

May 31, 2007

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

Humboldt County – Price Creek Road Bridge Abutment Protection
WDID No. 1B07046WNHU

Humboldt County

On April 19, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Department of Public Works (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, Section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to installation of rock slope protection (RSP) to prevent additional streambank erosion below a bridge abutment on Price Creek Road in Humboldt County. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Price Creek in the Ferndale Hydrologic Subarea No. 111.11.

The bridge over Price Creek at post mile 1.52 was built in 1981. In 1990, a county bridge inspector reported that the stream bank below the east bridge abutment was showing signs of erosion. The inspector noted that there was approximately twelve feet of earthen streambank material between the eroding streambank (right bank) and the concrete bridge abutment. In 1999, another county bridge inspection revealed that the streambank continued to erode and there was only six feet of material remaining between the eroding stream bank and the concrete bridge abutment. By 2003, only three feet remained between the eroding streambank and the abutment. A recent inspection confirmed that there is currently less than one foot of streambank material remaining between the eroding bank and the bridge abutment.

Inspections also discovered that sometime during the last few years a large tree, with the root-wad attached, was deposited in the stream channel directly across from the section of streambank that is eroding below the bridge abutment. The tree and root-wad appear to be directing high creek flows into the right bank and increasing erosion below the abutment. The tree and attached root wad will be removed and relocated downstream of the bridge to provide fish habitat.

The proposed project mainly involves the placement of RSP (one-quarter ton to two-ton rock) along the eroding right streambank to protect the streambank and bridge abutment from additional erosion that could eventually lead to failure of the bridge structure. An excavator will access the stream channel from the old access road on the west side of the creek that was built during construction of the bridge. The excavator must operate from the stream channel in order to dig a toe trench at the base of the eroding streambank and to place the RSP up the bank.

The proposed project will occur during the summer when flows in the creek are low. If necessary, any flow in the stream will be diverted away from the right bank. The affected area will be isolated from fish by placing fish exclusion fencing upstream and downstream of the construction activities.

The RSP materials will be stockpiled above the eroding streambank area on either side of the bridge abutment where the RSP material can be reached by the excavator operating in the stream channel. A toe trench (approximately 16' long x 3' wide x 2' deep) will be excavated along the base of the eroding bank. The largest RSP material (approximately 2-ton rock) will be placed in the toe trench and base of the RSP. The smaller RSP material will be placed as the RSP extends up the bank to the concrete abutment. The material excavated from the toe trench will be used to backfill the voids in the toe trench and RSP. Installation of the RSP will result in 200 square feet (0.005 acre) of permanent impacts to 20 linear feet of the streambank. Equipment access and operation in the channel, and relocation of the tree downstream will result in approximately 0.05 acre of temporarily impacts to the stream channel.

Compensatory mitigation is not required. Noncompensatory mitigation for this project includes revegetation of all disturbed areas with a mixture of native vegetation. Noncompensatory mitigation also includes the use of Best Management Practices for heavy equipment use near a waterway and for sediment and erosion control. The excavator will be stream cleaned and inspected for leaks prior to entering the stream channel. The project is expected to take four days to complete.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Number 3, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The Humboldt County Department of Public Works has determined that this project will have no significant effect on the environment and is categorically exempt from CEQA (Class 1, Cal Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15301 – Existing Facilities and Class 4, Cal Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15304 - Minor Alterations to Land). Based on our review of the project information submitted to date, Regional Water Board staff have also determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project. The applicant has applied to California Department of Fish and Game for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement.

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 submitted in writing and received at this office by mail 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, please contact staff member Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.