

December 10, 2007

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

CDOT – Highway 101/Highway 36, Alton Interchange  
WDID No. 1B07140WNHU

Humboldt County

On August 21, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the California Department of Transportation (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to the proposed Highway 101/Highway 36 Alton Interchange Project. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with wetlands, the Van Duzen River, and the Eel River in the Ferndale Hydrologic Subarea No. 111.11.

The proposed project involves conversion of Highway 101 from a four lane expressway to a four lane freeway between the Van Duzen River Bridge (P.M. 57.0) and Drake Hill Road (P.M. 59.1), approximately two miles south of the City of Fortuna. The project is designed to improve traffic safety and reduce conflicts. The proposed project includes construction of a spread diamond interchange structure to replace the existing at-grade intersection of Highway 101 and Highway 36. The proposed project will also result in closure of other at-grade road extensions on the west side of Highway 101 including Fowler Lane, Hansen Lane, Sandy Prairie Road, Drake Hill Road, and a Van Duzen River access road.

Construction of the interchange and other roadway structures will require filling and relocation of existing drainage features and wetlands. The proposed project will result in permanent impacts to 2.59 acres and temporary impacts to 0.19 acre of existing wetlands that are subject to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction. The proposed project will also result in permanent impacts to 0.07 acre and approximately 170 linear feet of roadside drainage channels within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction. Compensatory mitigation is required. Proposed compensatory mitigation involves creation of 4.3 acres of wetlands and enhancement of 1.5 acres of existing wetlands. The proposed project will also result in permanent impacts to 1.9 acres of coastal zone wetlands and 0.41 acre of riparian vegetation. Proposed mitigation also includes the creation of 5.9 acre of coastal zone wetlands and 1.23 acre of riparian area. Proposed compensatory mitigation activities will occur on an adjacent parcel located in the southwest quadrant. Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for erosion control.

The proposed project will result in a thirty-seven percent increase in the amount of impervious surface area within the project area. Projects that increase the amount of impervious surface area will increase the volume of storm water runoff from the area,

the duration of elevated storm water flows, and the runoff flow rate. A floodplain evaluation report, which considered the modified drainage patterns and modeled the potential for floodplain impacts from the proposed project, concluded that the proposed project would result in no changes to downstream water surface elevations. The applicant plans to use a large parcel in the southwest quadrant of the project area to meet the wetland mitigation requirements and for the purposes of drainage attenuation.

The drainage design involves routing most of the runoff from the project area through the southwest quadrant and includes construction of a new open channel to replace the Fowler Lane ditch. This design involves splitting flows from the new ditch at two locations to allow the water surface elevation to equalize between the two points in the ditch and the wetland mitigation area. A new channel north of the Humboldt County levee easement will be created to connect two constructed wetland mitigation areas to the existing wetlands. A combination of open channels and 42-inch diameter culverts will replace the existing drainage conveyance system that currently includes a series of heavily vegetated channels and 30-inch diameter culverts. An existing ditch in the southwest quadrant will be modified to provide additional storm water runoff storage capacity. The proposed drainage design is intended to replicate pre-project Fowler Lane ditch overflow patterns in the southwestern quadrant.

The proposed drainage plan also incorporates bio-filtration strips and bio-filtration swales as BMPs for post-construction storm water treatment. Approximately 207,356 square feet (4.76 acre) of bio-filtration strip area and approximately 20,990 square feet (0.48 acre) of bio-filtration swale area have been incorporated into the drainage plans. The proposed BMPs will be located adjacent to the highway and the new interchange structures.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under an individual permit, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. On June 28, 2005, the California Department of Transportation adopted a mitigated negative declaration (SCH No. 2005032007) for the project in order to comply with CEQA. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document and any proposed changes incorporated into the project or required as a condition of approval to avoid significant effects to the environment. The applicant has also applied to CDF&G for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement. The majority of proposed project activities are scheduled to begin in June 2008. Existing vegetation that is also potential bird nesting habitat will be cut and removed before the end of February 2008 to prevent nesting in the project area. The entire project is expected to take three to four years to complete.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed road widening 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.

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