

4/7/09 Bd Wrkshp
Russian River Frost Protect.
Deadline: 4/2/09 by 12 noon

From: "Tito Sasaki" <tito@att.net>
To: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov
Date: Fri, Mar 27, 2009 9:55 AM
Subject: 4/7/09 Russian River Frost Protection Workshop

Tito Sasaki
PO Box 200
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March 27, 2009

Charlie Hoppin
State Water Resources Control Board
PO Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairman Hoppin:

I am writing with concern that the State Water Resources Control Board will cut off water for frost protection purposes in the Russian River Basin.

I serve on the board of Sonoma County Farm Bureau. Many of our members will be affected directly by the decision.

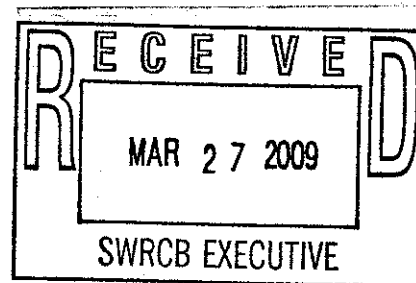
Growers in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties have been actively participating in a coalition to manage the water needs of agriculture, municipal and environmental interests. I understand the need for conservation, but also believe steps can be taken to ensure a healthy agriculture economy, while avoiding harmful impacts to fish. The SWRCB should continue to support these efforts.

Due to the reduced levels of Lake Mendocino, many growers have already received a 50% cutback on water from their usage in 2008. The allocated water could be used for irrigation or frost protection, but the proposed regulations would take that option away.

Frost application is applied carefully and sparingly. Only when the temperature approaches the freezing point is it turned on, and as soon as the danger of the frost damage goes away it is shut off. These few hours of application save the whole year of our livelihood. Taking this recourse away from us is diametrically opposite of what the government is now desperately trying to do: to save the businesses and economy through such programs as ARRA of 2009. Instead, it vastly increases the chance of devastating our local farming and related economy.

While agriculture has had to cut back, the SWRCB is mandating artificially high releases based upon a normal rain year, when in fact there is precious little water left in the lake. Instead of continuing to require these releases, the SWRCB should act quickly so the water we will need later is not lost today.

Last year's frost event was an extreme and rare occurrence. Since that time farmers have taken proactive measures to protect instream flows.



Emergency regulations prohibiting frost protection are not needed and are not the right answer. Please consider the alternatives available to ensure simultaneous protections.

Sincerely,

Tito Sasaki