

April 29, 2009

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

Hansen Sand and Gravel –Gravel Extraction Operations, Lower Eel River
WDID No. 1B02125WNHU

Humboldt County

On August 20, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Charles Hansen (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for sand and gravel extraction activities at the Hansen Bar on the Lower Eel River. The Hansen Bar is located west of the Hansen Truck Stop near the intersection of Highway 101 and Highway 36 in Alton. The proposed aggregate extraction operations will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Eel River in the Lower Eel River Hydrologic Area No. 111.10.

The proposed project involves annual extraction of up to 50,000 cubic yards of gravel from the channel of the Eel River for commercial purposes. Extraction volumes may fluctuate in response to annual replenishment, market conditions, and operational conditions affecting habitat protection goals. The applicant's property is approximately 108 acres with 49 acres used as pasture, 13 acres used for stockpiling and processing aggregate, a small area is used as a service yard for Hansen Truck Shop, and the remainder is open gravel bar. The river channel in this reach is approximately 1,700 feet wide and is mostly open gravel bar with little vegetation. The actual area that will be temporarily impacted during any extraction season varies and is rarely more than 18 acres.

The proposed activities have been ongoing and subject to active review, monitoring, and management. Since 1996, the applicant's aggregate extraction operations have been regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Letter of Permission (LOP) procedure pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 404. Activities authorized by the Army Corp of Engineers include aggregate mining within the stream channel and other work associated with this activity such as temporary stock piling of aggregate materials on dry gravel bar areas and installation and removal of temporary stream crossings. Permanent cross-sections of the gravel bar have been surveyed annually.

Skims are the predominant method used at the Hansen Bar. Other extraction methods that may be used include alcove excavation, oxbow extraction, horseshoe extraction, wet terrace pit, and dry terrace pit methods. Trenching at alcoves, along point bars, or on upper terraces may at times be the preferred methods of extraction which can be used to create channels between the river and fish bearing tributaries in order to enhance salmonid migration. The actual volume, location, and extraction method will be determined using the recommendations made by the County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT).

Equipment used for gravel extraction may consist of bulldozers, excavators, front-end loaders, and dump trucks. Temporary stockpiles are placed on the dry gravel bar during extraction activities. The gravel bar will be accessed using existing designated haul roads. Watering of the haul roads is conducted as needed to control dust as material is transporting between the extraction and processing areas. Extraction activities are typically limited to the period between June 1 and October 15 unless an extension is approved by ACOE and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). On October 1, seasonal reclamation begins and material stockpiled on the gravel bar must be removed daily and extraction sites are smoothed to a reclaimed state at the end of each work day.

On August 4, 1992, the County of Humboldt certified a Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for gravel removal from the Lower Eel River in order to comply with CEQA. 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 Applicant has obtained a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (R1-07-0439) from the DFG. The Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement requires, among other things, that all work be conducted as specified in the applicant's notification, pre-extraction plan (approved by CHERT and DFG), and all other supporting documents including the PEIR.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed activities, environmental review and regulatory process. The application for Water Quality Certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed project. 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. This project is likely to be eligible for coverage under the *General Waste Discharge Requirements and Water Quality Certification for Discharges Related to Sand and Gravel Mining, Excavation, and Processing Activities, Including Asphalt and Concrete Operations, on Non-Federal Lands in the North Coast Region* (Order No. R1-2005-0011) that was adopted by the Regional Water Board on June 21, 2005. 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 Regional Water Board staff Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.