

**Big Sur River Inn**  
46840 Highway One at Pheneger Creek  
Big Sur, California 93920

June 16, 2011

State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Rights

Attention Paul Murphey.

PO Box 2000,  
Sacramento, Ca.  
95812-2000

Re: Big Sur River Hearing

I am Alan Perlmutter.

I have lived in Big Sur for thirty three years. I am the General Partner and principal owner of the Big Sur River Inn. The River Inn property is adjacent to and just south of Andrew Molera State Park..... so The River Inn is the first commercial enterprise to be seen by southbound Highway One travelers / tourists - after passing through the El Sur Ranch. For the twenty three years I have operated the Big Sur River Inn visitors have always commented and ask about the spectacular cattle ranch they had just seen. The El Sur Ranch is the gateway to Big Sur and travelers from all over the world are invariably struck by the ranch's breathtaking vistas: by the dozens of cattle grazing in the well kept and perfectly fenced pastures; by this magnificent cattle ranch - one of the last and very few coastal ranches left in California.

When travelers stop at the River Inn, and we host more than three hundred thousand every year, we are always delighted to share our knowledge of the history and the unmatched contributions made by El Sur Ranch to our community. The River Inn has about 1000 feet of frontage on the Big Sur River. We depend on the health and vitality of the River as a feature of our business. And we depend on The El Sur Ranch to be a careful guardian of the vitality and health of the River as well. The El Sur Ranch is a great neighbor.

I hold a Bachelor's of Science degree from a very credible university but I certainly don't pretend to understand all the details of the biologic, hydrologic, chemical and environmental work being done to determine stream flows, fish viability, habitat endangerment and on and on. It does seem apparent though that all of the studies that I do understand and there are many of those ...completed – clearly point out that the water in question – currently being drawn and used by the Ranch;

1. Has been the Ranch's to use since the early 1950s.
2. Is clearly not the cause of the river running dry some years ago as described by State Water Resources Control Board nor the depletion of flows to ocean if and when those have occurred
3. Is water that had been reserved for use when the Ranch donated land with the wells to State Department of Parks and Recreation; and that such reservation of use was permitted by State Department of Parks and Recreation and exempted from CEQA study or review, some 15 years prior to the current complaint.
4. After 60 years of continuous El Sur Ranch water use the lower river is in pristine condition and supports a substantial and healthy steelhead population.

When the application is approved, as it should be, El Sur Ranch has committed to doing everything scientifically / physically / technologically feasible to assure that continued use for cattle grazing will not overdraft nor cause harm to Steelhead nor damage the native habitat.

If the application is denied the Ranch will diminish and perhaps become something less than the magnificent cattle ranch that we are fortunate enough to have as a neighbor.

And that –diminishing of the El Ranch - is what is of greatest concern to me, to our seventy employees - and to the entire Big Sur Community. We depend on the continued successful operation of the El Sur Ranch.

The El Sur Ranch has been an extraordinary member and contributor to the Big Sur Community. I'd like to mention just a few of the major contributions made by the Ranch – contributions which will not be counted on if the Ranch is forced to shrink or close.

During the severe fires we've had over the past thirty years or more, the Ranch has consistently contributed firefighting equipment and personnel; provided staging area space for all kinds of vehicles, personnel and equipment including vital firefighting aircraft; the ranch has provided easy access to fresh rather than salt water for water tenders as well as fire fighting aircraft. The Ranch is at the forefront during every fire emergency – seeking out best ways to assist, to lead and contribute.

The Ranch is a regular and significant financial supporter of our Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade and our self supported Big Sur Health Center - the only medical facility for the ninety mile stretch of Big Sur's Highway One. The Ranch provides at their expense, fully qualified and credentialed security personnel to assist / back up or even be the first responder to 911 calls and other emergencies in Big Sur. Neither California Highway Patrol nor Monterey County Sheriff Department has resident officers in Big Sur and so..... Incidents can occur when the nearest law enforcement officer is thirty miles away. The El Ranch Security person will be the only one available to respond to that emergency. Without that very important assistance / back up, Big Sur could often be without law enforcement personnel.

Several years ago El Sur Ranch sold a conservation easement to Monterey County – putting over 3200 acres of critical view shed property into permanent agricultural use. Many of us benefited from that sale: the Big Sur Land Trust received both property and dollars, the millions of visitors who have driven Highway One have had the once in a lifetime experience of driving through one of the last of California's Coastal Ranches; 33 million Californians who by virtue of the Coastal Act of 1976 continue to protect the fragile California Coast and Big Sur's very fragile local economy.

Had the Ranch not sold the scenic easement ..... at a bargain price by the way..... who knows what kind of development could have taken place. What eyesores we might have had in the viewshed. With the purchase of the easement, the people of the state of California have made a determination to maintain the El Sur Ranch as a cattle ranch. Cattle grazing is the only economically viable use left to the Ranch under the easement. Moreover, the easement contains strict standards for the conduct of grazing, which were adopted in contemplation of an ongoing irrigated pasture operation. It's unlikely that the Ranch could continue operations consistent with the high standards of the easement should the irrigated pasture be significantly diminished.

If the application is denied – the Ranch will reduce its herd, the Ranch will diminish in size or close; the millions of visitors will not have their once in a lifetime experience; the Big Sur economy will suffer.

The Big Sur River Inn fully supports the approval of El Sur Ranch's application – with the absolute knowledge that approval will be followed by the most careful stewardship of this magnificent Big Sur Treasure.

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