



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/11/2025

To: Board of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency

Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency

Staff Name and Phone Number: Gregg Horton 547-1907; Dave Manning 547-1988

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Sonoma Water Allocation Change Request

Recommended Action:

- A) Adopt a resolution amending the Department Allocation List of Sonoma Water, effective February 18, 2025.
- B) Adopt resolution authorizing adjustment to the Board Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2024/2025 for the Sonoma Water General Fund in the amount of \$47,840 for the Sonoma Water Allocation Change Requests, effective March 11, 2025. (4/5th Vote Required)

Executive Summary:

On November 8, 2022, Sonoma Water's Board of Directors approved the addition of a 2-year Time-Limited Water Agency Resource Programs Technician II to the Environmental Resources Division Funding to conduct fish monitoring required by the Russian River Biological Opinion. Sonoma Water is requesting the time limited position be converted to a permanent position as the 2-year time-limited position expires March 1, 2025. Funding for this position will come from an ongoing agreement between Sonoma Water and the University of California (CA Sea Grant) as well as funding required to implement a new Russian River Biological Opinion beginning in 2025.

Discussion:

Water Agency Resource Programs Technician II

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), through a direct contract with the Regents of the University of California (Scripps Institution, UC San Diego, California Sea Grant Program), is providing funds to conduct fish monitoring required by the Russian River Biological Opinion. In 2022, the USACE and CA Sea Grant requested that Sonoma Water perform tasks, previously conducted by the California Sea Grant (CA Sea Grant), necessary for the USACE to comply with the Biological Opinion. Sonoma Water identified the need for a 2-year time-limited Water Agency Resource Program Technician II as well as extra-help technical staff to assist in carrying out that work. On November 8, 2022, Sonoma Water's Board of Directors approved a subcontract with Sonoma Water allowing CA Sea Grant to extend USACE funds to Sonoma which allowed Sonoma Water to hire necessary staff.

In 2023, the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) 2008 Russian River Biological Opinion expired. The

2008 Biological Opinion authorized Sonoma Water and the USACE to conduct water supply and flood control operations in the Russian River watershed without jeopardizing the continued existence of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead. Sonoma Water anticipates a second Biological Opinion will be issued in May 2025 (2025 Biological Opinion) that provides similar authorization. Compliance with the Russian River Biological Opinion is mandatory for Sonoma Water and USACE and necessary for continuing to provide water supply for 600,000 north bay residents and flood control for communities throughout the Russian River watershed and is therefore a top priority for Sonoma Water. Although CA Sea Grant has been conducting required fisheries monitoring on behalf of USACE, for financial and administrative reasons they are unable to fulfill the remaining 15 months of their five-year agreement with USACE. For several reasons, Sonoma Water is a logical choice for continuing this work. Sonoma Water has a long history of conducting fisheries monitoring in the Russian River that is very similar to the monitoring that USACE will be required to conduct in the 2025 Biological Opinion. Sonoma Water has also collaborated with CA Sea Grant and the USACE for more than 15 years meaning that they have well-established relationships with USACE and CA Sea Grant staff and a full understanding of fisheries monitoring objectives required by our monitoring partners. Performing monitoring tasks in the Russian River requires trained staff, specialized equipment, stringent regulatory permits to handle endangered species, and permissions to enter more than 1,000 private properties throughout the watershed. Because Sonoma Water has the permissions and resources necessary to conduct fisheries monitoring in the Russian River, USACE and CA Sea Grant have requested that Sonoma Water perform tasks (previously conducted by CA Sea Grant) required for the USACE to comply with the Biological Opinion.

Through a subcontract with Sonoma Water, CA Sea Grant will continue to extend USACE funds to Sonoma Water to hire extra-help technical staff (Water Agency Resource Program Technician I-EH) as well as funds to pay for a permanent Water Agency Resource Program Technician II until the end of their existing five-year agreement with USACE in September 2026. Once CA Sea Grant's agreement with USACE expires, Sonoma Water will have a direct contract with USACE in place that provides funding to continue carrying out USACE monitoring to comply with the 2025 Russian River Biological Opinion including funding for this permanent Water Agency Resource Program Technician II position.

