



Friends of the Gualala River

PO Box 1543 Gualala, CA 95445

www.gualalariver.org

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Dear Friend of the Gualala River,

We need your help! Please donate generously to help protect the quality of our water and help ensure the continued existence of healthy redwood forests, wildlife and salmon. The quality of life our children and grandchildren will inherit depend on the action we take now.

FoGR is a grassroots organization that takes action to protect the Gualala River from harm and to promote the long-term recovery of our watershed. FoGR joins forces with other influential organizations such as the Sierra Club and Earthjustice, combining resources to protect the Gualala as it recovers from a legacy of destructive land uses. We strategically apply legal and scientific expertise to ensure that government decision makers do not lose sight of their duty to protect the public trust resources of the Gualala River.

FoGR's recent activities include:

Artesa vineyard conversion: The Spanish Codorniu Corporation proposed a vineyard conversion of forested land in Annapolis that could have serious impact on the flows and water quality of the Gualala River's tributaries. Scientific and legal experts hired by FoGR helped persuade the California Department of Forestry (CDF) that the developer of this project must be required to prepare a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR). When CDF finally agreed with our experts, they set a new precedent for requiring rigorous environmental review of vineyard conversions being developed in our watershed. The public draft EIR for Artesa appears to be delayed well past the projected target date. With your help, we will make sure qualified legal and scientific experts thoroughly analyze this project when the EIR finally arrives.

Preservation Ranch is a huge, speculative real estate and vineyard development project proposed for 19,000 acres of forestland in the middle of the Gualala River watershed and financed by the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CALPERS). This proposal to deforest 2,000 acres is the largest single forest to vineyard conversion in the watershed – and the largest forestland conversion in California! Construction has already begun in an illegal "piecemeal" fashion, without the thorough analysis and public review properly required by CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). The irrigation water sources for the project have not been disclosed to the public, and their impacts on the Gualala River's tributaries have not been analyzed or regulated. FoGR moved into action immediately, acquiring aerial photographic evidence of grading, construction, and logging to support a swift legal challenge of "illegal piecemealing," the deceptive tactic of dividing a large project into several smaller projects in order to avoid the legally required CEQA environmental review process for the entire project. We need your financial support to have our scientific and legal experts continue to monitor the impacts of this project.

Actions on other Timber Harvest and Timber Conversion Plans: Scientific and legal experts hired by FoGR carefully review Timber Harvest Plans (THP) and Timber Conversion Plans (TCP) prior to approval by the California Department of Forestry (CDF). Our experts then focus on plans that may pose unacceptable threats to recovery of the Gualala River.

For example, THPs that propose to log the few large trees that remain in the sensitive floodplain of the Gualala River have been re-submitted, even though these same plans were previously rejected by State and Federal resource agencies because they posed negative impacts to the River's endangered salmon and steelhead populations. FoGR has organized regulatory, scientific and legal action to oppose CDF's negligent approval of Gualala River floodplain logging plans.

FoGR also successfully challenged CDF's false conclusion that conversions of forested watersheds to irrigated, intensive agriculture do not have any significant cumulative impacts on local streams. We assembled technical experts to expose the flawed science that was being used by developers to justify short cuts in environmental review. Finally, we made a legally overwhelming argument to CDF that full Environmental Impact Reports must be required for vineyard conversions in the Gualala River watershed. With your financial support we have been able to hire the best experts to force CDF to improve compliance with environmental laws, thus helping to prevent avoidable harm to the Gualala River.

Adelman helicopter photography of the Gualala River Watershed: FoGR invited Ken and Gabrielle Adelman, renowned for their website featuring digital aerial photo archives of the California coast, to visit the Gualala River watershed. Their trip generated a library of spectacular digital photography, and provided new insights and documentation of recent, rapid land use changes that affect habitat health of the Gualala River and its tributaries.

Sonoma County General Plan Update: Sonoma County is updating its General Plan for land use. FoGR is working with a broad alliance of interested groups to limit the negative impacts of the conversion of forests to vineyards. FoGR has provided the County's Planning Department and Board of Supervisors with expert opinions on the potential damage to Gualala River water quality and flow that would result from the various regulatory options being considered.

FoGR website (GualalaRiver.org) keeps you informed and engaged: Our website is updated regularly. It provides in-depth information on the issues that affect the Gualala River and on the actions FoGR is taking to encourage recovery of our watershed. The website provides copies of the reports and legal briefs written by the scientific and legal experts we hire on your behalf.

Now, more than ever, FoGR needs your financial help. Only with adequate funding can we continue to expand our scientific and legal team. Only with adequate funding can our experts continue to provide critical scientific and legal review of the environmental decisions being made by the regulatory agencies that govern the natural resources of the Gualala River. We have already seen some improvement in the way regulatory agencies are treating the Gualala River, but much more oversight is needed. Only with your help can we hope to protect and restore the Gualala River and the wildlife that depend on it.

Thank you for your overwhelming generosity!

Sincerely,
FoGR Steering Committee