

# County of Mendocino drafts letter regarding Potter Valley diversion

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Supervisors to consider contacting NMFS regarding flow change denial  
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The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors Tuesday will discuss the recent unsuccessful request by local water agencies to have more water funneled through the Potter Valley Project to assist the Redwood Valley County Water District.

"We were very disappointed to find that, and at a loss to understand why, a representative from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) office in Santa Rosa ... reversed his public approval of a transfer of water that could have helped the community of Redwood Valley which is facing serious economic loss from a severe drought," wrote 3rd District Supervisor John Pinches, chairman of the board, in a letter addressed to Irma Lagomarsino, the Assistant Regional Administrator of NOAA's regional office in Arcata.

Pinches explains that the RVCWD requested 800 acre feet of water, which could have been diverted through the Potter Valley tunnel at a rate of 250 cubic feet per second and stored in Lake Mendocino.

With the amount of water flowing from Scott Dam into the East Fork of the Eel River at the time the request was made, "It would have taken approximately 38 hours to fulfill the request ... and all of the minimum required flows for the Eel River would have been exceeded by many hundreds of cfs."

Though written agreements supporting the temporary diversion were acquired from the Friends of the Eel River, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, CalTrout and the Potter Valley Irrigation District, Pinches writes that Dick Butler from the Santa Rosa NOAA office denied the request "due to the fact that he believed the current situation does not qualify as an emergency," which would have to cause "damage to life, health, property or essential public services."

"We are very concerned that a federal employee could make a determination that, first, drought is a predictable local event, and, second, that the loss of a farmer's crop is not

considered damage to property," Pinches writes. "We would like you to review the circumstance surrounding the proposed minor water diversion from the Potter Valley Project and provide us with an explanation of how the final decision to deny water to Redwood Valley was made."

Customers of the RVCWD are currently limited to 50 gallons a day per person, and water for agricultural uses, such as livestock and frost protection for grapevines, is no longer available.

The board will discuss the matter and consider approving the letter during its next meeting Tuesday, May 6, which will be held in the board's chambers at 501 Low Gap Road. The meeting begins at 9 a.m.