

**Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or
Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)**

Jack Noble – Gravel Extraction Operations
WDID No. 1B05114WNHU

Humboldt County

On August 12, 2005, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Jack Noble requesting Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) to conduct gravel extraction operations on the Van Duzen River between Hydesville and Carlotta, Humboldt County. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Van Duzen River in the Hydesville Hydrologic Subarea No. 111.21.

Jack Noble's (Noble Ranch) gravel extraction operations are located from one and one-half miles upstream to one and one-half miles downstream of the confluence of Yager Creek and the Van Duzen River in Sections 27, 28, 29, and 30, Township 2 North, Range 1 East, HB&M. The proposed project involves extraction of up to 100,000 cubic yards per year of river-run gravel from four gravel bars along the Van Duzen River. The proposed activity will result in the temporary disturbance of up to approximately 100 acres each year. Extraction of river-run gravel has occurred along the Van Duzen River since the 1940's. The Noble Ranch's gravel extraction operations are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Letter of Permission procedure pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 404. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G), County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT), and NOAA Fisheries review the proposed gravel extraction operations annually. CHERT provides site-specific recommendations for extraction quantities, and impact minimization and mitigation measures.

Extraction activities on the Noble Ranch involve skimming the dry gravel bars with bulldozers, excavators, scrapers, and/or front-end-loaders. The proposed project does not involve excavation in the active channel (wet channel). All aggregate material must be temporarily stockpiled away from the wet channel, in order to prevent runoff from entering the river. Existing haul roads will be used to access the gravel bars. The applicant may construct temporary channel crossings. The location, construction, and removal of temporary channel crossings will be reviewed by CHERT. Temporary channel crossings will typically be constructed with railroad flatcars set on concrete crib walls and native gravel abutments. Temporary crossings cannot be placed until June 30 and must be removed by October 15. Crossings are located to avoid potential fish spawning, holding, and rearing habitat. The extraction season is typically from June 1 to October 15.

In compliance with CHERT design features, extraction areas must be regraded upon completion of the aggregate extraction activities. Re-grading is intended to fill depressions, remove temporary fills, and return the affected areas to a free-draining configuration. Mitigation and impact avoidance measures include restricting heavy equipment and trucks to existing haul roads, exclusion of all machinery from the active low flow channel, maintenance of vertical and horizontal offsets from the active low flow channel, regular maintenance and inspection of equipment to prevent vehicles from leaking onto the gravel bars or into receiving waters, limiting temporary channel crossings, and maintaining sufficient water depth for fish.

The applicant conducts aggregate extraction operations under the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for aggregate removal from the Lower Eel River, which was adopted by Humboldt County in 1992. The Lower Eel River PEIR covers gravel extraction activities on the lower Van Duzen River. The California Department of Fish and Game determined that this project will not have a significant effect on the environment and approved a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for this project on May 13, 2004, pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act. The applicant applies for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreements (1600 Agreement) annually after receiving approval of its annual extraction plans from CHERT, CDF&G, ACOE, and NOAA Fisheries.

Regional Water Board staff propose to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. This project may be eligible for coverage under the *General Waste Discharge Requirements and Water Quality Certification for Dischargers Related to Sand and Gravel Mining, Excavation, and Processing Activities, Including Asphalt and Concrete Operations, on Non-Federal Lands in the North Coast Region* (General WDR's) that were adopted by the Regional Water Board on June 21, 2005. In addition, staff will consider all comments received during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801, or at dprat@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.