

November 19, 2007

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

**California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection,  
Caspar Creek Fish Ladder Construction Project  
(WDID# 1B07164WNME)**

**Sonoma County**

On October 30, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Marc Jameson, on behalf of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection requesting a Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Caspar Creek Fish Ladder Construction Project located in Mendocino County. The proposed project causes permanent impacts to 0.88 acres of the north and south forks of Caspar Creek within the Mendocino Hydrologic Unit No. 113.00.

The proposed project is located near Fort Bragg within the Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) in Mendocino County, California. The latitude and longitude is 39.36142°N and -123.7354°W (North Fork project area) and 39.34243°N and -123.75392°W (South Fork project area). The purpose of the project is to restore upstream fish passage by replacing two existing deteriorated wooden fish ladders with concrete structures and to remove accumulated sediment from two ponds. Both the fish ladders and weir dam/ponds are part of a long-term cooperative forestry study in the Caspar watershed conducted by the US Forestry Service (USFS) and the California Department of Forestry (CDF) since 1962.

The proposed project is divided into two subprojects. Subproject 1 is the construction of two fish ladders at two sites. The project will restore upstream fish passage in the South and North Forks of Caspar Creek by replacing the existing ladders. Fish ladder construction shall occur as follows: installation of fish screens, coffer dam construction, dewatering and fish rescue and relocation, demolish and remove wooden fish ladders, perform instream channel grading work upstream and downstream of fish ladder location, begin excavation for and construct fish ladder and spillway, modify flow measurement weir, add structural backfill, final grading, demobilization and final cleanup. Final design plans for the fish passage have been approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). NMFS may prescribe follow-up studies or project retrofits as needed.

Subproject 2 is the recurring sediment removal behind two weir dams located immediately upstream of both fish ladders. Cleaning the weir pond entails capturing and relocating fish in the ponds, bypassing the creek flow around the

pond, draining the water in the stilling pond, removing the sediment from the pond bottom, transporting and dumping the sediment, then restoring the creek flow to the pond site while maintaining some flow to the creek below the weirs. Pond cleanouts occur once every five years or less, depending on the bedload each pond receives. Approximately 300 cubic yards from each pond will be excavated using heavy equipment and trucked to the pre-approved upland dead-end spur road in JDSF. All fish or other significant aquatic species (such as tadpoles, frogs, and turtles) in the dewatered portion of the stream will be collected by a qualified biologist and relocated downstream of the work area. All fish collection and relocation will be performed in compliance with NMFS established guidelines.

The project requires pond dewatering and sediment capture. Creek discharge will be diverted through an existing 8 inch smooth walled pipe-line around the weir pond. The weir pond will then be gradually drained. In an effort to minimize increases in turbidity, a majority of the water will be siphoned from high in the water column and over the weir. The pipe inlet shall be screened. In addition, two settling pools will be utilized downstream of the dam to trap suspended sediments. One of these settling pools will be the existing after-bay created by the existing fish ladder. A second settling pool will be created below the fish ladder by constructing a mini-dam using weed-free straw hay bales or rice bales, plastic sheeting and clean washed gravel. This mini-dam will be removed after project completion. Water that comes in contact with wet concrete and has a pH greater than 9.0 must not be allowed to enter the ground or stream but may be pumped to a separate, lined basin constructed in the gravel bar, and then pumped to a truck or approved upland location for disposal or treatment.

This project is designed to be self mitigating as the ladder replacement will improve listed species fish passage and reduce the potential for a storm-related failure and subsequent sediment delivery. The pond cleanouts benefit Waters of the State by preventing sediment from entering the two sub-watersheds. Rock Slope Protection (rip-rap) will be used to the minimum feasible. Pruning of vegetation will be done by hand crews and kept to the minimum necessary to allow equipment and crews to operate and avoid breakage of trees. A compliance report to the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) will be completed by CALFIRE after every pond cleanout and the fish ladder construction. A post project inspection (within 60 days) and a biological and hydrological evaluation of the new fish ladder performance will be completed annually for two years by CALFIRE and/or the US Forest Service research staff for NOAA Fisheries.

The applicant has applied for a California Department of Fish and Game 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement, 2006, and an Incidental Take Permit, 2006, File Number 2081-2006-028-3.

The applicant has applied for necessary permits with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

At a minimum, the following construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be incorporated into the final Project plans in order to reduce and control soil erosion: work in and around waterways will be conducted during the dry season; installation of construction barrier fencing to preclude equipment entry into sensitive areas; installation of silt fencing or fiber rolls to prevent sediment loss from immediate work area; topsoil salvage and reapplication; and seeding and mulching. Additionally, all required BMPs shall be on-site and ready for timely deployment, before start of construction activities

The Caspar Creek Fish Ladder Construction Project is scheduled to begin Summer 2008. 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 Stephen Bargsten at (707) 576-2653, or at [sbargsten@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:sbargsten@waterboards.ca.gov), or Darren Bradford at (707) 576-2466, [dbradford@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:dbradford@waterboards.ca.gov), within 21 days of posting of this notice.

This is a brief summary of this project; all 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.