

August 30, 2007

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

PG&E – Gannon Slough Gas Pipeline Protection Project  
WDID No. 1B06033WNHU

Humboldt County

On March 25, 2006, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E/applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, Section 401, Water Quality Certification for proposed activities to install a grout mattress and concrete revetment walls in Gannon Slough to protect an existing buried high pressure gas line that is exposed along the bank of Gannon Slough. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Gannon Slough in the Eureka Plain Hydrologic Unit No. 110.00.

PG&E's high pressure gas pipeline 137B crosses beneath the Gannon Slough channel east of Highway 101, approximately 1.5 miles south of Arcata. Soft banks and tidal activity have resulted in bank erosion and exposure of a segment of the pipeline on the slough's left bank. The pipeline is an ongoing safety concern because the exposed pipeline is subject to corrosion and potential damage. PG&E is proposing to cover the pipeline with a grout filled mattress and to install revetment walls along both banks of the slough where the pipeline crosses to prevent additional bank erosion and to eliminate the exposure related safety concerns.

Implementation of the project will begin by isolating the water in the project area by installing two cofferdams in the slough, one approximately 25 feet north of the pipeline excavation activities and one approximately 25 feet south of the pipeline excavation activities. Cofferdam installation will occur during low tide. Pumps will be used to remove water from between the cofferdams and to move water around the isolated work area created by the cofferdams. All pump intakes will be screened to prevent aquatic species from being sucked into the pumps. A qualified biologist will monitor dewatering activities and will rescue any aquatic life captured within the isolated work area. Seepage into the isolated work area will be pumped to an upland area to allow sediments to settle prior to flowing back to the slough.

Following dewatering activities, the slough bottom will be excavated to a minimum depth of twelve inches below the existing slough bottom to accommodate installation of a grout mattress over the pipeline. Equipment used to excavate the slough bottom will be operated from the west bank of the slough between Highway 101 and the slough. Excavated sediment will be temporarily stockpiled and secured to prevent runoff into the slough. A 30 foot wide by 75 foot long grout mattress will be laid over the slough bottom and the edges of the mattress will be sloped into the slough bottom. The mattress consists of individual rectangular cells or pockets that are connected by tubes that allow the mattress cells to be pumped full of concrete grout. Stockpiled sediment removed from the slough bottom will be placed over the grout mattress after installation and curing is complete in order to restore the bottom of the slough. The primary purpose of installing the grout mattress approximately twelve inches below slough bottom is to minimize potential impacts to tidewater goby habitat.

The banks of the slough in the pipeline crossing area will also be stabilized by installing concrete revetment walls along 75 linear feet of both banks. The banks of the slough will be sloped to a 2:1 angle to accommodate the revetment walls. The revetment walls will consist of stacked concrete bags secured with rebar stakes. The exposed paper wrapping will be removed from all the concrete bags after the concrete has completely cured.

The temporary coffer dams will result in approximately 0.1 acre of temporary impacts to the waters of the State. The proposed pipeline protection activities will permanently impact 0.027 acre of tidal slough channel and bank including 0.01 acre of salt marsh habitat and a 100 square foot patch of Lyngbye's sedge located on small clumps of soil that have slumped off the top edge of the bank and into the channel. Compensatory mitigation is required for the permanent impacts to Lyngbye's sedge and the channel and banks of Gannon Slough. PG&E has submitted a Lyngbye's sedge Revegetation Plan and a Wetland Mitigation Plan.

The Lyngbye's sedge Revegetation and Monitoring Plan includes a proposal to compensate for impacts to Lyngbye's sedge by transplanting the existing Lyngbye's sedges to an area located approximately 500 feet upstream of the project. The goal of the revegetation effort is to maintain or increase the number of individual transplanted sedges over a three to five year monitoring period. If the population is stable within a three to five year period, the revegetation project will be deemed successful. A decrease of the sedges by 20 percent or more at the end of the monitoring period will be considered unsuccessful, and additional mitigation will be required. To compensate for 0.027 acre of permanent impacts to the slough channel and banks, including 0.01 acre of salt marsh and brackish marsh wetland habitat, the applicant proposes to provide in-lieu funding to the City of Arcata for restoration of 0.10 acre of wetlands, riparian, and riverine habitat along Janes Creek, approximately three miles from the project. The City of Arcata will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the mitigation project. PG&E will be responsible for securing 0.1 acre of property rights thru an open space easement. Noncompensatory mitigation for the proposed project includes timing construction activities with low tides and the use of Best Management Practices for erosion control and heavy equipment operation near a waterway.

The applicant has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for authorization to perform the project under an Nationwide Permit Numbers 3 and 33 (File No 299810N), pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District determined that this project is statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (section 15284 – Pipelines). Based on a review of the project information submitted to date, Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is statutorily exempt from CEQA review (section 15284 – Pipelines) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project, as well. The applicant has applied for a Coastal Development Permit.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed pipeline protection activities. The application for Water Quality Certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed project including maps and design drawings. The application and Regional Water Board file are available for public review.

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.