

March 8, 2006

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste  
Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)  
Franceschi Ranch Restoration Project  
Sonoma County (WDID# 1B05158WNSO)

On December 6, 2005, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Ms. Lisa Hulette of the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD), on behalf of Mr. Robert Franceschi (Property Owner), requesting a Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Franceschi Ranch Restoration Project, Sonoma County. The proposed project causes disturbances to waters of the state associated with a gully that drains surface water to the Estero de Americano Hydrologic Area No. 115.30.

The proposed project is located in southwestern Sonoma County, on Ranch EA15, at 17400 Highway 1, Bodega, Sonoma County, California. The purpose of the project is to address sedimentation, riparian management, and water quality issues, which are key factors in reducing existing adverse impacts to the Estero. The proposed project is part of the Gold Ridge RCD's Estero de Americano Ranch Restoration Program for 2005-2006, which is funded by the Coastal Conservancy.

The proposed project involves stabilization of gully erosion on an active cattle ranch. A grassy waterway has eroded into a stockwater pond, and currently there is an active gully with high erosion potential. The gully is approximately 100-feet long, 15-feet wide, and 7-feet deep. The sediment that has eroded from the gully has caused filling of a pond feature, and some of the sediment is being transported to the Estero de Americano. The Estero de Americano is on the Federal Environmental Protection Agency's Section 303(d) list for sediment impairment. The project has been designed to enhance the habitat values of, and reduce sediment input to the Estero.

Project activities involve laying back unstable banks of the gully to a 2:1 slope, and installing erosion control blankets and rock energy dissipaters. The overall project area will be revegetated with native species in three habitat reaches: wetland with multi-story native riparian vegetation, upland northern coastal scrub, and native grasses and trees. Exclusionary fencing will be installed to protect the restored area from livestock grazing impacts.

The proposed project is scheduled to take place between June 15 and October 15<sup>th</sup>, during the 2006 work season. Revegetation work will commence during the winter dormancy period. The plans call for a total of 460 riparian trees, small trees, and shrubs to be planted within the work area.

The total area of impact will be approximately 0.1 acre of eroding gully. The project involves a balanced cut and fill of 130 cubic yards of soil cut, 130 cubic yards of soil fill, and 106 cubic yards of rock fill. Cut and fill quantities will be balanced to avoid

import/export of bulk materials. The project will be monitored for a total of at least 3 years, to ensure success of the revegetation and stabilization efforts.

Prunuske Chatham, Inc. (PCI), conducted a Biological Impacts Evaluation and California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Review for Ranch EA15 (Project Site), October 2005. According to the document prepared by PCI, CNDDDB records indicated an occurrence of a special status plant community on the site, consisting of coastal brackish marsh. The proposed project is designed to help enhance downstream coastal brackish marsh habitat within the watershed, by helping reduce sedimentation from winter run-off.

No special status animal species were observed during the site visit PCI conducted. A single adult California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*) was observed in a pool at the downstream end of the project reach on the adjacent ranch. The report recommended including measures in the project that would create a narrow band of native riparian plants along the gully and fenced grassland habitat in the surrounding areas. These measures are included into the proposed project design.

Compensatory mitigation for this project was not proposed, because the project has been designed to be self-mitigating, and will result in improvements in water quality within the Estero, reduction in sediment transport to the Estero, and an overall improvement in aquatic and upland habitat. No direct impacts are anticipated from the implementation of the proposed project.

Non-compensatory mitigation measures include the use of standard Best Management Practices (BMPs), for erosion control, as well as construction schedules that avoid wet periods. Project construction will take place during the summer months. Temporary silt fencing, seeding, and mulching, and other appropriate BMPs will be incorporated to minimize the risk of soil mobilization and sediment transport during construction. Permanent erosion control BMPs include hydraulic structures, rock armor, and permanent vegetation cover on the banks and within all disturbed areas. In addition, special precautions, including a pre-construction briefing of the work crew, will occur to avoid disturbance to any special status species potentially occurring on site.

The project applicant has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) for a Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit No. 27: Stream and Wetland Restoration (Pending).

A 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement Application has also been submitted to the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) (Pending).

The Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, as the lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has prepared a Notice of Exemption, Class 33 – Section 15333 – Small Habitat Restoration Projects, pursuant to the CEQA guidelines (Resolution No. 05-1129-3).

The restoration project is scheduled to begin after June 15<sup>th</sup> 2006, and is expected to take

several months to complete. The project will be complete no later than October 15th 2006. Staff is 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 Andrew Jensen at (707) 576-2683, or at [AJensen@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:AJensen@waterboards.ca.gov) within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The related documents and comments received are on file and may be inspected or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Blvd., Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.

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