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## North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

# NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AND NOTICE OF BOARD WORKSHOP FOR THE NORTH COAST REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD'S DRAFT FEDERAL LANDS PERMIT

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board) staff will hold a 45-day public comment period from March 22, 2024 to May 7, 2024 to seek input on the draft *Waste Discharge Requirements for Nonpoint Source Discharges Related to Certain Land Management Activities on Federal Lands in the North Coast Region*, Draft Order No. R1-2024-0012 (Draft Federal Lands Permit) and its supporting draft Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Draft EIR). A workshop on the Draft Federal Lands Permit and Draft EIR will be held during the North Coast Water Board's regularly scheduled April 4-5, 2024, meeting in Santa Rosa, California. The Board will not take any action at the public workshop; the North Coast Water Board will conduct a public hearing to consider adoption of the Federal Lands Permit and EIR at a later date.

This Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment and Board Workshop includes 1) a brief background on the Draft Federal Lands Permit; 2) how to review and comment on the Draft Federal Lands Permit and Draft EIR; and 3) details and participation information on the April North Coast Water Board workshop.

### ***I. Quick Information***

- You can review the Draft Federal Lands Permit and Environmental Impact Report on the North Coast Water Board's webpage here: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board\\_info/board\\_meetings/04\\_2024/index.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/04_2024/index.html).
- Send written comments to [RB1-Federal@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RB1-Federal@waterboards.ca.gov) by **5:00 pm on May 7, 2024**. More information on submitting comments is in Section III below.
- Provide oral comments at the Board workshop on April 4, 2024, at the North Coast Water Board's office in Santa Rosa, California. More information in Section IV.

## ***II. Background***

The Draft Federal Lands Permit proposes to regulate certain land management activities from the three largest federal agencies in the North Coast Region – the United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS). The North Coast Water Board has regulated the discharge of nonpoint source pollutants to surface waters on federal lands through three iterations of a Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements permit (Waiver) since 2004. Since the issuance of the first Waiver in 2004, many lessons have been learned and environmental conditions have changed. An increasing annual fire regime, new state and federal policies, and other factors affect the North Coast Water Board’s approach to federal land regulation in the North Coast Region. These considerations, in part, prompted the development of the Draft Federal Lands Permit and a new supporting environmental analysis (i.e., the Draft EIR).

The Draft Federal Lands Permit proposes to cover discharges of waste to surface waters from timber harvest, vegetation and fuels management, roads and trails, grazing, emergency actions, fire recovery, and some aquatic habitat restoration activities on federal lands. Activities not covered under the Draft Federal Lands Permit include mining, application of herbicides or pesticides, discharges of hazardous or human waste, third parties conducting activities on federal lands not covered by this permit, and land disturbance activities unrelated to silvicultural operations that disturb one or more acres.

The Draft Federal Lands Permit relies on permit conditions, existing federal best management practices, and the standards and guidelines contained in federal agency guidance documents to demonstrate compliance with water quality standards. Key requirements of the Draft Federal Lands Permit include the annual treatment of sediment sources across each Administrative Unit<sup>1</sup>, retention of natural shade within designated riparian zones, compliance with monitoring and reporting conditions, and implementation of best management practices designed to prevent and minimize discharges of pollutants to surface waters.

Please refer to the Staff Summary Report and other Draft Federal Lands Permit and Draft EIR supporting documents for further information on the proposed project. These documents may be viewed at the following webpage:

[https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board\\_info/board\\_meetings/](https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/).

## ***III. Public Review and Comment Period***

**Notice is hereby given** that the North Coast Water Board will receive public comments on the Draft Federal Lands Permit and Draft EIR for a 45-day period from **March 22 – May 7, 2024**.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Administrative Unit” refers to an individual federal agency management unit, such as a USFS National Forest, BLM Field Office, or NPS National Park or Monument.

The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on May 7, 2024.

