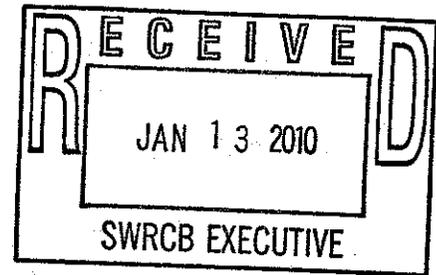


1/19/10 Bd Mtg/Wrkshp Item 7
 Russian River
 Deadline: 1/13/10 by 12 noon



VINO FARMS, LLC



January 12, 2010

Chairman Charles Hoppin
 State Water Resources Control Board
 P.O. Box 100
 Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Re: Russian River Frost Protection Draft Regulation for the January 19th SWRCB Workshop

Dear Chairman Hoppin and Board Members,

I am writing in response to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) draft regulation relating to the effects of water diversion practices for frost protection of crops on salmonids in the Russian River watershed in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties and the related workshop scheduled for January 19, 2010.

This draft regulation does not give any consideration to the cooperative efforts put forth by local growers over the last year or to any of the comments that were brought before the SWRCB by members of the agricultural community at the November 18, 2009 Russian River frost protection workshop. In addition, this draft regulation does not in any way resemble the "hybrid" document that SWRCB staff were directed to construct following the November workshop. Although this is only a draft regulation, it is an impractical starting point from which to continue the collaborative efforts to resolve the water use needs for both the agricultural community and the fishery resources.

The use of water from the Russian River watershed for frost protection purposes is not an unreasonable use of water. VINO Farms has been farming in the Alexander Valley and Russian River Valley areas of Sonoma County since 1976. We have 1,242 acres in these two areas that use sprinklers for frost protection. In most years, without water at frost time it would be almost impossible to produce an economic wine grape crop.

The draft regulation is also suggesting a far more overreaching problem that surface water diversions by including, "the pumping of closely connected groundwater." The SWRCB has defined closely connected groundwater to be any groundwater that "is pumped from areas described as subterranean flow or mapped active stream channels and associated alluvial deposits on maps prepared by Stetson Engineers, Inc." However, the SWRCB has not proved that it has jurisdiction over subterranean streams like those mentioned in the Stetson Engineers, Inc. maps. To force diverters to prove that their groundwater sources are, "not hydrologically connected to any surface stream within the Russian River stream system," will be virtually impossible since nearly all groundwater is hydrologically connected to some surface body of water at some point in time.

This draft regulation is an attempt by the SWRCB to secure new jurisdiction over groundwater sources that will affect a wide array of diverters including municipalities, residential supply as well as those for vineyards and other crops. Suggesting a regulation that includes groundwater goes above and beyond the initial scope of working toward a policy for frost water diversions in the Russian River and in fact expands the regulatory authority of the SWRCB into all aspects of ground water within the state of California.

Presenting a draft such as this is contradictory to what was understood by diverters to be a collaborative approach to resolving the water needs for both agriculture and the fishery. It appears that the extensive effort made by diverters over the past year, resulting in a viable solution, has been ignored and the protocol that was presented in November was not significantly considered. Refusing to include input from those who will be the most affected by such a regulation will only lead to further dispute and will significantly extend the period of time for a resolution to be reached.

Sincerely,

James D. Ledbetter
jim@vinofarms.net

LODI—1377 East Lodi Ave, Lodi, CA 95240
 P. 209 334 6975 E. 209 369 8765