



Friends of the Gualala River

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Dear Friend of the Gualala River,

As we all know, the Gualala River is vital to our area: it provides drinking water for most of the residents of Gualala and Sea Ranch and is a major source of recreation. Steelhead and the occasional coho are still swimming upstream to spawn – so there is hope that the previous damage can be reversed. But most importantly, we must prevent further degradation and for this we need your financial help.

Because of abusive logging practices, the river is now listed as sediment and temperature impaired. The once abundant coho salmon and steelhead are almost gone. Sediment run-off from bad logging roads and clearcuts have smothered the spawning grounds and filled in the deep, cool pools. Moreover, the reckless decisions to cut far too many trees directly along the river has raised the ambient air temperature and brought in-stream temperatures to levels fatal for salmonids.

Despite this cumulative damage, Gualala Redwoods Inc. insists on logging the all-important riparian zone, both along the North Fork and Little North Fork and along a five-mile stretch of the western shore of the South Fork, going north from the Hot Spot. Some of these areas had been set aside for protection as mitigation to previous logging plans. These WLPZ (watercourse and lake protection zones) act as buffer and debris filter between the river and logged uphill tracts. They are considered part of the floodplain and most of them are under water during periodic floods.

Fisheries experts agree that a healthy, undisturbed riparian zone with large trees shading the river is essential for salmonids to survive. It is also necessary to have these large trees for future, natural recruitment of large woody debris in the river – baby steelhead and salmon prefer the dark pools scoured out underneath large trunks in the river.

So far this year, Friends of the Gualala River (FoGR) has paid thousands of dollars to hydrologists, fish biologists, forestry consultants and other experts to provide the California Department of Forestry with independent scientific evaluations of timber harvest plans and vineyard conversions. We have also used the services of environmental attorneys. These are large expenses for a small grass-roots organization. We need your financial help to continue these efforts.

Together we have had some successes (see the “campaign report” on the reverse side), but our fight to protect the watershed must continue. FoGR is especially concerned now about the increasing conversion of forestland to vineyards in the Annapolis area and the cumulative impact these many conversions will have on the entire Gualala River Watershed. We have worked with Mike Reilly, our Sonoma County supervisor, to amend the County General Plan to prevent the conversion of timberland to other uses. We had a temporary success when Artesa Winery withdrew its conversion plan, but the recent acquisition of 15,000 acres of mostly forested land by Premier Pacific Vineyards means that the fight to protect the watershed is just beginning.

FoGR is an independent advocacy group; our steering committee members have no financial interests in timberlands or vineyards. The health of the watershed is our only goal. You have helped the Gualala River in the past. Your generous, tax-deductible contribution will help support our on-going work to protect and restore the river.

Sincerely,

Ursula Jones
Friends of the Gualala River

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Friends of the Gualala River

Campaign Report

2002

Friends of the Gualala River (FoGR) helped lead opposition to the **waterbag scheme** -- a plan to export water from the Gualala River in giant polyfiber bags. We recruited scientific and legal experts to provide detailed analyses, organized dozens of informational meetings, and created an extensive website. In the face of well-organized opposition, the plan was withdrawn.

2003

Premiere Pacific Vineyards withdrew a proposed 5,000 acre **forest-to-vineyard conversion**, citing public opposition, after FoGR organized public meetings and a letter writing campaign.

The Citizens Advisory Committee on the Sonoma County General Plan Update voted to **protect forestland** from conversion to other uses after hearing from many groups, including FoGR.

The lower reaches of the Gualala River were added to the **Wild & Scenic** Rivers system by the California legislature, in a bill introduced by Patty Berg and supported by FoGR.

The **old growth redwood forest** on Haupt Creek, in the Gualala River watershed, was saved from chainsaws. FoGR led the opposition to the environmentally damaging logging plan.

A Spanish company withdrew its application to **destroy 105 acres of redwood forest** adjacent to the Gualala River to plant grapes without an environmental impact report after FoGR organized public, scientific and legal opposition.

2004

The plan to log Haupt Creek's **old growth forest** was rejected by the Board of Forestry, after an appeal by the landowner. FoGR spoke on behalf of the ancient trees at the public hearing.

The pace of proposals to log redwoods in environmentally sensitive areas and to convert forestland to vineyards has accelerated in 2004. Gualala Redwoods proposes **logging in the floodplain** of the river. Developers envision removing sections of **coastal redwood forest** to plant premium pinot noir grapes on the headwaters and tributaries of the Gualala River.

These proposals violate numerous environmental laws, but the laws don't enforce themselves. Regulatory officials may turn a blind eye to the on-going damage to our watershed unless the public actively demands enforcement of the environmental protections enacted by our elected representatives. Scientific experts and environmental attorneys working on behalf of FoGR have addressed a dozen of the most environmentally damaging proposals in the past year. We are working to stop the worst abuses and to reduce adverse environmental impacts, but we need your support to continue.

The future: The Gualala River watershed is healthier today as a result of our efforts. To continue our work, we need your support. Please contribute to protecting the Gualala River.

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