



# Friends of the Gualala River

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Visit our website: [GualalaRiver.org](http://GualalaRiver.org)

Editor:

Early in September, Friends of the Gualala River asked hydrologist Dennis Jackson to analyze the impacts of in-stream gravel mining in the Gualala River and to comment on the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Gualala Redwoods gravel mining permit renewal that is being considered by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

Dennis Jackson taught hydrology at California State University and was the hydrologist for the Mendocino County Water Agency. One of his primary duties has been to advise the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors on the appropriateness of in-stream gravel extraction operations on various rivers in Mendocino County.

Mr. Jackson concluded that the MND fell far short of meeting the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and that a full Environmental Impact Report is necessary. According to Mr. Jackson, gravel mining in the Gualala River has widened the active channel and has reduced the natural capacity of the river to remove sediment. In-stream gravel extraction has kept the river out of balance with its sediment load allowing portions of the river to fill in with gravel and sediment. For insight into the unintended impacts of gravel mining, we have posted Mr. Jackson's full report on the [GualalaRiver.org](http://GualalaRiver.org) website.

I want to stress that Friends of the Gualala River is not opposed to well-regulated gravel mining in the Gualala River. However, we agree that the current MND is inadequate, and that the County must prepare a rigorous Environmental Impact Report, one that enacts state-of-the-science mitigation and monitoring.

The Sonoma County PRMD Gravel Mining permit expired more than 2 years ago. Federal and State agencies also have not provided their required updated oversight. Sonoma County is not justified in rushing through a flawed, last-minute permit process just because they procrastinated for 2 years. County, State, and Federal agency oversight must occur simultaneously in order to protect the overall public interests of water quality and endangered species protection.

Friends of the Gualala River encourage Sonoma County to consider setting up an Independent Scientific Review Panel to provide oversight of gravel mining on the Gualala River that is similar to the County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT). CHERT is an independent scientific team made up of 5 interdisciplinary scientists who review mining plans and assess impacts *each year*. They are paid directly by fees collected from Humboldt County gravel operators. CHERT reviews gravel operations for the county Planning Department and coordinates with State and Federal agencies. CHERT determines where and how gravel mining operations are performed with an eye on salmon protection and river recovery.

Gravel mining policy on the Gualala River should be based on the best watershed science currently available and rely on independent experts for verification. Recovery of a healthy, functioning watershed should become a high priority for everyone.

John Holland  
President  
Friends of the Gualala River