



# Enforcement News

## **North Coast Water Board Proposes \$4.9 Million Fine Against Luxury Resort Developer** *Massive Discharges Threatened to Suffocate Aquatic Life in Russian River Tributaries*

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**Healdsburg** -- The developer of a luxury hotel and residential project in Healdsburg is facing a proposed fine of \$4.9 million after an investigation by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board found major violations of the federal Clean Water Act that threatened vulnerable salmon populations and harmed water quality in tributaries of the Russian River.

An [administrative complaint](#) alleges that Sonoma Luxury Resort LLC violated water quality regulations during construction of the 258-acre Saggio Hills Development site by discharging an estimated six million gallons of highly turbid water into Foss Creek and other Russian River tributaries.

“There were substantial impacts to water quality, and the proposed fine reflects those impacts,” said Claudia E. Villacorta, North Coast Water Board Assistant Executive Officer. “Had the developer complied with the stormwater permit, impacts to water quality -- and our subsequent enforcement actions -- could have been avoided.”

A public hearing to consider the complaint is scheduled before the North Coast Water Board on April 16-17. Sonoma Luxury Resort LLC has the option to pay the penalty, propose a settlement or supplemental environmental project, or contest the penalty at the hearing.

The excessive releases of sediment-laden stormwater runoff from the project not only violated the Clean Water Act and the developer’s stormwater permit, but they threatened to smother aquatic animals and habitat, alter or obstruct flows that could lead to flooding, and reduce water clarity.

North Coast Water Board staff observed that the developer consistently failed to use best management practices (BMPs) to prevent or minimize pollutants from discharging off site and documented egregious violations over many months.

North Coast Water Board staff first identified significant deficiencies with the site in



November 2018 and temporarily suspended construction in December 2018 to ensure that the developer directed resources to implementing adequate BMPs. Following their initial inspection, North Coast Water Board staff noted significant improvements to BMPs, though such practices appeared to be short-lived, as construction was again suspended in February 2019 for failure to implement and maintain adequate and effective BMPs.

The stormwater permit, designed to protect against weather-related environmental damage originating at building sites, requires developers to implement precautionary measures such as slope stabilization, erosion and sediment control, curtailment of activity when it rains, and the use of sediment basins and traps to contain highly erosive soils.

A copy of the North Coast Water Board's administrative complaint (No. R1-2020-0009) is available for review on its [enforcement website](#).

The [North Coast Water Board's](#) mission is to develop and enforce water quality objectives and implement plans that will best protect the region's waters while recognizing our local differences in climate, topography, geology and hydrology.

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