

Biological Opinion and Russian River Estuary....

Finally, the Agency has plans for a project to keep the Russian River Estuary at Jenner closed all summer. There have been deep concerns about the impact to the harbor seals who seem to disappear when the mouth is closed. They have a plan to monitor the seals this summer to find out where they go and whether their habitat would be impaired as a result of this project. They will continue to monitor water quality perimeters in the Estuary and will study the effects of flooding on artificial breaching activities in the past. If low-lying structures could be raised somehow, there would be no harm in allowing the Estuary to become much more full. Then it could breach more naturally. There were about 17 breaches last year, mostly in the fall when the migration period begins. (Breaching is when they take bulldozers and/or shovels to open the mouth of the river.)

Increased Water Demands are Back....

There is another issue we barely have room to discuss. Last fall (2009) SCWA announced that they were going to drop their application to the State to increase their water rights

from 75,000 acre feet a year (AFY) to 101,000 AFY, and instead focus on other options for increasing water supply. They had been attempting to obtain these increased rights for the last 18 years. The City of Santa Rosa subsequently filed a lawsuit to stop this action, which they saw as a unilateral decision by the County.

To describe City goals in a nutshell, (along with agreement from many of the other contractors) they want more water for lower cost. They want to continue attempts to obtain water rights to 101,000 AFY. They want a strong say in how the Agency spends their money and they want the pipeline project prioritized over the habitat improvements, even though the latter may be cheaper and easier in the long run.

Former General Manager and Chief Engineer Randy Poole recently retired and his job has been split between Grant Davis (General Manager) and Jay Jasperse (Chief Engineer) for the coming year. The City of Santa Rosa withdrew their lawsuit after the Water Agency promised to give extensive warning before withdrawing the application for increased water supply to 101,000 AFY. In other words, nothing much has changed, and the desired water grab is still in the works.

Water issues, including the need to protect our precious Russian River, won't be going away any time soon.

"Growing Roots" Community Service Campaign

By Davin Cardenas

On Thursday, February 18, 12 workers from the Graton Day Labor Center set out to do battle with brush, ivy and blackberry, all very formidable opponents, at Oak Grove Elementary School in Graton. The day was a national day of community service and in coordination with centers nationwide who are members of the National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON). The shared goal to demonstrate to local residents, businesses, and politicians that day laborers wish to give back and help the communities where they live and work.

According to leading experts, approximately 117,000 day laborers seek and receive work every day in cities and towns across the country. In part due to their high visibility, they are often deemed as symbols of the United States' broken immigration system and its increasing dependence on a low-wage,

contingent workforce. Despite the undeniable demand for their services, day laborers' rights are routinely violated, as they are harassed by police, underpaid by employers, and attacked by vigilantes. According to author Eric Schlosser, "The great irony of day laborers is that they embody the American Dream, yet are widely used, abused, and despised."

For the members of the Graton Day Labor Center it was just another opportunity to share with the community they belong to. "What's important is that if we cut back the trail and clean up the sidewalk access, local families will be able to use the trail and children will be able to walk safely to school" said Juan Cuandon, a day laborer and member of the Graton Day Labor Center Board of Directors.

El Coronel Mexican Taco Truck of Sebastopol supported this volunteer effort by providing lunch to the day laborer trail clearers.

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