

August 15, 2008

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

California Department of Transportation – District 2
Highway 299 - China Slide Safety Project:
WDID No. 1A08121WNTR

Trinity County

On July 28, 2008, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), requesting Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to the proposed Highway 299 China Slide Safety project (project). The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and waters of the State within the Trinity River Hydrologic Unit No.114.00, Burnt Ranch Hydrologic Sub-Area No. 106.13. Both temporary and permanent impacts are proposed to wetlands, Bidden Creek and other unnamed tributaries to the Trinity River.

The project is located along Highway 299 in Trinity County, near the community of Burnt Ranch, and extends from post mile (PM) 13.3 to PM 13.8. The purposes and objectives of the project are to reduce the number and severity of accidents within the project boundary, stabilize slopes that have the potential for failure, reinforce weak pockets, increase horizontal curve distance, increase stopping sight distance, and reduce sediment transport into the Trinity River. The total disturbed area associated with the project is approximately 7.5 acres, including all staging and disposal areas.

The proposed construction activities will consist of: installing a drainage gallery to dewater the unstable hill slope; constructing two retaining walls on the North side of Highway 299 (mechanically stabilized earth wall and gabion wall); conducting slope stabilization on the South side of Highway 299 (reinforced soil slope construction and concrete retaining wall); repairing and replacing culverts at six locations within the project area; grading and paving the roadway; and revegetation and erosion control.

The project will result in permanent impacts to 171 square feet (78 linear feet) of drainages considered waters of the U.S. In addition, 1,990 square feet (715 linear feet) of wetlands considered water of the U.S. will be permanently impacted. In addition, construction activities will result in 300 square feet (65 linear feet) of temporary impacts to the drainages within the project. Water diversions will be required for work associated within Bidden Creek and an unnamed perennial stream. All graded areas within the project affected by the construction activities will be appropriately stabilized utilizing erosion control blankets and hydro seed with native vegetation. In addition, construction and post construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented to ensure erosion is minimized and controlled.

To compensate for the loss of waters of the State and waters of the U.S. associated with project, Caltrans will enter into contract with the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) to restore and revegetate 3,980 square feet of wetlands and 342 square feet of riparian habitat. These activities will take place at the

Department of Water Resources (DWR)-Hamilton Ranch property, as part of a larger habitat restoration and water quality improvement project. All temporary impacts associated with construction will be addressed on-site, following completion of the related activity.

The project will result in an increase of 0.39 acres of impervious area. Caltrans has evaluated the feasibility of installing post construction storm water treatment features within the project; however, based on the nature of the project to dewater an unstable hillside and provide additional embankment stability additional treatment is unfeasible. Conversely, the retaining walls and bank stabilization efforts will address the continual discharge of sediment related to the unstable hill slopes throughout the project. In addition, the project is also designed to reduce the potential for catastrophic failure of the hillside and roadway decreasing the chance of a significant discharge to the river.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to perform the project under their Nationwide Permit No. 14 (linear transportation projects) pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. Caltrans has also applied to California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement. On March 07, 2008, Caltrans certified a Negative Declaration (State Clearing House No. 2007122099) for the Project in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document. The proposed project is anticipated to begin in February 2009, with the hillslope dewatering. Earthwork is anticipated to begin approximately around March/April 2009, and construction work in all drainages will only be conducted during dry weather from the period of June 1st to September 30th. The entire project is expected to take 110 working days and is anticipated to be completed by October, 2009.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within 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 or comments, please contact staff member Jeremiah Puget at (707) 576-2835 or jpuget@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed road construction 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 related documents and comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.