

July 10, 2008

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

Mattole Salmon Group – East Mill Creek, Fish Migration Barrier Removal
WDID No. 1B08076WNHU

Humboldt County

On May 2, 2008, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Mattole Salmon Group (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to replacing culverts with bridges at two road crossings over East Mill Creek and removing a small concrete dam that is located between the crossings. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with East Mill Creek in the Mattole River Hydrologic Area No. 112.30.

The purpose of the proposed project is to remove three in-stream structures that are barriers to fish migration. The migration barriers include a temporal barrier referred to as the Barber culvert, a complete barrier upstream of the Barber culvert referred to as Lacief Daniels' dam, and a shotgun culvert on Richard Cogswell's property that is also a complete barrier. East Mill Creek will not contain any man-made migration barriers following implementation of the proposed project.

The most downstream barrier is the Barber culvert. The barrier is a 6-foot diameter and 40-foot long culvert. This culvert was determined to be a temporal barrier to fish migration because the invert is steep and the outlet is slightly elevated above the outlet pool. The existing roadway fill will be removed and placed in an old road cut where the material originated. The culvert crossing will be replaced with a 40-foot long and 16-foot wide railcar bridge or a pre-fabricated steel-reinforced concrete bridge.

A 14-foot tall and 20-foot wide concrete dam is located upstream of the Barber culvert. The dam was constructed in the 1950s, most likely for recreational purposes. The dam is a complete barrier to fish migration. The current landowner observes summer steelhead spawning below the dam every year and supports removal of the dam. The dam has a large steel gate valve and a 2-foot by 3-foot opening at the bottom that is plugged with debris. An estimated 1,800 cubic yards of sediment has accumulated in the stream channel upstream of the dam. Excess sediment and the dam structure will be removed using heavy equipment that will access the channel at the dam site using an existing access road. The dam will be demolished and removed without the use of explosives. Sediment will be removed from the channel for a distance of approximately 500 feet upstream of the dam. The removed sediment will be deposited and stabilized in nearby areas that are above the 100-year flood elevation. Disturbed areas around the dam and along 500 feet of the channel upstream of the dam will be replanted with native vegetation.

The most upstream barrier consists of two four-foot diameter and 38-foot long culverts that are side-by-side under a road crossing on the Cogswell's property, approximately one-quarter mile upstream of the dam. The culverts create a fish barrier because the outlets are elevated well above the water surface of the outlet pool. The existing fill will be removed from the crossing and placed in nearby upland areas. Due to the angle of the roadway approaches and the long vehicles that use this crossing, the culverts will be replaced with a 60-foot long and 20-foot wide pre-fabricated steel-reinforced concrete bridge.

East Mill Creek typically dries up by late summer during a dry year. If necessary, a temporary coffer dam will be installed upstream of project activities using straw bales and pond liner. A pump with a float activated switch and pipes will be used to divert flows around the construction activities.

Proposed culvert and road fill removal activities will result in restoration of approximately 80 linear feet of streambed and 160 linear feet of streambank. Proposed dam and sediment removal activities will temporarily impact approximately 500 linear feet of streambed and 1000 linear feet of streambank. Temporary impacts from the dam and sediment removal activities are associated with removal of an estimated 1,800 cubic yards of excess sediment from the channel, and restoration the streambed gradient and streambanks where sediment is removed. Proposed cofferdam and stream diversion activities will temporarily impact up to 60 square feet and 20 linear feet of stream channel. The proposed bridge structures will span the entire channel and will not result in any permanent impacts to the stream.

Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Noncompensatory mitigation includes revegetation and mulching of disturbed areas. Noncompensatory mitigation also includes the use of Best Management Practices for sediment and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment in a stream channel.

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. The Applicant has applied to the California Department of Fish and Game for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) adopted a mitigated negative declaration (SCH No. 2008052026) for their 2008 Fisheries Restoration Grant Program in order to comply with CEQA and filed a Notice of Determination on June 12, 2008. The mitigated negative declaration document covers this project and a variety of activities and projects that are designed to restore salmon and steelhead habitat in various coastal streams. 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 proposed project is scheduled for construction between August 1, 2008 and October 1, 2008.

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