

Russian River CURRENTS

Friends of the Russian River/Russian Riverkeeper

Spring 2003

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The years 2002 and now 2003 have been packed with activity at FORR. The election of new board members brought us a wealth of talent, commitment and clout as you can see in our list of new members. Your Russian Riverkeeper, Don McEnhill has quickly filled a gaping hole in our communities ability to provide real protection for the River. As the "eyes, ears and voice" of the River, Don is out front in virtually every arena where folks are working to make a real difference for the River. I had the pleasure last April to join Don at the Water-keepers Alliance Annual Conference. We had fun rubbing elbows with Robert F. Kennedy Jr., but we also saw that he is just a small part of an extraordinary organization. Don will be going to Toronto in June for the next conference.

FORR can also be extremely proud for gaining recognition for the past 10 years of accomplishment having just received the 2003 David Gaines Award from the powerful Planning and Conservation League. This award, named after the leader who did so much to save Mono Lake was created to recognize groups, which have played unique and exemplary roles in protection of our natural resources. This is a tremendous tribute and all the current and past members and supporters of FORR should be proud of what we've accomplished since our founding in 1993.

Enclosed in this newsletter is a membership form. We hope we can count on you to keep up your generous support, especially now as we go forward full force with our Russian Riverkeeper program. As an example, I recently was lucky enough to receive a small windfall, which allowed my wife Dee and I a chance to give a real gift of appreciation. Try it!! We can attest that it will make you feel good and add years to your life.

Dan Wickham, President



A sawmill recently caught by Riverkeeper intentionally dumping muddy water and stormwater high in oxygen demanding pollutants, which both suffocate the endangered steelhead in this creek.

Photo: Don McEnhill

RIVERKEEPER'S LOG

Most of us live here because of the natural beauty of the Russian River Watershed – our chosen Homeland if you will. So many things to delight in; a river clean enough to swim in and provide us drinking water, over 6,000 returning Chinook salmon last fall, and water quality that ranks among the highest in our state. Unfortunately, all that we value is under attack.

These days we keep hearing the words "Homeland Security" and it makes me think about what Homeland Security means to me. I worry less about a terrorist than about my kids getting cancer or polluters degrading our Russian River. While our borders, airports and national monuments are bristling with police, national guardsman and bomb-sniffing dogs; our President threatens the bedrock environmental laws meant to protect your health and your natural environment – in essence your Homeland. If laws

can't be watered down, then slashing enforcement funds makes protection laws irrelevant. Nationally Christine Whitman, EPA Chief, was just caught using EPA environmental crimes investigators as personal butlers and chauffeurs rather than pursue polluters; locally we have our District Attorney thinking about closing the environmental crimes unit and Santa Rosa lobbying to lower water quality requirements to accommodate continued dumping of their sewage. It increasingly falls to non-profit environmental groups – like your Russian Riverkeeper – to protect your actual Homeland as many in your government think it's in your best interest to despoil your homeland. FORR has worked for ten years to protect your watershed and I work every day with your help to continue this important work.

Speaking of helping, I want to Thank everyone who has helped us in our efforts to protect our watershed, our homeland. A special THANK YOU! goes to Thérèse Shere our recently departed Treasurer extraordinaire; former board members

Michael Symons & Tim Derry; The Rockey Fund & Tammie Fraser; Sequoia Paddling Club; Brenda Adelman; Russian River Environmental Forum; Lynn Newton; Mike and Sarah of CCWI; Revital Katznelson of the SWRCB Clean Water Team; Zeno, Sharon & all those dedicated "First Flushers"; my fellow Keepers and other clean water advocates; my wife Vicky; Sean Swift and the crew at Bishops Ranch; Peeter and Joan Vilms; the many concerned citizens who reported incidents to us; our members who sustain FORR and its Riverkeeper program; people signing our mixing zone petition; all the hardworking volunteers and everyone else who has helped with our program. Your dedication motivates me – THANK YOU!

Don McEnhill
Your Russian Riverkeeper

RUSSIAN RIVERKEEPER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ON THE RIVER

- Over 500 patrol hours on river in last 12 months
- Documented and reported 21 incidents on mainstem river, including 2 intentional pollution incidents in progress, mining permit violations, stormwater permit violations, unpermitted dredge & fill operations and prevented several unpermitted actions by notifying landowners about permitting requirements
- 4 cases reported to DF&G for prosecution, 13 to Regional Water Quality Board for administrative action
- Responded to over 80 citizen complaints either directly or with referral to appropriate agency
- Implementation of Turtle Creek monitoring with Bishops Ranch in response to proposed wastewater reservoirs and identified several water quality problems to address
- Gathered monthly monitoring data at four locations on mainstem using CCWI equipment
- Organized and trained two "First Flush" teams in Healdsburg, assisted with lab analysis, sample receiving and delivery and helped with First Flush celebration

IN THE OFFICE & AT PUBLIC PROCEEDINGS

- Provided data and testimony for 303(d) list of impaired waters resulting in listing of Laguna for dissolved oxygen and Russian for temperature, lost fight to list Laguna for excess nutrients but won assurances that DO listing will trigger investigation of nutrient contribution to DO problem (note: excess nutrients are direct cause of plant growth in Laguna that enable mosquitos possibly carrying West Nile Virus to breed. Instead of spraying toxic chemicals on plants we should be controlling nutrients!)
- Fought attempts to allow mixing zones in Russian River for the first time. Currently a basin plan amendment study will be conducted with Santa Rosa funding (SR asked for MZ's to be allowed!) Our goal is to see the process is transparent, open to the public and results in all beneficial uses being protected.

- Working to improve or close a temporary soils yard located next to river that is contributing very high biochemical oxygen demand, which suffocates fish and aquatic organisms
- Submitted comments and testimony on NPDES permit renewals, Santa Rosa's IRWP, Agricultural discharge waivers, and 84 other issues

WELCOME NEW FORR BOARD MEMBERS!

Brian Hines – Trout Unlimited Secretary of California Council, Fisherman, Habitat Restorationist and works as energy conservation consultant.

Mary Kelley – Graduate of the College of Natural Resources at UC Berkeley, specializing in water policy and former river explorer Mary is a teacher at Sonoma Country Day School.

Andrew Packard – Runs a public interest environmental law practice representing non-profit groups and activists throughout California, specializing in Prop 65 & Clean Water Act cases.

Dr. Morgan D. Sullivan – Professor in the Geological and Environmental Sciences Department at California State University, Chico he teaches environmental geology and sedimentology.

Virginia Strom-Martin – Termed-out assemblymember who served the magnificent 1st Assembly District from 1996-2002 and a riverside resident in Duncans Mills for 25 years, Virginia wishes to see our precious and life-sustaining environments remain pristine for generations to come.

Welcome new Riverkeeper Steering Committee member – George Zastrow – George recently won an award from EPA recognizing his contributions to protecting and restoring the river and is VP of Sequoia Paddling Club as well as long-time veteran of the Watershed Clean-up.

Save the date!

Russian River Appreciation Festival

Sunday, September 14 • 3-6pm

Hop Kiln Winery

Updates on River Protection

Premium Wine Tasting

Displays by Many Groups • Keynote Speaker

Delicious Barbecue • Vegetarian Option

Silent Auction • Fun & Surprises

**DONATIONS TO FORR/RUSSIAN RIVERKEEPER CAN BE SENT TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.
ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE!**



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