

**Public Notice for Section 401 Water Quality Certification
and/or Waste Discharge Requirements**

CDOT – Highway 299 Culvert Rehabilitation and Drainage Ditch Project, P.M. 8.75-9.05
WDID No. 1B05124WNHU

Humboldt County

On September 8, 2005, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Gail Popham, representing the California Department of Transportation (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, Section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to a proposed project to rehabilitate three culverts and to conduct other drainage work along Highway 299 east of Arcata in Humboldt County. Staff deemed the application complete on February 17, 2006. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with unnamed tributaries to the North Fork Mad River in the North Fork Mad River Hydrologic Area No. 109.20.

The proposed project is located between Post Miles 8.75 and 9.05, a section of Highway 299 where subsurface water causes chronic slumping of the highway. The highway continues to develop cracks and the surface has to be frequently repaved to address safety concerns. In order to relieve the chronic slumping problem, the applicant is proposing to create approximately 600 feet of rock lined drainage ditches and to install a 300 foot long underdrain along the uphill side of the highway. The underdrain will convey subsurface water into existing watercourses that are culverted under the highway. The proposed underdrain will be placed in a trench excavated about 50 feet west of the highway. The trench will be eight to twelve feet deep. Perforated pipe will be installed in the trench and the trench will be backfilled with permeable material. All excess excavated material will be used onsite.

The proposed rock-lined ditches will be installed about 100 feet from the edge of the pavement on the uphill side of the highway. The rock-lined ditches will be up to 2 feet deep and are designed to intercept water that flows towards the highway from small ponds located above the highway. No more than two trees with a diameter greater than 6 inches will be removed in order to install the ditches. All disturbed areas will be replanted with native plants. The project will not cause any disturbance to the small ponds. High visibility fencing will be installed around the pond area prior to construction to protect the ponds and to prevent entry into the area during construction activities.

Three existing culverts that cross under the highway in the project area will be rehabilitated. Activities related to rehabilitation of the existing culverts include removal of the single flared end sections on each culvert inlet and installation of concrete headwalls. A plastic liner will also be inserted through the 42-inch culvert at Post Mile 8.85 and a rock energy dissipater will be installed at the outlet of the 32-inch culvert located at Post Mile 8.75. The perennial stream that flows through the 42-inch culvert will be diverted around the culvert during liner installation activities. Herbaceous riparian vegetation around the culvert inlets and outlets will be temporarily impacted by headwall installation, rock energy dissipater installation, and dewatering activities. Upland shrubs will be temporarily impacted to access the outlet area of the culvert located at Post Mile 8.85.

The proposed project is scheduled to be implemented between June 1 and October 15 in 2006 or 2007. Approximately 0.01 acre of streambed will be temporarily impacted for

construction access. Approximately 63 square feet (0.0014 acre) of streambed will be permanently impacted by the addition of rock energy dissipaters at a culvert outlet and an area where the proposed drainage ditch will enter an existing stream channel. The project will not affect wetlands, and compensatory mitigation is not required. Noncompensatory mitigation for this project includes the use of Best Management Practices for heavy equipment use near waterways and for sediment and turbidity control.

The applicant has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for authorization to perform the project, pursuant to Clean Water Act, Section 404. The California Department of Transportation, as the lead agency for CEQA, determined that this project will have no significant effect on the environment and that it is categorically exempt from CEQA (Class 1, Section 15301). The applicant has applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (1600 Permit) from the California Department of Fish and Game.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing 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. 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.

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