

WISDOM FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of FORR,

We enjoyed a rousing and successful River Appreciation Festival this year, which, in a sign of our increasing visibility we featured California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, and our own Sonoma County Environmental DA Jeff Holzman. It was encouraging to see real legal support behind FORR's activities.

Your Russian Riverkeeper has quickly become one of the most respected and effective spokesmen for protection of our River. His constant presence on the River gives him special clout.

The only bad part of our heightened scrutiny of the River is that we now confront almost daily threats we never knew existed. The crudest imaginable violations by gravel mining interests now aren't quite so hidden. But the largest threat faced by the River, one which FORR is knee-deep in, is the proposal by Santa Rosa to discharge their billions of gallons of effluent directly into the River near Healdsburg. In a ham-handed attempt to subvert our Regional Water Quality Control Board, the City is funding (to the tune of just under a million dollars) studies that will attempt to whitewash the idea of what are referred to as mixing zones. The City wants to use the River to dilute out the various toxic compounds it releases and figures if it can get a big enough "mixing zone" it can release all it wants without any ill effect.

This is only the most visible threat, but our Water Agency always poses a risk in their thirst to control and ultimately sell every drop of water in the watershed. Development continues apace and you, as citizens and Friends of the Russian River, need to be informed and active. We, as advocates for the River, need your continued support to keep you informed but also to be able to keep in the front lines as your troops in what increasingly seems like a war against the environment.

To the victor go the spoils, and make no mistake, if we lose the River will be spoiled. Thanks for all your help in the past and now for your help in keeping up our momentum.

Dr. Dan Wickham
President of the Board

RIVERKEEPER'S LOG

Sitting at my desk in a dark basement, I can still tell fall is in the air and the rainy season is approaching. It's not because I can see the leaves turning and dropping because huge stacks of 10 gal tubs filled with First Flush water sampling kits block any view of the outside world. I know it must be fall because

the sampling kits are part of gearing up to test urban run-off water quality at 36 stations in the Russian watershed!

As the seasons change from our dry summer and early fall to the rainy season, our program shifts into high gear. This because most pollution affecting our watershed is deposited into our streams during the winter rains. We will be more prepared this year due to a generous grant that allowed us to purchase an electronic water tester that gives me instant readings on seven key water quality parameters. If I see a potential water quality violation I'll be able to verify any violation with our new equipment and immediately document and report violations to the resource protection agencies. By patrolling the river all year and responding to numerous citizen complaints, I already know where many violations are likely to occur and my ability to halt them will be greatly enhanced.

As the seasons change from dry to wet we also celebrate the return of our endangered Steelhead, Chinook and Coho salmonids. The change from dry to rainy seasons also washes accumulated urban pollutants from our driveways, parking lots, streets and other impervious surfaces. This "First Flush" of pollutants also will extend an unfriendly welcome mat to our returning fish. The watershed-wide Russian River First Flush water quality survey of urban streams, conducted largely by volunteers, is a remarkable community effort to measure and quantify the impact of this surge of urban pollution from the first rains. The time I put towards this study as co-technical leader is well rewarded by the useful information we gather. The study results will help us assist cities in focusing their stormwater education programs on the pollutants that show up in each city's streams. Stormwater pollution is a leading cause of water quality problems and the problems start outside all of our front doors. First Flush study results can show us what we can all do as a watershed community to take action and reduce these pollutants.

Luckily I'll be taking this mountain of First Flush sampling kits to a training today so I'll be able to look out the window again and see the trees turning and dropping their leaves, signaling the pending return of our winter rains and our magnificent but endangered Steelhead, Chinook and Coho.

Don McEnhill
The Russian Riverkeeper



On September 17th, Riverkeeper Don McEnhill led a group of 18 paddlers on an informational river tour of the Russian River's Middle Reach. See Back Cover for upcoming trips!

THE 2003 RIVER APPRECIATION FESTIVAL!

Friends of the Russian River is a non-profit coalition of river and conservation groups whose mission is to preserve, restore and enhance the natural systems of the Russian River, its tributaries, riparian corridors and uplands through citizen action, scientific research and expert advocacy.

Russian Riverkeeper is a project of Friends of the Russian River.

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"This is a struggle between short-term greed and ignorance and a long-term vision of building communities that are dignified and enriching and that meet the obligations to future generations."

– Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
President, Waterkeeper Alliance



Marty Griffin (left) and Fred Euphrat crown Joan Vilms "The Guardian of the Russian River." Rebecca Kress (right), Russian River Unlimited, received the 2003 "In the Trenches" Award!

The much anticipated Festival Awards were presented by our host, Marty Griffin and Festival MC/FORR Board Member Fred Euphrat. Joan Vilms was presented with "The Guardian of the Russian River Award" in recognition of her ten-year dedication to Friends of the Russian River. Rebecca Kress of Russian River Unlimited received "The 'In the Trenches' Award" and The City of Sebastopol received the "Unmitigated Gall Award." Assembly-member Pat Wiggins was honored as a "Best Friend of the Russian River."

More than a dozen organizations participated in the Festival bringing their booths/displays and offering a plethora of information to attendees. Blending among the informational booths, local wineries offered their exceptional wines to guests. Kim Atkinson and his Carnival Spirit provided the energizing music again this year!



FORR Board Member Virginia Strom-Martin introduces California Attorney General Bill Lockyer at the 2003 River Appreciation Festival.

The 12th Annual River Appreciation Festival was a huge success – thanks to hospitality of Joyce and Marty Griffin/Hop Kiln Winery, very generous participants and tireless volunteers!

Bill Lockyer, California's Attorney General, was the Festival's keynote speaker offering words of encouragement to the environmentally dedicated. We were also happy to have Jeffrey Holtzman, Sonoma County Environmental Crimes Deputy DA, express support for our efforts in his short talk!



Photos: Morgan Sullivan

Riverkeeper Junior Jack McEnhill steals the show (and the microphone) from Riverkeeper Don McEnhill!

The over 300 Festival guests enjoyed a delicious BBQ organic chicken, pasta and salad dinner and the evening came to a close with the famous silent auction of outdoor equipment, weekend getaways, wine and river trips.

The Friends of the Russian River, The Riverkeeper, The Environmental Forum and The Environmental Center of Sonoma County thank all those who contributed to the success of the 2003 River Appreciation Festival!!