
State Water Resources Control Board

AMENDED NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND NOTICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION OPPORTUNITY

The State Water Resources Control Board
Administrative Hearings Office
will hold a Pre-Hearing Conference
and Public Hearing on the

Pending Petitions for Change and Extension of Time for Permit 14853
(A021883) and Pending Water Right Application A031792 of

North Gualala Water Company

for a permit to appropriate water from
the North Fork Gualala River in Mendocino County.

**The Pre-Hearing Conference formerly scheduled for September 28, 2026,
will now begin on
January 5, 2027, at 9:00 a.m.**

**The Public Hearing formerly scheduled for October 12, 2026, will now begin on
January 26, 2027, at 9:00 a.m.
and continue as necessary on
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays until 2:30 p.m. each day,**

and will be held by Zoom Webinar.

**Parties or interested members of the public who would like to watch this
hearing without participating may do so through the Administrative
Hearings Office YouTube channel at: bit.ly/aho-youtube**

ASSIGNMENT TO NEW HEARING OFFICERS

The hearing officer formerly assigned to this proceeding, Sam Bivins, no longer works at the Administrative Hearings Office (AHO). I assign this matter to Senior Hearing Officer Megan Knize. Hearing Officer Knize will be assisted by the AHO's Senior Water Resource Control Engineer Kyle Wooldridge.

I also assign this matter for purposes of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to Senior Hearing Officer Malissa McKeith.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION OPPORTUNITY

North Gualala and California Department of Fish and Wildlife have represented to the AHO that the parties are negotiating a settlement in good faith. Hearing Officer McKeith is an experienced neutral mediator who would work with Engineering Geologist Carla Landrum, also with the AHO, to provide an opportunity for voluntary mediation to resolve this proceeding.

If the parties choose to mediate, discussions and documents shared during the mediation would be confidential and would not be admissible for any purposes should the dispute ultimately go to hearing. Please review the attached document for more information about the mediation process.

REVISED HEARING DEADLINES

Whether the parties elect to mediate or not, Hearing Officer Knize has set new hearing deadlines. There are no deadlines in, and there is no status conference scheduled for, February 2026.

The joint request on February 10, 2026, from North Gualala Water Company and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for a continuance of the hearing date and accompanying deadlines is granted with a three-month extension. The new dates and deadlines are as follows:

Deadlines / Schedule	Dates and Times
Deadline to submit case-in-chief evidence and optional opening briefs (15-page limit).	June 5, 2026, at 11:59 pm September 8, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
Deadline to submit evidentiary objections to case-in-chief evidence.	June 26, 2026, at 11:59 pm September 28, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
Deadline to submit rebuttal evidence.	August 21, 2026, at 11:59 pm November 23, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.

Deadline to submit evidentiary objections to rebuttal evidence.	September 9, 2026, at 11:59 pm December 9, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
Deadline to file pre-hearing conference statements, witness PowerPoint presentations, and (optional) written policy statements from interested persons.	September 23, 2026, at 11:59 pm December 18, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
Pre-hearing conference date and time.	September 28, 2026, at 9:00 am January 5, 2027, at 9:00 a.m.
Public hearing begins.	October 12, 2026, at 9:00 am January 26, 2027, at 9:00 a.m.
Deadline to submit closing briefs (30-page limit).	December 18, 2026, at 11:59 pm April 9, 2027, at 11:59 p.m.

February 17, 2026



Nicole L. Kuenzi,
Presiding Hearing Officer

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 - Service List
- Attachment 2 – Notice of Alternative Dispute Resolution Opportunity

ATTACHMENT 1
SERVICE LIST

North Gualala Water Company
legal.ngwc@gmail.com

Kristin B. Peer
Zachary Castagnola-Johnson
Morgan S. Biggerstaff
BKS Law Firm, PC
kbp@bkslawfirm.com
zcj@bkslawfirm.com
msb@bkslawfirm.com
Counsel for North Gualala Water Co.

Alan Levine
Coast Action Group
alevine@mcn.org

Monty Larson
David Manthorne
Stephen Puccini
Department of Fish and Wildlife
monty.larson@wildlife.ca.gov
david.manthorne@wildlife.ca.gov
Stephen.puccini@wildlife.ca.gov

Nicholas F. Bonsignore, P.E.
Wagner & Bonsignore, CCE
nbonsignore@wbecorp.com

Craig Bell
acenlil@mcn.org

Administrative Hearings Office
exec-adminhrгоffice@waterboards.ca.gov

By U.S. mail only:

Jerome P. Lucey
66 Manderly Road
San Rafael, CA 94901

ATTACHMENT 2



State Water Resources Control Board

TO: Parties in North Gualala Water Company Proceeding

FROM: Malissa McKeith
Senior Hearing Officer
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS OFFICE

DATE: February 17, 2026

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION OPPORTUNITY

Dear Counsel:

Several parties have requested, and the AHO has granted, a continuance of the hearing on Application AO31792, the petition to change the place of use and Term 9 of Permit 14853, and a petition for the extension of time for Permit 14853. (Applications)

This matter has been pending for many years and appears to turn on several technical issues as set forth in the request for continuance dated February 10, 2026. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has raised objections regarding the methods and results of the North Gualala Water Company (NGWC's) studies and has conducted its own studies concerning bypass flows and the effects of additional pumping on those flows. Over the years, litigation over the North Gualala River also has revolved around jurisdiction over subterranean streams and total maximum daily load (TMDLs) in the watershed.

To constructively move these petitions and this application forward, the AHO urges all parties to agree to a voluntary, confidential mediation at which a range of technical and legal issues can be openly discussed. The goal of the mediation is to allow for open, informal dialogue about the current conditions of the watershed and short- and long-term options for improving conditions and securing adequate water supply. Facilitated discussions can lead to durable resolutions that save all parties time and resources. Mediation also can serve to build trust among parties who will likely be working together on enhancing and optimizing the North Gualala River in the future.

If mediation occurs, all documents and communications will be privileged such that the information provided cannot be used in subsequent proceedings. Nor would I be

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | ERIC OPPENHEIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

communicating or sharing information with Hearing Officer Megan Knize, who will serve as the hearing officer and preside over any hearing if the matter is not resolved in mediation. The mediation and all documents concerning it will be subject to Evidence Code sections 1115-1128. All mediation documents will be filed directly with me and will not become public documents or parts of the administrative record for this proceeding. Mediations will not be recorded or posted on any website.

Please e-mail the AHO by April 1, 2026, if you are willing to hold a mediation status conference to discuss how the mediation would proceed including the scope of the mediation and what issues remain unresolved. If all parties agree, a conference would be scheduled shortly after April 1, 2026 to develop an agreed upon schedule and approach.