

# Coalition to Stop the Mad Water Grab

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## **Coalition Calls for Rejection of Mad Water Export**

### ***Groups Send Detailed Letter to Water Officials Pointing Out Fatal Flaws in Plan***

EUREKA, Calif. - Numerous environmental and public interest organizations announced today that a new coalition has formed to oppose a plan to export millions of gallons of water each day from the Mad River. Attorneys representing the Coalition to Stop the Mad Water Grab also submitted a detailed letter to the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District today, pointing out that the water export plan would violate numerous laws and will be fought vigorously by the rapidly expanding Coalition.

Aqueous, Inc. is currently negotiating with the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District on the proposal, which would use tugboats to transport Mad River water in 800 foot long, inflatable "bladder" bags. Each bag could transport approximately 13 million gallons of water per day to locations that have not yet been revealed. It is estimated that the water proposal would save each Humboldt Bay customer a maximum of only \$10 per year.

The principal of Aqueous, Inc., Ric Davidge, previously worked under President Reagan for the infamous anti-environmental Interior Secretary James Watt, and claims to have potential investors from transnational corporations based in Saudi Arabia and Japan.

Using a different name, the same company last year proposed a similar plan to export water from the Gualala and Albion Rivers in Mendocino County, a proposal that was met with fierce opposition and ultimately rejected. There are only two similar operations in the world and both have experienced persistent problems. Nordic Water Supply, which transports water in the mild Mediterranean Sea between Turkey and Cypress, functions at a deficit and its water bags have frequently torn and ripped. Aquarius, which operates throughout the Adriatic, has only utilized much smaller bags for its operations.

Last week, the State Water Resources Control Board listed the Mad River as "impaired" under the Clean Water Act due to extremely elevated water temperatures in the watershed. The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District is representing that the water is "excess industrial water," but this allocation of water has not been used in a number of years and currently flows to the Mad River estuary and ocean aiding in the recovery of the river's damaged fisheries.

In its letter to officials, the coalition referenced these concerns and a number of existing problems in Humboldt County that are occurring from current water diversions. The coalition also cited oil spills, resulting problems if a water bag tears or rips, and other issues of concern associated with this new usage.

"We do not believe this radical water bagging proposal can pass legal muster under the applicable state and federal environmental laws," said Simeon Herskovits of the Western Environmental Law Center, the attorney representing the coalition, and we will closely monitor the regulatory review processes to make sure that it is not allowed to cause serious environmental and economic harm in the Humboldt Bay area or elsewhere."

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Environmental Protection Information Center • Sierra Club • Humboldt Watershed Council  
Northcoast Environmental Center • Friends of the Eel River • Friends of the Gualala River  
Albion River Watershed Protection Association • Public Citizen • Alliance for Democracy