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2025 Russian River Biological Opinion

Lower River Municipal Advisory
Committee

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    sonomawater.org



2025 Russian River Biological Opinion



On April 29, 2025, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a second Biological Opinion to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Sonoma Water, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District (District).



10-year term and covers the USACE and Sonoma Water's operations and maintenance activities, including flood control, water supply, channel maintenance, monitoring, and habitat restoration in the Russian River watershed. District channel maintenance activities included.



Non-jeopardy Opinion

Proposed Action “is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence” of Central California Coast coho salmon, California Coastal Chinook salmon, Central California Coast steelhead, or Southern Resident Killer Whale, nor is it likely to destroy or adversely modify their designated critical habitat.

Significant change from the 2008 Russian River Biological Opinion, which was a jeopardy opinion. The **2025 Biological Opinion is a non-jeopardy opinion**, which reflects improvements in operations and conservation measures.

NMFS included Reasonable and Prudent Measures in the 2025 Biological Opinion to address potential adverse impacts to listed salmon species.

Technical Advisory groups need to be formed this summer.



Proposed Action Evaluated

- Reservoir flood control and water supply operations at Coyote Valley Dam (Lake Mendocino) and Warm Springs Dam (Lake Sonoma), including deviations to the Water Control manuals with Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) procedures.
- NMFS supports implementation of FIRO and changing the Russian River Hydrologic Index (Water Year Classifications) by moving the index from the Eel River (Lake Pillsbury) to the Russian River (Lake Mendocino).



Proposed Action Evaluated

- Evaluation of **short- and long-term turbidity reduction** strategies for Lake Mendocino (Coyote Valley Dam) and requirements for the USACE to:
 - conduct specific turbidity investigations,
 - form a multi-agency technical advisory committee, and
 - conduct water quality and fisheries monitoring in the Upper Russian River.



Proposed Action Evaluated

Annual allocation of **2,500 acre-feet of stored water in Lake Sonoma** to be used for enhancing seasonal fish migration through pulse flows per NMFS direction

Adaptively manage Coyote Valley Dam / Lake Mendocino releases

Juvenile salmon and steelhead (smolt) outmigration timing and **survival rate studies throughout the Upper and Lower Russian River**



Proposed Action Evaluated



USACE and Sonoma Water to continue habitat enhancement efforts in **Dry Creek including adaptive management**, completion of an additional mile of restoration, and long-term maintenance of completed projects by Sonoma Water

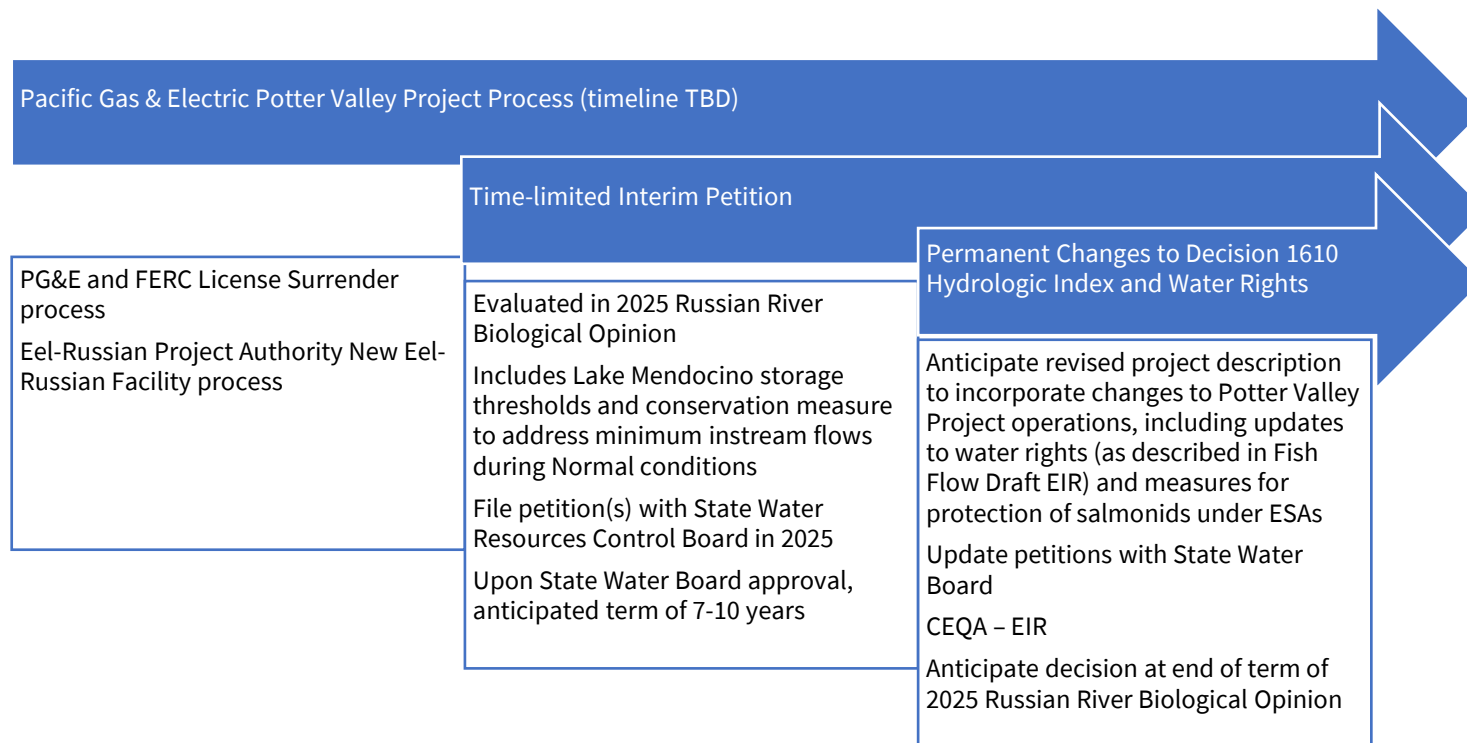


Revised Russian River Estuary Adaptive Management Plan emphasizing improved water quality-based habitat optimization, and **habitat enhancement including construction of 3–5 acres** of estuarine habitat enhancement(s) targeting juvenile steelhead rearing



Next Steps

Water Supply Operations and Evaluations



Next Steps

Technical Advisory work groups

- Reservoir Operations
- Turbidity
- Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement
- Dry Creek Joint Monitoring
- Estuary Adaptive Management
- Survival Studies

Monitoring

- Salmonids
- Turbidity reduction investigations and evaluations

Survival Studies

- Upper and Lower River

Reservoir Operations Water Supply

- Time-limited Interim Petition

Estuary Management Project

- Adaptive Management Plans
- Habitat Enhancement Feasibility Study
 - Enhancement Design and Implementation

Dry Creek

- Continued monitoring of existing enhancements
- Maintenance

CESA

- Incidental Take Permit(s) under CA Endangered Species Act





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