



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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### **River Enthusiasts to Launch Year-long Focus on Russian River through headwaters to ocean descent, and “the Confluence”**

(Russian River Headwaters - Willits Grade, CA) – On Wednesday, August 24, a diverse group of stakeholders from Sonoma and Mendocino counties will launch their boats and initiate a year-long effort to create a new vision to improve the health of Russian River watershed. Participants will paddle along this “Headwaters to Ocean Descent” through the winding path of the Russian River. This expedition, organized by the non-profit LandPaths and led by Sonoma County Supervisor James Gore, will include representatives from local, regional and tribal governments, as well as farmers, conservationists, scientists, water managers, and others passionate about the river. Designed to break through historic differences and preconceptions, this journey will seek to build new types of camaraderie and “can do” amongst participants and build momentum towards a summit to be held in the Summer of 2017 called “The Russian River Confluence.”

A press event to kick-off the effort will take place at 8:00 a.m., August 24, at Ridgewood Ranch 16200 N Highway 101, Willits, CA 95490. In addition to Gore, expected participants include Mendocino County Supervisor Carre Brown, Ukiah City Councilman Kevin Doble and a group of twenty or more partners.

“We are embarking on a journey together to explore and celebrate the Russian River. This diverse group of people all share a desire to support the Russian River watershed. And while we don’t agree on every issue in the present, we will all be paddling in the same direction to ensure a healthy future for the watershed,” said Gore. “Symbolically and practically, we want to direct the community’s energy and attention to the Russian River, the critical role it plays in our lives, and redefine how we collectively invest in the health of our watershed.”

“This is an expedition that will test both sinew and resolve, demanding that we be better at working across differences in order to help this region work towards increased health for both land and people,” said Craig Anderson, executive director of LandPaths, which has been coordinating multi-day, non-motorized trips since 2009. “We will gather stories and be sharing them with people as we head down the river. The purpose of this journey is incredibly important – and its time has come.”

The press event will be followed by a tour of Ridgewood Ranch and a look at restoration efforts on the land. From there, the group will travel to the base of Lake Mendocino and launch their boats. The overall Descent is comprised of three distinct, yet connected, multi-day paddle explorations of the Russian River on the following dates:

- August 24 – 27            Lake Mendocino to Cloverdale
- Sept 7 – 9                Cloverdale to Forestville
- October 7 - 9            Forestville to Pacific Ocean at Jenner (Public Float)

As part of the Confluence, LandPaths, Russian Riverkeeper, the Sonoma and Goldridge Resource Conservation Districts, Sonoma County Regional Parks, and other organizations and will be holding several “tributary” events focused on increasing awareness and encouraging community dialogue about the Russian River watershed. Information about all events can be found at [www.russianriverconfluence.org](http://www.russianriverconfluence.org)

Of special note, on September 17<sup>th</sup>, the Russian River Watershed Cleanup will take place. From Ukiah to Jenner, hundreds of volunteers will be cleaning up the trash in and around the river, which ensures that we won’t be contributing to pollution in the ocean. Those interested in volunteering are encouraged to register at [www.russianrivercleanup.org](http://www.russianrivercleanup.org).

The culmination of the Descent and Tributary events will be the Russian River Confluence – a summit focused on development of a multi-generational plan to regenerate and revitalize the river. The Confluence event will be held in 2017. Details will be available at [www.russianriverconfluence.org](http://www.russianriverconfluence.org).

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