



Friends of the Gualala River

An affiliate of the Redwood Coast Watersheds Alliance
P.O. Box 1543, Gualala, CA 95445 GualalaRiver.org



June 7, 2012

News Alert -- WE NEED YOUR HELP

A GIANT STEP: FOGR Files a Lawsuit to Defend our Watershed from Forestland Conversions to Vineyards!

Dear Supporters,

Friends of the Gualala River (FOGR) took a giant step today to stop vineyard projects that clearcut the river's forest, and we need your help!

Today we filed a lawsuit against CAL FIRE, the state agency approving the controversial landmark proposal by a Spanish winery giant to clearcut 154 acres of redwood forest and plant wine grapes in the Gualala River watershed in Annapolis. This winery giant **Codorniu S.A. of Barcelona, Spain, owns the Napa valley Artesa winery that is proposing the Artesa "Fairfax" conversion project.**

Joining us in the lawsuit are the Sierra Club's Redwood Chapter and the Center for Biological Diversity. The lawsuit contends the lead state permit agency for vineyard conversions, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), failed to follow California law in its preparation of the project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

This is the first EIR for a redwood forest-to-vineyard conversion to ever get approval in California. It sets a ground-breaking precedent for more and more, one-at-a-time, conversions of forest to intensive agriculture. If projects like this become business as usual for state approvals, they will transform our whole region into a mosaic of clear-cuts that will never heal, permanently sacrificing forests and steelhead streams. **Help us take a stand right here, to tell the State that this is unacceptable. A thriving wine industry can exist *without* sacrificing forests and rivers for speculative boom-and-bust projects like this.**

FOGR has been the lead watchdog for the Artesa project *ever since it first appeared in 2001*. With your help, we succeeded in our 2003 lawsuit against CAL FIRE for trying to permit forest conversion to vineyards without even preparing EIRs at all. **We won!** CAL FIRE was forced to prepare an EIR for Artesa. FOGR paid for carefully prepared expert comment letters for the EIR files. But CAL FIRE has just approved the Artesa permit with a *permissive EIR* that simply *dismisses* significant impacts and public comments from citizens, experts, and agencies. We must not let this stand as a precedent.

This Giant Step Taken by FOGR Needs Your Financial Help.

FOGR has put in countless hours *for over 10 years* to stop Artesa's destructive plan. And now we are at the final showdown – not just for the approval of Artesa as the breakthrough precedent, but for all the forest-vineyard conversions watching and waiting in the wings for its outcome – including the 20,000 acre Preservation Ranch project. FOGR volunteers will continue to work tirelessly (we have no paid staff!), but we are facing daunting bills for attorney and expert consultant services and related court costs.

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This is your opportunity to make a difference right in your own “back yard.” Our story to protect these temperate rainforests is just as compelling as those we hear coming in from distant places -- tropical rainforest destruction, mountaintop removal for coal, vast oil spills. **Where this story is different for you is that it is playing out minutes from your home and you have the local leverage to do something about it.**

Choose this moment to change the fate of our river. Continued destruction and exploitation, OR recovery and conservation? Modest donations will help, but with our small local population, those will not combine to meet the challenge we face. Please consider making your difference count by being as generous as you can afford to be. Our non-profit status makes your donation tax-deductible and effective in assuring a legacy of natural beauty and diversity for future generations in the place you call home.

For additional information on the legal action and why it is so important, see our website at www.GualalaRiver.org Feel free to call me with any questions, 707-886-5182.

Donations should be made payable to Friends of the Gualala River and sent using the enclosed envelope. Alternately, donate using PayPal on our secure website at <http://www.GualalaRiver.org> – just click the DONATE button.

We thank you for being a friend of the Gualala River and of the countless species of plants and animals at risk. Together, with your help, we will prevail and determine the fate of our watershed.

Sincerely,

Chris Poehlmann
Friends of the Gualala River