

December 17, 2007

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

USDOT - Federal Highway Administration – Bluff Creek Road Culvert Replacement  
WDID No. 1B07162WNHU

Humboldt County

On October 25, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to a culvert replacement project on Bluff Creek Road near Weitchpec. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with an unnamed tributary to Aikens Creek in the Orleans Hydrologic Subarea No. 105.12.

The purpose of the proposed project is to replace an existing deteriorated culvert on an ephemeral stream with a shorter and larger diameter culvert that will pass a 100-year storm event. The proposed project involves removal of an existing 128-foot long and 6-foot diameter corrugated metal culvert and replacement with an 88-foot long and 7-foot diameter corrugated metal culvert in the same alignment. A concrete headwall will be installed at the new inlet and rock riprap will be placed below the new outlet. The headwall and riprap will be placed in areas where the existing longer culvert and fill will be removed. A temporary sandbag cofferdam will be placed immediately upstream of the culvert inlet to impound water that will be pumped around the construction area. Pumped water will be discharged to the channel immediately downstream of construction activities.

The culvert replacement project is part of a larger Bluff Creek Road project that includes constructing a 160-foot long reinforced slope at a slide area, chipsealing 1.9 miles of existing road, and obliteration of an abandoned switchback section of the road. Slides and slope failures in the abandoned switchback section have been significant and maintaining this section has been impractical. Obliteration of the switchback section involves removal of guardrail, rock and slide material, and asphalt. Rock and slide material will be used to fill roadside ditches and to outslope the roadbed. The final graded surface will be scarified, mulched, and seeded with native plant species.

The proposed project will result in a slight decrease in the overall area and length of permanent fill in the stream channel. The proposed project will result in approximately 0.002 acre and 22 linear feet of temporary impacts to the stream channel. Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Noncompensatory mitigation for this project includes the use of Best Management Practices for sediment and turbidity control and the operation of heavy equipment near a waterway. In addition, approximately 40 cubic yards of slide material will be removed from a 160-foot wide slide area located approximately 600 feet from the culvert and the slide area will be stabilized with riprap to eliminate this source of sediment from storm water runoff. The proposed project is scheduled for the summer of 2008 during the dry period when

there is little or no flow in the stream. Construction activities are expected to take four months to complete.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Numbers 14 and 33, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement is not required for federal projects on federal land. Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Class 1, Section 15301 – existing facilities) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project.

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.