

October 13, 2015

Ukiah Daily Journal  
K.C. Meadows, Editor  
617 South State Street  
Ukiah, California 95482  
(707) 468-3500

**RE: Letter to the Editor – Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District (RRFCWCID)**

Dear Editor Meadows:

In the past year three members of the Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District Board of Trustees (RRFCD), Chairman Richard Shoemaker, Al White, and Paul Zellman, have all voted to take a course of action that potentially threatens the financial stability of the RRFCD, may increase the cost of water to water users within the District, and reduce the availability of water for those now currently within District boundaries. They voted, with the support of their former manager, Sean White, to go through an “Annexation/Dissolution” process with the Redwood Valley County Water District (Redwood).

The action of combining both Districts, would dissolve both the RRFCD and the Redwood Valley County Water District into a single agency. The problem is that Redwood board, back in 1976, obtained a \$7.3 Million loan from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to construct their district. Redwood never paid back the loan and still owes this money to the Bureau.

The potential now exists, in the event of an Annexation/Dissolution, that the Redwood \$7.3 Million debt would be transferred to the RRFCD, thereby increasing water contract prices for everyone within the RRFCD. In addition, the RRFCD would then have to operate Redwood’s District and take on the costs of personnel, legal costs, water treatment plant operations, repairs, improvements, follow California water treatment rules and regulations; in other words, operate a costly water district whose domestic water treatment plant is not in operation at this time.

The Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District (RRFCD), was formed by a vote of the people within the District Boundaries in order to preserve 8,000 Acre-Feet of water from Lake Mendocino for future water needs. A bond was issued for \$650,000 and paid by the people in the District for this water right. (The RRFCD Ukiah Valley Area boundaries are from the Mendocino south county line to HWY 20+/-.)

The Redwood Valley County Water District, many years ago, opted out of being included within the boundaries of the RRFCD District and has, until very recently, fought annexation. When Redwood opted out they had no water rights assigned to them from the State of California during the months of May through November each year. This has made Redwood dependent on the RRFCD, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and others for surplus water during this time period and has now resulted in the 2014, shut off of all agriculture water use, and during 2014-2015, the current long-term rationing of domestic water (50 gallons per person, per day).

The Redwood board has made no provisions for those within their district boundaries to pay off the \$7.3 Million debt and now Redwood, and special agriculture interests are working, for this "Annexation/Dissolution", (which must be approved by LAFCO). Their alleged intent is to push the repayment of the Redwood debt onto the backs of those within the RRFCD and to possibly obtain a share (as much as 2,500 A.F.), of the 8,000 Acre-Feet of water from Lake Mendocino. This has the potential to reduce the amount of water available for current RRFCD District users and increase the water costs for everyone currently within the District. This action could also push the RRFCD into a State mandated water moratorium and severe water rationing.

If you have any questions about a debt transfer from Redwood to RRFCD, please read California Government Code Section 56121, and subsections (f) and (g), summarized as follows: If a loan is a general fund obligation of a predecessor agency (Redwood), a subsequent consolidation or reorganization by LAFCO of the predecessor agency (Redwood), into another agency (RRFDC), under the CA Cortese-Knox Act, will result in the general fund of the new agency being fully obligated to pay the loan obligation.

Don't be fooled by the slick agriculture and special interest campaign literature associated with the upcoming election for RRFCD Board of Trustees. Only one candidate, Phil Baldwin, fully understands water issues in the Ukiah Valley, is not obligated to any special interests, and would be willing to fight to keep the RRFCD free of the enormous Redwood debt, other associated costs, and protect RRFCD water rights.

Sincerely,

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