

# **Russian River Bill of Rights**

## **Preamble**

The Russian River is the heart of Sonoma County.

The Russian River is a living system that provides clean water, recreation, tourism, fisheries, wildlife, serenity and aesthetics to the people of Sonoma County. The River attracts thousands of visitors annually, provides an economic base, and is unparalleled in beauty and recreational quality. The River is an important wildlife and cultural corridor linking urban, agricultural, forest and coastal zones of the County. The River and its watershed is an essential source of irrigation (for farms) and drinking water to over one-half million people, in Sonoma, Mendocino and Marin Counties.

Each and every person in the County is entitled to enjoy the benefits of the river. Those benefits include clean water, recreation, safe and clean beaches, and a healthy environment for people, fish and wildlife. With the County's responsible leadership, the River can regain or retain its quality fishing, boating, swimming, ecologic and aesthetic character, and protect its critical water supply.

It is the challenge of the County and its residents to preserve and enhance the River's biological resources, its recreation and water supply, and its support of the local economy. To this end, the County will develop this Russian River Bill of Rights, to protect the renewable, global treasure that is the Russian River.

## **Russian River Bill of Rights**

1. The Russian River shall be maintained in perpetuity as a living system, as a water source, and as an economic asset.
2. The Russian River water shall be a source of drinkable water, of the highest quality as determined by standards of the day, reflecting good watershed management and best available water protection technologies.
3. The Russian River's beauty, both of and from the River, shall be protected by County planning.
4. The Russian River shall be suitable and available for swimming and contact recreation, with adequate flows for non-motorized recreational boating and floating during summer months.
5. The Russian River corridor shall be available for hiking, biking, passive recreation and education through the use of easements and public ownership.
6. The Russian River shall be available as a County trail for boating, with public access points no less than once per river mile.
7. The Russian River shall have clean beaches with adequate toilet facilities, trash cans and security patrols.
8. The Russian River shall support thriving aquatic life and a sustainable sport fishery of native species, with winter flows adequate to rejuvenate fishery resources, reduce invasive vegetation and alleviate the danger of floods.
9. The Russian River shall, with adequate habitat corridors, be an effective and abundant habitat for wildlife, and be protected through the use of easements and public ownership.
10. The waters of the Russian River are a finite resource. The county and cities shall maximize the use of conservation, water efficiency practices, reuse and safe recycling to minimize the additional degradation of the natural flows.
11. The County shall sustain the Russian River as an asset, and promote it to derive economic benefits, to create educational opportunities and to seek its recognition as a global resource.
12. The Russian River shall be sustainably managed by an independent Regional Water Resources Management Board, established through a countywide general election, as recommended by the Sonoma County Grand Jury, 2003-2004.