, Inc with over 30,000 acres. Their cutting techniques involve clear cutting hundreds of acres. All Redwoods and other merchantable trees are cut and dragged off steep slopes. Wildlife is forced out of these areas into other often unsuitable habitat. The other trees and

vegetation is cut and left to dry. The areas are then prepared for burning. A helicopter is brought in to ignite the dry brush by a napalm solution dropped from the air. Hundreds of acres can be ignited in a day and at a speed which causes a chimney effect in the center of the burn. The high temperatures sterilize the soil many inches down killing all life above and below ground. The soil becomes an impermeable layer from the fire. When the rains arrive in the winter and spring the impermeable layer does not absorb the water. What sediment is left in the area becomes liquefied and washes down the steep bare slopes into the Gualala River.

There is talk that The Sea Ranch could only divert water to fill our reservoir and tanks from December 15 to March 31. Historically and currently we have been allowed to operate our wells year round as long as river flows are within the permitted range. With a diversion time limit of March 31 each year our reservoir will become dry quite quickly. The implications are severe and are listed below: (1). We would have no capacity to fight fires. The Sonoma County Department of Health is quite critical of our water flow on the south side of The Sea Ranch in case of a major wild fire. We are planning the construction of a new water tank for the southern part of The Sea Ranch with the capacity of 900,000 gallons. We are working with both the California Public Utilities Commission and the Sonoma County Department of Health for approval of this tank and funding methods. (2). The Sea Ranch would become uninhabitable for several months each year. This condition would have a major economic impact on all business and people in the surrounding area. Most people in these surrounding areas would have to leave for jobs elsewhere. (3). The property values at The Sea Ranch would drop drastically. People would not be able to sell their homes. In the US most people actually have their savings in their homes where as in other countries they have savings in banks. As conditions of people's lives change in the US they access their savings by selling their homes.

Hopefully, AB2121 would not impact The Sea Ranch and surrounding areas as people are saying. Please keep me informed as the SWRCB In-Stream Flow Policy is finalized and the impacts on the Gualala River Watershed becomes defined [and the water becomes clear].

Please make my letter part of the administrative record for the Proposed Policy for Maintaining In-Stream Flows in Northern California Streams.

Sincerely,

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