

July 14, 2008

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

PG&E – Freshwater Slough Gas Pipeline Replacement  
WDID No. 1B04019WNHU  
Humboldt County

On February 26, 2004, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to replacing a section of natural gas pipeline that is exposed on the north bank of Freshwater Slough in Eureka. The Regional Water Board provided public notice (attached) of that application on July 12, 2004 and issued certification on August 3, 2004. In August 2005, during the horizontal directional drilling activities, a “frac-out” occurred and the drilling activities were put on hold while the applicant reviewed alternatives. The certification expired on October 15, 2005.

On April 21, 2008, the applicant submitted a request for an extension of the certification and additional information including a revised Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) Fluid Release Contingency Plan. The proposed project differs from the previously approved project (see attached public notice); the entry and exit bore pits will be moved from their original location, and the depth of the HDD boring will be increased from 55 feet to 85 feet. The depth of the boring will be increased to reduce the risk of another frac-out. In order to increase the depth of the boring, the bore pits will be moved farther away from the slough, approximately 150 feet from their previous locations.

The proposed project involves replacing a 1,350 foot section of 8-inch diameter high pressure natural gas transmission pipeline (Line137B). Approximately 970 feet of 8-inch pipeline will be installed beneath the Freshwater Slough using the HDD method. The remaining 380 feet will be installed in an excavated trench on the north side of the slough.

The proposed project will result in temporary impacts to seasonal wetlands which are also referred to as diked former tidelands, farmed wetlands, and grazed seasonal wetlands. Impacts associated with temporary access routes, equipment staging, and excavation activities will result in up to 3 acres of temporary impacts to seasonal wetlands. The proposed project is not expected to result in any permanent impacts to wetlands or other waters of the state. The applicant has prepared and submitted a Wetland Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (Plan) for the proposed project. Proposed mitigation consists of onsite, in-kind restoration of all disturbed wetland areas.

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.

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**Public Notice for 401 Certification**

PG & E – Freshwater Slough Gas Pipeline Replacement  
WDID No. 1B04018WNHU

Humboldt County

On February 26, 2004, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (hereinafter Regional Water Board) received an application from Mr. Ernie Ralston on behalf of Pacific Gas and Electric Company (hereinafter applicant) requesting Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) to replace a 1,200-foot section of 8-inch diameter high pressure natural gas transmission pipeline beneath Freshwater Slough in Humboldt County. The proposed work will cause temporary disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Freshwater Slough and adjacent wetlands in the Eureka Plains Hydrologic Unit No. 110.00.

The purpose of the proposed project is to replace a section of the pipeline that has become exposed on the north bank of the slough. This pipeline is a major source of natural gas for the region. The project involves installation of 700 feet of new pipeline under the slough and an additional 500 feet of pipe will be installed in a trench excavated through the adjacent wetlands (diked former tideland converted to pasture) on the north side of the slough. The pipeline will be installed under the bottom of Freshwater Slough using the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) method. HDD uses drilling mud pumped under high pressure through the drill stem to rotate the cutting head and to transport drill cuttings to a pit at the entry point. The drilling mud is pumped through a processing unit to remove drill cuttings and the mud is reused. Weak or unconsolidated earthen material above the borehole can allow drilling mud to escape the borehole and rise to the surface. If drilling mud escapes the borehole during the operation, drilling must be stopped immediately. This situation, generally referred to as “frac-out”, is usually resolved by reducing pressure in the mud system or by increasing the viscosity of the drilling mud.

The drill rig will be set up at an entrance pit on the south bank and accessed from Park Street. The drill bit will bore at an angle until it reaches the mid-point under the slough. Once the drill bit reaches the mid-point, the drill head is articulated slightly upward to begin the climb into a receiving pit on the north side of the slough. The receiving pit will be accessed through private property from Devoy Road. After the drill bit reaches the receiving pit, larger cutting heads and reamer bits are pulled and pushed through the borehole until the size is appropriate for the pipeline. Sections of armor-coated pipe will be strung on pipe supports and welded together while the borehole is being drilled. Once the borehole is open, a pulling head is welded to one end of the pipeline and the pipeline is pulled through the borehole. The ends of the pipeline will be connected to the existing pipeline at the entrance and the new section of pipeline that will be installed in the excavated trench. The new alignment of the pipeline will eliminate the existing dogleg in the pipeline.

Dewatering of the excavated trench will be necessary. The applicant has submitted a Report of Waste Discharge (application) for coverage under the North Coast Regional Water Board's General National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for Discharges of Groundwater to Surface Water Related to Construction and Subsurface Seepage Dewatering Activities (Order No. 93-61). Water used for hydrostatic testing of the new pipeline will be from the local municipal water supply system. Prior to discharging water used for hydrostatic testing into Freshwater Slough, the water will be passed through a settling basin that will also be used to remove sediment from groundwater removed during the trench dewatering activities. A monitoring program will be issued to the applicant requiring monitoring of the discharges and the receiving water to demonstrate compliance with Order No. 93-61 and the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (Basin Plan).

Best Management Practices will be implemented to prevent impacts to water quality including the use of erosion control devices where appropriate. All vehicles and equipment will be restricted to pre-established work areas or designated roads. Low-intensity revegetation of impacted areas will be performed to minimize destabilization of soil. Excavated material containing vegetation will be stockpiled separately, kept moist, and used for revegetation of the disturbed excavation areas. The proposed project will be conducted between June 1 and October 15, 2004.

The applicant has applied for authorization to perform the proposed project under Nationwide Permit No. 12 from the United States Army Corps of Engineers, pursuant to the Clean Water Act, Section 404. The applicant anticipates that the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), as the lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, will make a determination that this project will have no significant effect on the environment and is categorically exempt from CEQA (Class 1, Section 15301). The applicant has applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (1600 Permit) from DFG.

Regional Water Board 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 Regional Water Board staff member Dean Prat by phone at (707) 576-2801, or e-mail [pratd@rbl.swrcb.ca.gov](mailto:pratd@rbl.swrcb.ca.gov) within 21 days of the posting.