Please send comments by selecting from the following methods:

1. **Email** up to 15 megabytes to [RB1-Federal@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RB1-Federal@waterboards.ca.gov) with the subject heading “Draft Order and/or EIR Comments”
  - a. Follow [electronic submittal guidelines](#) for comments greater than 15 megabytes
2. **Fax** to 707-576-2069
3. **Mail or Hand Deliver** to:  
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Attention: Draft Federal Lands Permit  
5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A  
Santa Rosa, California 95403-1072

#### ***V. Availability of Documents and Information***

The Draft Federal Lands Permit and Draft EIR may be reviewed at the North Coast Water Board offices during normal business hours<sup>2</sup> or at the following webpages:

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Tentative Orders:  
[https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board\\_decisions/tentative\\_orders/](https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_decisions/tentative_orders/)

Forest Activities on Federal Lands Homepage:  
[https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water\\_issues/programs/forest\\_activities/US\\_forest\\_service/](https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/forest_activities/US_forest_service/)

#### ***IV. Board Workshop***

**Notice is additionally hereby given** that the North Coast Water Board will hold a workshop during the 45-day public comment period. The purpose of the Board workshop is to inform and invite comments from North Coast Water Board members, communities of interest, and the public on the Draft Federal Lands Permit and Draft EIR. The Board will not take any action at the workshop; the North Coast Water Board will conduct a public hearing to consider adoption of the Federal Lands Permit and EIR at a later date.

The workshop will be held during the following North Coast Water Board meeting:

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<sup>2</sup> The Draft Federal Lands Permit and EIR may be reviewed at the Santa Rosa office during normal business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, and at the Eureka office by appointment only. Please contact Mona Dougherty at [mona.dougherty@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:mona.dougherty@waterboards.ca.gov) to schedule an appointment to view the documents at the Eureka office.

Board Meeting Date:                    **April 4, 2024**  
Board Meeting Start Time:        **09:00 a.m.**  
Physical Location:                    **David C. Joseph Board Room**  
    **5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A**  
    **Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

Link to Meeting Agenda:            [North Coast Water Board Meetings 2024](#)

Video and teleconference options: The meeting may be viewed live at: <https://cal-span.org/>. If you wish to comment on the item from a remote location, please complete the virtual speaker card available here: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_QrWBPQ85Rym6ZTPTICEqcw#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QrWBPQ85Rym6ZTPTICEqcw#/registration).

Additional information about the North Coast Water Board workshop, including meeting procedures and information on making presentations, can be found at the North Coast Water Board's webpage.

Oral comments will be accepted at the workshop. The time limit for public oral comments will be 5 minutes; however, additional time may be provided, upon request, at the discretion of the North Coast Water Board Chair. A timer may be used, and speakers are expected to honor the time limits. Where speakers can be grouped by affiliation or interest, such groups will be expected to select a spokesperson and not be repetitive.

***VI. Accessibility and Language Services***

For directions to the North Coast Water Board office, please refer to: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/about\\_us/contact\\_us.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/about_us/contact_us.shtml). Parking for the meetings is available onsite. Individuals requiring special accommodations are requested to contact Ms. Deidre Wilkerson, Executive Assistant, at (707) 576-2066 or [Deidre.Wilkerson@Waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Deidre.Wilkerson@Waterboards.ca.gov) at least five days prior to the meeting. TTY/TDD/Speech-to-Speech users may contact the California Relay Service at 1-800-735-2929 or voice line at 1-800-735-2922.

***VII. Potential Future Changes to the Noticed Items***

Any changes regarding the noticed items will be posted on the North Coast Water Board's webpage and noticed through the email distribution list. Any person desiring to receive future notices must sign up for the email distribution list by assessing the [Email List Subscription Form webpage](#) and subscribing to the "Forest Activities on Federal Lands" email list.

***VIII. North Coast Water Board Contact Information***

Please direct questions about this public notice or the Draft Federal Lands Permit and/or Draft EIR to [RB1-Federal@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:RB1-Federal@waterboards.ca.gov).