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PRESS RELEASE

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And

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Dr. John Zebelean, scientific expert on pollution of Clear Lake

Living Rivers Council and Friends of Clear Lake are environmental organizations dedicated to the recovery of aquatic ecosystems of Clear Lake for the benefit of fish, plants and other wildlife through science based advocacy, research and education.

Clear Lake, (Lake County, Clearlake California) is suffering an environmental disaster of epic proportions due to massive amounts of mercury, sediment, water diversions and nutrient pollution exacerbated by drought all impacting the natural bio-chemistry of the Lake causing an enormous toxic cyanobacteria infestation (aka blue-green algae) that has been poisoning the Lake for more than two month.

The Lake County public officials have a public warning out telling people not to touch the water or breathe the air coming from the decaying bacteria accumulating on the shores. This dangerous mass of purple scum has caused nausea, headaches and asthma to folks living on the shoreline. Fishing resorts are suffering serious economic impacts threatening to become a ghost town. The summer promises to worsen the situation due to low Lake levels from drought conditions that can only worsen this toxic cyanobacteria infestation. While Clear Lake is known as a 'eutrophic (plant life sucking oxygen out of the water favoring plant life over animals life) Lake' the cyanobacteria infestation is opportunistic and is thriving on poor water quality at toxic levels of growth. This is a sign of an eco-system out of equilibrium due to excessive nutrient, mercury and sediment pollution caused by human activities.

According to Dr. John Zebelean, Ph.D. (707-274-3302) who quotes from a publication by UCD, Ecology of Clear Lake 2008, this Lake is the most polluted lake in the world from mercury. Cache Creek which flows out of Clear Lake then flows to the Sacramento River, polluted with mercury ladden water to the Central Valley farms as irrigation. Mercury bioaccumulates in the air, soil and water. Scientist claim that the Sulphur Banks Mercury Mine near Clear Lake is a recipient of federal Super Funds clean up dollars. This mercury pollution site is the largest source of mercury contamination to the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. United Nations' scientist's research have stated that mercury pollution has a strong correlation with cyanobacteria. Cyanobacteria which can transform inorganic mercury which lies in the lakebed sediment, to methyl mercury which advances into the food chain and bioaccumulates in the environment.

On Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> and August 6th 2009 over 40 business owners of Clearlake gathered at the Clear Lake City Council chambers to challenge public officials demanding to know what could be done to improve the water quality of Clear Lake. Lake County Environmental Health and the Lake County Department of Water Resources, Pamela Francis (707-263-2341) continue to advised the people to stay out of the water, don't breath the fumes of sulphur and methane gas bubbling out from the decaying cyanobacteria. Public warnings state that human health is at risk

from contact with the cyanobacteria ranging from: a rash, asthma and toxins if swallowed can cause harm to liver and kidney functions resulting in death.

Living Rivers Council, LRC and Friends of Clear Lake, FOCL, are filing a Water Rights Complaint with the State Water Resource Control Board, SWRCB, demanding that all water diversion uses provided by Clear Lake basin be reallocated by emergency order of the SWRCB and/or the governor of California so that more water is stored in Clear Lake. By slowing down water diversions/allocations this will help relieve the cyanobacteria pollution by providing fresh water recharge. Water diversions from Clear Lake supply farmers, industries and municipalities in Yolo and Solano Counties. LRC and FOCL claim that this Emergency Order could allow the natural fresh water flows including surface groundwater to recharge the Lake. This could then restore the water quality by diluting and flushing the cyanobacteria. Reducing water withdrawals must be done during drought conditions and all water allocations must be reviewed and reallocated to reduce diversion so more fresh water can recharge Clear Lake especially during drought conditions. Additionally, LRC and FOER is calling on the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to immediately assert their jurisdiction to impose strict regulatory rules and water quality monitoring schedules along with measurable performance standards on polluters to reduce nutrient, sediment and mercury to Clear Lake. LRC and FOCL further request that the stalemate over the clean up of the Sulphur Banks Mercury Mine be immediately remedied and that efforts get started to prevent further mercury contamination of the waters of the State.