Failure to conduct the work described above would result in no data collection for the tasks described and a violation of the terms of the Russian Biological Opinion. Only Sonoma Water and CA Sea Grant have the unique federal and state regulatory permissions, expertise, equipment, and landowner access to conduct fisheries monitoring in the Russian River. Private consultants would be unable to accomplish the required monitoring tasks without substantial investments in time and money to acquire resources needed to accomplish this work. Therefore, Sonoma Water is the only organization prepared to assume monitoring duties from CA Sea Grant and to implement the 2025 Biological Opinion. Sonoma Water's fisheries monitoring program utilizes both extra-help and permanent technicians. Sonoma Water considered trying to accomplish the monitoring tasks with only extra-help staff. However, Sonoma Water extra-help technicians typically work for a period of 9-10 months prior to taking a 3-month service break. While extra-help staff will still be required to carry out the work, the continuous nature of the monitoring tasks in the CA Sea Grant/Sonoma contract also demands the experience, dedication and leadership of a permanent Water Agency Resource Program Technician II. The permanent duration of the position will adhere to the CA Sea Grant/Sonoma Water contracting timeline while allowing Sonoma Water to continue required monitoring tasks outlined in the 2025 Biological Opinion beyond the period of that contract. The permanent Water Agency Resource Programs Technician II will serve as a field crew leader for the following tasks included in the CA Sea Grant/Sonoma

water contract and outlined in the Biological Opinion.

- Daily operation of fish traps in four Russian River tributary streams between March and June each year. Duties include measuring, weighing, and tagging threatened and endangered fish; using field computers; downloading and error checking data.
- Year-round operation of electronic fish tag detection and data logging equipment in four tributary streams. Duties include maintenance of tag antenna arrays, downloading data, and uploading data into a database.
- Conducting juvenile fish counts via snorkel and electrofishing surveys in four tributary streams annually between June and September.
- Conducting adult salmon and steelhead surveys weekly in multiple streams between December and March each year. Duties include identifying species, measuring salmon spawning sites, and collecting mapping data.
- Helping coordinate field data collection activities, assist with error checking of data, and preparation of summary reports.

County of Sonoma Strategic Plan Alignment: N/A

Sonoma Water Strategic Plan Alignment:

Goal 3 Protect and sustain our watersheds to maintain water resources, ecosystems and communities.

Strategy 3.1 Ensure current and future water supply reliability by complying with the Federal and State Endangered Species Acts.

Action Item 3.1.3 Implement the next Russian River Biological Opinion.

Prior Board Actions:

11/8/2022 Sonoma Water Allocation Change Requests

FISCAL SUMMARY

| Expenditures | FY 24-25 Adopted | FY 25-26 Projected | FY 26-27 Projected |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses | | 147,826 | \$152,261 |
| Additional Appropriation Requested | \$47,840 | | |
| Total Expenditures | \$47,840 | \$147,826 | \$152,261 |
| Funding Sources | | | |
| General Fund/WA GF | | | |
| State/Federal | | | |
| Fees/Other | \$47,840 | \$147,826 | \$152,261 |
| Use of Fund Balance | | | |
| Contingencies | | | |
| Total Sources | \$47,840 | \$147,826 | \$152,261 |

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The increase in annual salary and benefits for the conversion of 1.0 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Time-Limited

Agenda Date: 3/11/2025

Water Agency Resource Programs Technician II allocation is \$143,520 (based on an hourly weighted rate of \$69.00). This position is currently filled, and we anticipate needing this position permanently to fulfill contractual and regulatory requirements. Costs for FY 2024/2025 are \$47,840, based on a start date of March 11, 2025. Annual costs for future fiscal years assume a 3% COLA. Salary and benefits are budgeted in Sonoma Water's General Fund which is funded through property tax revenue and grants. The General Fund is reimbursed by our enterprise funds through project costing. Sonoma Water's cost accounting system allocates labor costs to Sonoma Water projects specific to its enterprise funds. The budget adjustment for FY 2024/2025 will be accounted for with a budget resolution. FY 2025/2026 and FY 2026/2027 appropriations will be budgeted in these fiscal years.

| Staffing Impacts: | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Position Title (Payroll Classification) | Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step) | Additions (Number) | Deletions (Number) |
| Water Agency Resource Programs Technician II (0914) | \$6,725.74 - \$8,174.55 | 0.0 <input type="checkbox"/> | 0.0 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

If approved, this request will convert 1.0 FTE Time-Limited Water Agency Resources Programs Technician II to ongoing, thus maintaining current staffing.

Attachments:

- Resolution for position conversion
- Resolution for budget adjustment

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None