



## MEMO

**To:** NCRA Board of Directors

**From:** Executive Director Mitch Stogner

**Date:** March 11, 2009

**Subject:** **Agenda Item - F.1 – Ratification of April 15, 2009 Public Hearing Date for Russian River Division DEIR to be held at the Petaluma Community Center at 6:30 p.m.**

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On March 9, NCRA will deliver the \$3.5 million Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Russian River Division (Lombard-Willits) to the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR), which serves as the State Clearinghouse for reports requiring public review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This will trigger the 45 day review period under CEQA in which NCRA will receive comments. At the close of the comment period, staff will proceed to prepare the final EIR which will include responses to comments.

As you know, on July 10, 2007 NCRA released a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study of the DEIR for train operations on the Russian River Division. The NOP and Initial Study outlined a plan of freight service between Willits and Lombard consisting of 3 round trips per week initially, culminating with a maximum of three roundtrips per day by the second or third year of operations. Comments were received during the scoping period, a public meeting was conducted in Novato on July 19, 2007 and public scoping sessions were held in Novato on July 31, 2007, in Santa Rosa on August 29, 2007, and in Petaluma on August 31, 2007. NCRA's plans for operations on the Russian River Division were also outlined at several public meetings with SMART and were the subject of numerous press stories throughout 2008 in connection with the Novato lawsuit and the SMART ballot measure approved on November 4, 2008.

With respect to the March 9, 2009 release of the DEIR, NCRA is planning one more public meeting as required by CEQA to receive public comments on the DEIR for the Russian River Division. This meeting is currently scheduled for April 15, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Petaluma Community Center.

**Staff Recommendation:** Ratify public meeting required under CEQA to receive comments on the DEIR issued on March 9, 2009: meeting to be held at the Petaluma Community Center on Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.