

July 10, 2006

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

Humboldt County Department of Public Works – Redwood Creek Flood Control Project
WDID No. 1B00185WNHU

Humboldt County

On May 24, 2006, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Mr. Hank Seemann of the Humboldt County Department of Public Works requesting Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Redwood Creek flood control project located in the vicinity of Orick, Humboldt County. Regional Water Board staff deemed the application complete on July 6, 2006. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Redwood Creek Hydrologic Unit No. 107.00.

The purpose of the proposed project is to prevent flooding in the community of Orick and the surrounding agricultural land by maintaining and preserving a sufficient channel volume and the geologic stability of the channel. The proposed project is located in Northern Humboldt County (S32-34, T11N, R1E and S4, 5; T10N, R1E). Redwood Creek is 65 miles long, draining 285 square miles of watershed. The proposed project activities involve approximately 3.9 miles of Redwood Creek, to the upstream extent of the levees, including the confluence with Prairie Creek and the Redwood Creek estuary north and south sloughs. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) created the flood control project in 1968, in response to a flood event in 1964. Humboldt County has been responsible for maintaining the original ACOE project; this responsibility includes repairing infrastructure as detailed in the *Redwood Creek Local Flood Protection Project Operation and Maintenance Manual*. The proposed flood control project involves a system of two earthen embankment levees, which confine the Redwood Creek channel to 300 feet width by 3.4 miles long configuration with associated infrastructure including relief walls, flap gates, and drains. The levees are 24 feet high, measured from the channel bed, and 12 feet wide at the crest of the levee. The annual County plan for flood control maintenance involves monitoring cross sections and identifying which areas are accruing aggregate and vegetation that is altering the hydraulic capacity of the Creek. These identified areas, hydrologic hot spots, are then prioritized and ranked according to the potential for flooding, and the importance of the areas to salmonid habitat. All areas of the stream are evaluated, and sediment removed as appropriate, to maintain the channel and to reduce impacts to listed salmonids. The applicant proposes that the project will continue for a period of five years, during the months of June to October.

Redwood Creek potentially could receive a maximum of 90,000 cubic yards of aggregate during one year; the average yearly accrument of aggregate is approximately 50,000 cubic yards. The annual extraction of gravel for maintenance is between 50,000 and 90,000 cubic yards. Extraction methods may involve secondary and mid channel skim, narrow skims, dry trenching, horseshoe-shaped deep skims and alcove extractions. If the dry trenching technique is required, a silt fence and/or a gravel berm will be used along the length of the extraction area, for turbidity control, and will be removed when trenching activities are completed. Extraction activities will not occur in the active channel, and riparian vegetation will not be removed from areas outside the Interagency Review Team approved areas for gravel extraction, access crossing and/or stockpiling locations. Gravel extraction activities will not alter the head of the gravel bar. The applicant proposes to conduct gravel extraction during August 15 to October 15. All extraction areas will be reclaimed when extraction activities are complete. Location of railroad flatcar type temporary crossings will be determined by the Interagency Review Team on a site specific basis, and will not extend to the wetted channel except in shallow flat water areas.

Flood control maintenance includes vegetation removal from the channel and along the sides of the levees. Vegetation along the slope of the levees to within 5 feet of the toe of the slope will be removed by hand cutting or controlled by burning. Vegetation will not be uprooted. Vegetation burning will be conducted in accordance with a burn permit, using buffers to control ash. The applicant proposes to vary the vegetation removal techniques according to site specific requirements; vegetation removal may involve removal of trees less than 4 inches in diameter from the dry side of islands to within 10 feet of live creek waters; removal of trees greater than 4 inches in diameter within 10 feet of the creek; and totally removing all vegetation from the tip of an island to within 30 feet downstream of the head of the bar. The removal of selected vegetation will increase scour potential, provide potential refuge for salmonids from large cut trees left in place and the creation of a varied vegetated landscape.

The applicant proposes to excavate the channels between the North Slough and the Redwood Creek embayment and between the South Slough and the embayment in order to enhance fish habitat. Typically, the channels fill with sediment annually, frequently during one large storm event. The North Slough is a 900 foot long trapezoidal channel connecting the North Slough to the embayment of the Redwood Creek estuary. The applicant proposes to excavate approximately 1,500 cubic yards by bulldozer, configuring the channel to 4 feet deep by 7 feet wide at the base by 15 feet wide on the top. The South Slough, approximately 1,100 feet long, connects the South Slough to the embayment of the Redwood Creek estuary. Excavation by bulldozer will configure the channel to approximately 4 feet depth, maximum of 14 feet wide at the base, and 22 feet wide on top. The applicant estimates that approximately 3,000 cubic yards will be excavated from the South Slough area. Excavated sand will be placed along the side of the channel, then smoothed and sloped, blending with the existing sand deposits. Equipment will access the work area from along the side of the channel. The excavation activities will be conducted when the mouth of Redwood Creek is open and subject to

tidal fluctuation, in order to dilute and transport sediment. Excavation in these areas is estimated to occur between February 14 and March 15.

Federally listed fish species in the area include Chinook salmon, Coho salmon, steelhead trout, and tidewater goby. The tidewater goby has not been observed in the area since 1980 and may have been extirpated in the Redwood Creek estuary. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the endangered California brown pelican, tidewater goby, and beach layia. The benefits of the proposed project to the listed species will be improvement to water quality and increase of connectivity within the estuary.

Compensatory mitigation for riparian vegetation removal includes in-kind replacement of riparian vegetation at a 1:1 ratio in the Redwood Creek watershed, enhancement of the stream channel by removing fish barriers and/or removal of abandoned logging roads or equivalent mitigation. The applicant will submit a Mitigation and Monitoring Plan to the California Coastal Commission according to the Coastal Development Permit (1-04-005). Non-compensatory mitigation measures include implementation of Best Management Practices for sediment and erosion control. Equipment refueling and maintenance will occur in a contained area outside of the proposed project area. BMPs for equipment fueling and maintenance will be used to prevent contamination by fuel or fluids. Low flow channel crossings will be conducted in compliance with the ACOE and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) permits.

The proposed project is authorized under the United States Army Corps of Engineers (File No. 25094N), pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Section 1344) and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 U.S.C. Section 403). The applicant has obtained a California Coastal Commission permit issued June 2, 2005 (#1-04-005). The County of Humboldt Department of Public Works has determined the project to be categorically exempt in accordance with Article 18, section 15261(a) (Ongoing Project) of the 2002 California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. The applicant has obtained a Streambed and Alteration Agreement (#04-0031).

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. 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 and ends at 5:00 p.m on the last day of the comment period. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Diana Henriouille at (707) 576-2350 or Catherine Woody at (707) 576-6723 or within 21 days of the posting of this notice.