



September 11, 2025 River MAC Meeting

Minutes

Regular Meeting

September 11, 2025 05:30 PM

West County Services Center, 16390 Main Street, Suite B Guerneville

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/lrrmac>

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 pm by Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata.

Recording: <https://youtu.be/fUUfqMah3bA>

A. Roll Call

Present: Chair & Rio Nido Representative: Pip Marquez de la Plata, Vice Chair & Hacienda Representative: Vicki Clewes, Cazadero / Duncan Mills Representative: Tony Goodwin, Guerneville Representative: Spencer R. Scott, Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke, Monte Rio / Villa Grande Representative: Patty Thayer, Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar, Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton

Absent: Guerneville Representative: Joe Rogoff, Non-Voting Student Representative: Faye Zamora

2. **Approval of the Agenda** Forestville Representative: Lonnie Lazar motioned to approve. Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following vote:

8 In Favor 0 Opposed

 Abstained Absent Recused

3. Statement of Conflict of Interest

There were no statements of conflict of interest.

4. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of August 14, 2025 Minutes

Pip, Tony & Lonnie abstained due to not having attended the August meeting.

Forestville Representative: Thai Hilton motioned to approve. Guerneville South / Pocket Canyon Representative: Betsy Van Dyke seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following vote:

5 In Favor Opposed

3 Abstained Absent Recused

5. Councilmember Comment

Councilmembers provided updates and announcements on local events and issues:

- **Patty Thayer** announced the upcoming Monte Rio Revival on October 3, featuring art, storytelling, and music.
- **Vicki Clewes** reminded residents of an evacuation drill scheduled for September 27 in her neighborhood.
- **Lonnie Lazar** encouraged participation in the County's survey on the Forestville Front Street bike facility and shared feedback from a recent Chamber of Commerce discussion regarding bike lane design and parking impacts.
- **Betsy Van Dyke** highlighted Russian River Pride events scheduled for the week of September 20 and suggested the MAC consider hosting a booth.
- **Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata** announced that Pick of the Litter thrift store, benefitting Cats of Sonoma County, will be relocating to a larger facility on Cleveland Avenue in Santa Rosa.

6. Public Comment on Matters not listed on the Agenda

Members of the public offered comments on a variety of community issues:

- A representative from **Safer West County** reminded residents of Monte Rio and Forestville about the September 15 deadline to apply for \$1,000 home-hardening rebates.
- A speaker highlighted upcoming **Future of Our Schools** community meetings on district unification, noting sessions in Guerneville (September 17) and Cazadero (September 20).
- A representative from the **Chamber of Commerce** reported progress on downtown construction and invited community input on customized crosswalk designs through an online survey.
- A community member asked about the process for adding items to future MAC agendas and was advised to coordinate with the MAC Clerk.

7. County Update

Debbie Ramirez, Field Representative / MAC Clerk provided updates on behalf of Supervisor Hopkins, who was unable to attend due to a schedule conflict:

- Shared information on the **crosswalk survey** being conducted in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and Caltrans.
- Encouraged participation in the **bike facility survey** related to the Forestville Front Street improvement project.
- Announced that the **MAC application period** is open through September 24 for new two-year terms beginning in January. Vacancies exist for several areas including Guerneville, Guerneville South/Pocket Canyon, Rio Nido, Forestville, Monte Rio/Villa Grande, and others. Interested community members were encouraged to apply.

- Staff explained the **appointment process**, noting that if multiple applications are received for a single area, a community forum will be held prior to Supervisor Hopkins making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for final approval.

8. **Presentation from Sonoma Water on the New 2025 Russian River Biological Opinion: Protecting endangered fish and ensuring reliable water supply for the region**

David Manning & Jessica Martini-Lamb from Sonoma Water presented on the newly issued 2025 Russian River Biological Opinion, which will guide operations for the next 10 years. Key points included:

- The opinion, issued in April 2025 by the National Marine Fisheries Service, found that proposed actions are **not likely to jeopardize salmonid species** in the Russian River watershed.
- Covered activities include **reservoir and flood control operations** at Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma, **habitat restoration** on Dry Creek, **revised estuary management**, and **monitoring of fish survival and migration**.
- Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) were highlighted as a major advancement, allowing the Army Corps of Engineers to store more water in low-risk periods while maintaining flood protection.
- Sonoma Water described next steps, including technical advisory groups, habitat enhancement feasibility studies, and ongoing coordination with state and federal agencies.

Council and Community Q&A:

- Questions addressed the **relationship to the Potter Valley Project**, with staff clarifying that FIRO and hydrologic index updates are resiliency strategies independent of PG&E's surrender process.
- Councilmembers asked about **pollutants of concern** in the estuary; Sonoma Water noted focus on dissolved oxygen, nutrients, turbidity, and bacteria.
- Clarification was provided on **adaptive management**, described as adjusting actions based on monitoring data (e.g., flows, fish use, dissolved oxygen).
- Questions were raised on **habitat restoration locations**, including Willow Creek Marsh and lower estuary areas.
- Councilmembers asked about the **decline of fish populations**, with staff citing cumulative human impacts, drought cycles, and ocean conditions as key factors.
- Discussion also covered **seasonal dams in tributaries**, feasibility of raising Coyote Dam, Russian Riverkeeper's restoration projects, and the role of **forecasting improvements** in flood and drought management.
- Staff emphasized that these measures aim to balance **fish protection, water supply reliability, agriculture, and flood control**.

No action was taken; the presentation and discussion were informational

9. **Ad Hoc Committee Dissolution | Community Engagement for District Formation Consultants**

The Council received an update on the ad hoc committee formed in May to support early community

engagement in the district formation process. The committee (Cari, Betsy, Patty, and Vicki) had met with County staff and consultants to develop outreach strategies reflecting local priorities.

At the August meeting, the committee recommended:

- tailoring outreach to each Lower Russian River community rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach,
- prioritizing smaller, targeted outreach meetings with groups ready to participate,
- and developing clear printed materials for public understanding.

These recommendations were supported by the full MAC and shared with the consultants. Having completed its purpose, **Chair Pip Marquez de la Plata formally dissolved the committee.** No vote was required

10. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by the chair at 7:17 PM

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