

## FIREWORKS OVER GUALALA – SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

FROM: Marshall Sayegh, spokesperson for the Gualala Festivals Committee

Why do Fireworks over Gualala?

Last year the Gualala Festivals Committee (GFC) wanted to use the safest possible location to benefit the Gualala area with the least impact to the river, and the environment. The GFC also knew the surrounding communities would benefit if coordinated properly and, effort made to not conflict with scheduled activities in Point. Arena.

Last year the most vocal opponents cited environmental impacts which included long lists of chemicals that would pollute the estuary with wildlife having spontaneous abortions and/or abandoning or eating their young. Research has revealed that none of the above will occur; *therefore we invite those opponents to offer their scientific sources.*

Fireworks over sensitive marine environments such as ours are not new and have been placed under a scientific microscope for many years.

The scientific data on the environmental effects of Fireworks can be found in several excellent sources including most notably a *Report from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Re: Effects of Solid Debris and Chemical Residue on the environment, wildlife and aquatic biota* which present the results of a 10-year study of the impacts of fireworks decomposition products (chemical residue) upon an aquatic environment. The report further suggested that [quotes are theirs] "environmental impacts from fireworks decomposition products typically will be negligible in locations that conduct fireworks displays infrequently". Point Arena has been firing Fireworks above a bay since 1990....go figure.

The GFC was not denied a permit based on environmental issues.

Last year GFC proposed to use the park to transport fireworks to the sand bar. GFC offered to provide thousands of dollars in security measures to augment the park personnel restrict access and provide the safest show possible. Sonoma County Parks Department declined this offer.

GFC fireworks display was approved by the State Fire Marshall. It was Sonoma County Parks' refusal to allow us to cross its property that caused the failure.

Monterey Bay, Lake Tahoe and the San Francisco Bay and yes – even Point Arena have Fireworks displays. Some locations have multiple displays. This 4<sup>th</sup> of July *the Monterey Bay*

*Marine Sanctuary* will have Fireworks over the Monterey Bay. And visitors are being welcomed to the local park that has access to the beach. Yes, the park charges for parking and the beaches are crowded with families watching the display. And yes, the park makes a significant amount of badly needed revenue by participating in a family friendly event.

The Sponsors of the Gualala Fireworks are not suggesting Gualala Point Park be opened for the fireworks – although the view would be terrific. The park COULD make much needed revenues and, relieve possible parking in the downtown area if they chose to participate.

The GFC's motives are simple: celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and provide visitors with a reason to stay in the Gualala area one more day.

There were other letters which claimed "Gualala has too many tourists". Please speak to the merchants where you shop. Ask them how much their businesses have dropped since 9/11. The situation is just now starting to come back to pre 9/11 levels.

The GFC members are long time residents of Gualala, The Sea Ranch and Point Arena. I can attest to the fact they all care deeply about their communities, the river and, the environment.

Last year I stated that if Fireworks were delayed because of mis-conceptions; please be assured the Sponsors will file for an application in 2006. We followed through. The research has been done, the permits have been acquired.

We sincerely hope you will enjoy the First Annual Gualala Fireworks Display. If you have any questions feel free to call me directly at 884-4453 or visit our website at [www.gualalafestivals.org](http://www.gualalafestivals.org) and send me an e-mail.

So why do Fireworks? It's really no different today than what John Adams said in a letter to his wife Abigail after the Continental Congress of 1776:

*"It [Our Country's founding] ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other from this moment forward forever more."*