

August 6, 2008

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

**Sonoma County Water Agency,
Coleman Creek Maintenance Project
(WDID No. 1B08082WNSO)**

Sonoma County

On April 30, 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 Coleman Creek Channel Maintenance Project located in Sonoma County. The proposed project will cause permanent impacts to 0.73 acres of streambed within the Laguna Hydrologic Sub Unit No. 114.21.

The project extends between Snyder Lane and 100 feet downstream of Hillview Way in Rohnert Park, Sonoma County, California. The upstream latitude and longitude is 38° 22' 10.65" N and -122° 41' 09.36" W, and the downstream latitude and longitude is 38° 22' 10.19" N and -122° 41' 26.07" W. The purpose of the project is to improve the hydraulic and flood conveyance capacity of Coleman 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 temporary access ramps as needed; (2) removal of sediment from the channel bottom and the box culverts under Snyder Lane and Hillview Way; (3) removal of vegetation from the channel bottom; (4) removal or limbing of selected trees growing at the toe of channel banks; (5) installation of temporary coffer dams as a dewatering system; (6) creation of a low flow channel (thalweg); and, (7) revegetation of the channel with native vegetation, from thalweg to outer edge of riparian zone.

The project involves vegetation management and sediment removal in Coleman Creek (approximately 1,337 linear feet, removal of approximately 1,432 cubic yards of sediment). Other activities may include bank stabilization, landscaping, fencing, mowing, and debris removal. Coleman 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 sediment accumulation and growth of in-channel vegetation.

Though not anticipated, it is possible that temporary access ramps would be constructed where needed to allow equipment to enter the channel. The ramp locations would be selected to avoid impacts to vegetation, while providing efficient, safe equipment access to the work area. Access ramps, if used, would be temporary and would be restored following sediment removal. The restored ramp areas would be seeded with native grasses and erosion control fabric would 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 1,432 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 limbed. There is not much large bank vegetation (approximately 5 mature trees) along the project reach that requires removal or thinning. Work on banks would be completed using hand tools. At the upper project reach near Snyder Lane, some arroyo and red willow saplings growing in the channel will also be removed (approximately 100). Those stumps left in place will be treated with herbicide to prevent future growth.

Work will be done between June 15 and October 15, 2008, and it is unlikely that water flow will be present. Although it is not anticipated that any dewatering activities will be necessary, if flows are encountered then dewatering shall occur as needed. If any streamflow or ponding in the channel are encountered, 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.

An inset (low-flow) channel will be created to provide a two-stage channel that promotes the transport of fine sediments in flows generally smaller than the annual sized event. Sediment will be excavated along the existing channel bed to create such a low-flow channel with adjacent bench features. Such a two-staged channel will be excavated to follow a sinuous pattern that promotes in-channel complexity and habitat diversity. Sediment removal and low flow channel excavation activities will not exceed the depth of the original channel design.

Compensatory mitigation will include on-site restoration activities and off-site restoration and erosion control activities. 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 through 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 and monitoring and maintenance of 0.32 acres of the total project area. The Cotati Creek Critters mitigation project will 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 9, 2008, Notification Number: 1600-2008-0191-03.

Applicant has received a United States Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Section 404 permit, File Number 2008-00184N.

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 March 26, 2008. 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 conducted 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.