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5.31.19

Russian River County Sanitation District

Summary of emergency discharge of recycled water from treatment plant

The May rainstorm that occurred from May 15-19 produced 3 inches of rainfall and drastically increased flows in the Russian River from 550 cubic feet per second (cfs) on May 15 to 4,000 cfs on May 20. During the same time period, the river level at Guerneville rose from 5.6 feet to 9.7 feet. The rains also greatly increased wastewater flows into the Russian River County Sanitation District's (District) treatment plant on Neeley Road. Within days after the storm, the plant had reached its maximum storage capacity for its tertiary treated wastewater (highly treated water that is suitable for reuse – recycled water). Normally at this time of the year this recycled water is used to irrigate redwood forest and the Northwood Golf Course. Due to the very wet year and this late storm, irrigation was not an option.

The District is permitted to discharge its tertiary treated water into the Russian River between October 15 and May 15 at a rate that does not exceed 1.0% of the flow in the river and had been discharging up until May 15th. Streamflow in the Russian River was about 550 CFS on May 15th. Because the extraordinary late season storm filled all available storage capacity at the treatment plant, District staff made an emergency decision, after contacting the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, to resume discharging recycled water into the Russian River between May 20 and 28. During this period, the flow in the river was between from 1,200 cfs to 4,000 cfs and recycled water discharge amounted to approximately 0.1% of the river's flow.

District staff take environmental stewardship seriously. The alternative to the emergency discharges would have been a plant overflow, which would be uncontrolled and would have had a variety of detrimental impacts, such as erosion, emergency storage reduction, and eventual entry of the recycled water into the river.

Tertiary treated recycled water is tested daily at the plant and meets all state water quality regulations, including dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, temperature, and coliform testing. Water quality tests included weekly upstream sampling and daily treatment plant testing during the emergency discharges and none of the permitted constituent levels contained in the District's NPDES permit were exceeded.

For more information about the District, visit www.sonomawater.org/RRCSD