



Legislation Text

File #: 2023-0499, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, and the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Water Agency
Department or Agency Name(s): Regional Parks, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, and Sonoma County Water Agency
Staff Name and Phone Number: Bert Whitaker, 707-565-2041; Misti Arias, 707-565-7360; Michael Thompson, 707-526-5370
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Fourth, Fifth

Title:

Russian River Confluence Memorandum of Understanding

Recommended Action:

Authorize the Chair to execute the Russian River Confluence Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. (Fourth and Fifth District)

Executive Summary:

The Russian River Confluence (Confluence) is a collaboration of partners dedicated to creating a generational shift in restoring, renewing, and celebrating the future of the Russian River watershed. Initially launched in 2017, this collaborative effort brought together stakeholders for a series of conversations, events and experiences that engaged the Russian River watershed community. Staff from the County, Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water), and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) have been actively participating in Confluence discussions and activities.

Stakeholders in the Russian River watershed seek to memorialize a vision of watershed-scale collaboration aimed at improving the health and resilience of the Russian River, as well as the human and ecological communities it supports, and creating a stronger connection between the public and the Russian River watershed. The purpose of the Russian River Confluence Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to establish the mutual understandings of Russian River area agencies, Tribes, and non-governmental watershed-focused organizations towards ongoing and adaptive collaborations that will increase regional coordination, communication, and mutual assistance in obtaining funding and resources to restore and preserve the health of this vital watershed.

Discussion:

The Russian River Confluence is a working group which has brought people from all areas of the watershed together to gain a shared understanding of its current state and to tap the collective capacity of the Russian River watershed community. The Confluence engages with stakeholders and the community to grow wide support for watershed critical projects addressing water supply, river health, and climate resilience.

Regional Parks, Ag + Open Space and Sonoma Water staff have been participating in the formation of the

Confluence and development of this MOU. Staff recommend entering into the MOU and continuing to actively participate in the Confluence’s ongoing collaborative discussions and activities with representatives from the County of Mendocino, Tribes, other government agencies, community-based organizations, and nonprofit partners. Discussions are anticipated to include developing the strategic and management direction of the organization, forming committees and workgroups to develop recommendations, approving the annual workplan, and tracking the overall progress and effectiveness of the Confluence.

In 2022, the Confluence hosted regular meetings with participating agencies and organizations in Mendocino and Sonoma. Work included developing a shared vision, development of this MOU, the Respect Russian River branding, an updated website (russianriverconfluence.org) and collaborations with Leave No Trace messaging focused on river stewardship. Using the “Respect Russian River” brand, the Confluence aims to grow the region’s pride in the river and catalyze action for the benefit of the watershed. The Confluence also partnered with the Russian River Regional Monitoring Program (R3MP) to assess and report the current river health, trends in overall watershed health and how can the health of the watershed be improved, as well as the Adopt a Road program launched by Sonoma County Public Infrastructure.

The workplan for 2023 includes additional work developing the organizational structure of the Confluence. The MOU is the initial organizing document for the signatory partners and additional investments into the website are envisioned in the year ahead to serve as a central repository for information and data. The Confluence partners are working on a project plan and budget to develop enhanced mapping with GIS functionality to provide opensource data projects occurring across the entire watershed. An annual stakeholders conference is envisioned in the fall of 2023 with workshops on a range of topics including the R3MP, which was established in 2019 to provide scientific information necessary for successful long-term management of the Russian River watershed health in the context of climate change, land use change, and population growth. Conservation Works, a local 501(c)3 non-profit organization, has agreed to act as the initial fiscal sponsor and will facilitate the receipt of funds to implement projects, activities, and other endeavors consistent with the Confluence goals.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

4/20/2021: Authorized Chair to execute the agreement with Catch Creative LLC for Brand Development and Marketing Campaign for the Russian River Recovery and Resilience (R4) Project, and authorize the County Administrator, and designees, to expend the remaining, related allocated funds to procure goods and services as needed for the Project.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			

General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

None

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None

Attachments:

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

List of Founding Partners

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

None