

July 11, 2006

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste
Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)
Pacific Gas & Electric Company
PG&E Fulton Gas Line Replacement Project
Sonoma County (WDID# 1B06055WNSO)

On April 20, 2006, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) requesting a Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Fulton Gas Line Replacement Project in Sonoma County. The proposed project causes disturbances to Waters of the United States associated with seasonal wetlands and an unnamed tributary to Mark West Creek in the Russian River Hydrologic Unit No. 114.00.

The proposed project will replace 850 feet of 6-inch vintage gas line that transverses a 4.35 acre site (APNs 059-170-032, -033), located approximately one-half mile north of Fulton and immediately adjacent to the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way in Santa Rosa, California. The purpose of the project is to protect nearby residents from potential gas line explosions caused by ground movement, external corrosion potential and design/material issues from vintage pipes.

The proposed project would entail the use of horizontal durational boring, starting with a bore pit near the intersection of River Road and the Railroad tracks, proceeding northward along the railroad tracks for approximately 850 linear feet, ending at a second bore pit on the site. The pipeline will cross, at a depth of approximately 20 feet, below an unnamed tributary to Mark West Creek and seasonal wetlands to the north. Stockpiling and backfilling of excavated material associated with the second bore pit would result in the discharge of up to 35 cubic yards of dredged material in Waters of the United States, causing temporary disturbance to 0.03 acre of seasonal wetlands.

The project is scheduled to be completed by October 15, 2006 to ensure work is conducted during the dry season. In the event that construction activities will continue during the wet season, additional erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be required to winterize the site.

According to the "Site Assessment for California Red-Legged Frog and California Tiger Salamander for the Fulton DFM Gas Line Project" (January 2006), a site assessment for Red Legged Frog and California Tiger Salamanders was performed by Jones & Stokes on the proposed site.

California red-legged frogs were not observed during the site assessment, although there is potential breeding habitat identified in the unnamed tributary of Mark West Creek, and suitable dispersal habitat identified at the seasonal wetland in the irrigated pasture. California red-legged frogs have not been reported within five miles of the site, and the closest record is approximately 11 miles south east of the site.

California tiger salamanders (CTS) were not observed during the survey. Potential aquatic breeding habitat for CTS was identified at the seasonal wetland in the irrigated pasture. CTS have been identified within 3.1 (5 km) of the project site with the nearest record approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 km) southeast of the project site. Three ponds located within one mile (1.6 km) of the site provided a suitable breeding habitat, however, two of the sites are surrounded by vineyards and have very little natural vegetation.

Based on the potential for the project site to support California red-legged frogs and CTS, PG&E will either be conducting protocol-level surveys or initiating consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act the following measures are proposed to be included as conservation measure in the project design.

- Prior to initial site investigation and subsequent ground disturbing activities a qualified biologist will instruct all project personnel in the worker awareness training. This training will include recognition of the California red-legged frogs and California tiger salamanders and their habitats.
- A qualified biologist will conduct pre-construction surveys within the project area no earlier than two days before ground disturbing activities.
- No activities will occur after October 12th or the onset of the rainy season, whichever occurs first, until May 1st. Activities can only be resumed after site inspection by a qualified biologist. The rainy season is defined as a frontal system that results in the depositing of 0.25 inch (6.35 mm) or more precipitation in one event.
- Vehicles traveling to and from the project will be confined to existing roadways or pre-planned project routes to minimize disturbances of habitat.
- Prior to movement of backhoes or other excavation equipment in the project area, a qualified biologist will ascertain that the route is clear of California red-legged frogs and California tiger salamanders.
- If a California red-legged frog or a California tiger salamander is encountered during excavations or any other project activities, activities will cease until the frog or salamander is removed and relocated by a USFWS-approved biologist. Any incidental take will be reported to USFWS immediately by telephone at (916) 414-6600.
- If suitable wetland habitat is disturbed or removed, the applicant will restore the suitable habitat to its original value by restoring disturbed areas to condition of pre-project function and value.

The total area of wetlands to be temporarily filled is approximately 0.03 acre. Excavated material stockpiled or sidecast onto the adjacent seasonal wetland shall be removed at the earliest practical time, but not later than three months after placement.

Construction will be limited to the dry season to prevent fill discharge to the unnamed tributary of Mark West Creek. All equipment vehicles will travel to the construction site along an existing roadway. Prior to construction, environmentally sensitive area (ESA)

fencing will be erected around the portions of delineated wetlands not to be filled. A double trenching method of excavation shall be employed to separate topsoil from other substrate materials. The approximate soil profile shall be maintained during the backfill operations to promote the re-establishment of wetland plant species. The year following construction completion, wetland vegetative cover shall be equal to that which existed prior to construction or a proactive replanting effort shall be immediately performed.

The Regional Water Board, as the lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has determined that the project is Categorical Exempt from CEQA under Section 15301 - Existing facilities.

The PG&E Fulton Gas Line Replacement Project is scheduled to begin August 1, 2006 and end before October 15, 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 William Kirchanski at (707) 576-2466 or wkirchanski@waterboards.ca.gov, or staff member Michelle Jensen at (707) 576-6711 or mjensen@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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