May 23, 2008

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

**Sonoma County Water Agency,**
**Hinebaugh Creek Maintenance Project**
**(WDID No. 1B07096WNSO)**

**Sonoma County**

On February 25, 2008, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Michael Stevenson of Horizon Water and Environment, on behalf of the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), requesting a Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Hinebaugh Creek Channel Maintenance Project, Phase 2 – Hwy 101 to Laguna de Santa Rosa, located in Sonoma County. The proposed project will cause permanent impacts to 5.90 acres of streambed within the Laguna Hydrologic Sub Unit No. 114.21.

The project extends from Highway 101 to approximately 100 feet downstream of Labath Drive in Rohnert Park, Sonoma County, California. The upstream latitude and longitude is 38˚ 21' 01.72" N and -122˚ 42' 49.36" W, and the downstream latitude and longitude is 38˚ 20' 59.59" N and -122˚ 43' 53.71" W. The purpose of the project is to improve the hydraulic and flood conveyance capacity of Hinebaugh Creek, prevent potential flooding of adjacent residences and properties, and improve the creek's potential to serve as aquatic habitat.

The project includes: (1) installation of ten temporary access ramps; removal of sediment from the channel bottom and the box culverts under Labath Avenue and Rohnert Park Expressway; (2) removal of vegetation from the channel bottom; (3) removal or limbing of selected trees growing at the bank toes; (4) installation of temporary coffer dams as a dewatering system; (5) creation of a low flow channel (thalweg); and, (6) revegetation with native vegetation, from thalweg to outer edge of riparian zone.

The project involves vegetation management and sediment removal in Hinebaugh Creek (approximately 4,532 linear feet, removal of approximately 12,000 cubic yards of sediment). Other activities may include bank stabilization, landscaping, fencing, mowing, and debris removal. Hinebaugh Creek is an engineered trapezoidal flood conveyance channel. The hydraulic and flood conveyance capacity of this channel has been decreased from its original design, due to a combination of silt accumulation and growth of in-channel vegetation. Winzler and Kelly Consulting engineers (W&K) performed a hydrologic and hydraulic study of Hinebaugh Creek (W&K 2005). Results of the study indicate that under 2003 channel conditions, the predicted 100-year water surface is above the top of bank for much of the project reach. Results of this model were used to identify general problem areas to aid in the design of this project.

Ten temporary access ramps will be constructed. The ramp locations on both banks were selected to avoid impacts to large, mature trees and to minimize impacts to under-story vegetation. Access ramps are temporary and will be restored following sediment removal. The ramps will be seeded with native grasses and erosion control fabric will be installed.

Sediment and vegetation growing in the bed will be removed with an excavator, bulldozer, or front loader operating in the dewatered channel. Approximately 12,000 cubic yards of accumulated sediment will be piled and removed using a long-reach excavator positioned at access ramps, or with equipment, including haul trucks operating in the dewatered channel when necessary. Sediment will be hauled to an off-site location approved by the Regional Water Board.

Vegetation growing on the lower bank that impedes high flows and contributes to flooding will be selectively removed or limbed. Work on banks would be completed using hand tools. The existing over-story canopy will be preserved to the greatest extent possible.

Work will be done between June 15 and October 15, 2008; however it is likely that some flow will be present as a result of urban runoff. Sediment removal will require installation of a dewatering system/coffer dams to intercept and divert surface water and intercepted shallow groundwater moving through near surface sediments. The dewatering will be accomplished by installation of temporary coffer dams/sumps at the upstream end of the project, and pumping or using gravity flow piping of any nuisance water around the worksite to re-enter the channel below the downstream end of the project. Fish screening shall be conducted at the intake meeting all NOAA Fisheries fish screen criteria. Large sediment filtering bags will be incorporated into the outlet end of the discharge line to minimize turbidity. The dewatering system will be removed following project completion.

Meandering low flow channels will be constructed in a similar wavelength and sinuosity as those observed in the channel from aerial photographs. If possible, in the lower reaches, which exhibit backwatering characteristics, a thalweg will be created near the south bank. Locating the thalweg near the south bank will concentrate flow into a deeper channel and allow aquatic habitat to benefit from shading from the southern bank.

Compensatory mitigation will include on-site and off-site restoration. On site, in-channel planting of a number of native species and creation of a meandering low-flow channel are proposed to naturalize the impacted areas. Monitoring and reporting will evaluate the efficacy of the revegetation and retention of the low flow channel/thalweg morphology, for a period of 5 years or until minimum survival/cover is achieved. Additionally, to compensate for repeated temporal impacts (repeated periodic dredging/removal of riparian vegetation), off-site water quality improvement projects are proposed. Off-site mitigation projects will be coordinated though the “Watershed Partnerships Program” (WPP) funded at a cost of 10% of the cost of the project, which results in a restoration area larger than 10% of the impacted area. WPP projects that are being contributed to for this project include: Cotati Creek Critters Upper Laguna de Santa Rosa restoration project, and the Cook Creek headwaters erosion control and sediment management project. The Cotati Creek Critters project involves understory revegetation, monitoring and maintenance of 1.43 acres of 4.6 acres of the total project area, to provide bank stabilization, increase ecological value of the stream, and provide environmental education to volunteers and users of the area. The Cook Creek headwaters erosion control and sediment management project includes slope grading and vegetation plating to decrease sediment delivery to Cook Creek. For each off-site

mitigation project, native plants will be planted and managed, and a five year monitoring plan will be implemented with an 80% survival rate of all plant species. Yearly monitoring and reporting will be required.

The applicant has received a California Department of Fish and Game 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement, on July 16, 2007, Notification Number: 1600-2007-0315-3.

Applicant has applied for a United States Army Corps of Engineers Permit, File Number 2007-400596N.

The County of Sonoma has determined that this project is statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (Section 15301 – Existing Facilities), and filed a Notice of Exemption on June 21, 2007. Based on a review of the project information submitted to date, Regional Water Board staff 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.

At a minimum, the following construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be incorporated into the final project plans as appropriate 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.

The channel maintenance project is scheduled to be between June 15, and October 15, 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**,** 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.