

January 08, 2009

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 222 – Russian River Bridge Replacement Project
WDID No. 1B07108WNME
Mendocino County

On July 10, 2007, 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 222 – Russian River Bridge Replacement project (project). The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and waters of the State associated with the Russian River, Russian River Hydrologic Unit No.114.00, and Ukiah Hydrologic Sub-Area No. 114.31.

Based on changes to the project design for the incorporation of on-site post-construction storm water treatment, the Regional Water Board has revised the public notice for the project. Recent evaluation of the project has led Caltrans to determine that post-construction storm water treatment within the project limits is feasible. Caltrans will no longer use the Confusion Hill project site as a location to off-set storm water impacts associated with the Russian River Bridge project. The project will result in a net increase of impervious surface area of approximately 0.1 acres. Caltrans will design bioswales to treat storm water runoff within the project boundaries to meet the maximum extent practicable (MEP). In addition, Caltrans will provide additional storm water treatment controls at an off-site location within the Russian River watershed if on-site designs are unable to treat 0.1 acres of impervious surface.

The proposed project is located on Highway 222 at post mile (PM) 0.98, in Mendocino County. The purpose of the proposed project is to replace the existing bridge which was constructed in 1954 and is degrading due to scour. Bridge retrofits have been determined not to be a viable option; therefore, replacement is warranted. Caltrans proposes replacing the current bridge with a new structure that would consist of two abutments and four piers, one pier less than the existing bridge. The newly proposed bridge will be approximately 10 feet wider to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians, and would result in a net decrease of in-channel structures as compared to the existing bridge.

The proposed project will result in temporary and permanent impacts to waters of the U.S and waters of the State. The scope of work proposed would require the installation of a water diversion and is likely to require dewatering activities. Bridge construction will also include vegetation clearing, excavation, pile driving, drilling, steel and concrete work and the construction of temporary falsework and a construction trestle. The project also includes the demolition of the existing bridge and riparian revegetation activities.

Caltrans has determined that temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. (0.24 acres riparian wetland and 0.62 acres Russian River channel and ditches) would total 0.86 acres. Also, access to the river would require removal of riparian vegetation along the

stream banks, resulting in an additional 0.19 acre of temporary impacts to waters of the State. Additionally, approximately 0.002 acres of stream channel will be permanently impacted by the new piers; however, the permanent impacts will be off-set by removal of the existing bridge piers. Caltrans will utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to provide erosion control and pollution prevention throughout the project area during construction and demolition.

Caltrans proposes mitigation by replanting 0.43 acres of riparian vegetation on-site subsequent to completion of the newly proposed bridge. In addition, Caltrans proposes replanting 0.86 acres of riparian vegetation off-site by working cooperatively with the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) on a restoration project at Ackerman Creek, which is located within the Ukiah Hydrologic Sub-Area No. 114.31. All graded areas within the project affected by the construction activities will be appropriately stabilized and/or replanted with appropriate native vegetation. In addition, construction and post construction BMPs will be implemented to ensure erosion is minimized and controlled.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under their Nationwide Permits No. 25 (structural discharges) and No. 33 (Temporary Construction, Access and Dewatering) pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. Caltrans has also applied for a California Department of Fish and Game Streambed Alteration Agreement and a Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service. On June 09, 2006, Caltrans certified an Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration (State Clearing House No.2006062038) for the project in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document. The majority of proposed project activity is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2010. The entire project is expected to take two year to complete; however, the proposed in-channel work will only be conducted between May 1st and October 31st, when flows are low.

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.