

May 1, 2009

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

California Department of Parks and Recreation – Seasonal Bailey Bridge Crossings at
Richardson Grove and Standish-Hickey Parks, South Fork Eel River
WDID No. 1B09036WNHU

Mendocino County and Humboldt County

On March 25, 2009, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from California Department of Parks and Recreation (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities associated with annual installation and removal of summer bridge crossings over the South Fork Eel River at Richardson Grove State Park and Standish-Hickey State Recreational Area. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the South Fork Eel River in the Benbow Hydrologic Subarea No. 111.32.

The proposed project is located within the North Coast Redwoods District of California State Parks. The proposed project involves annual installation and removal of “Bailey” bridges (US military style panel bridges) on the South Fork Eel River to provide vehicle access to portions of campgrounds at Richardson Grove State Park (RGSP) and Standish-Hickey State Recreation Area (SHSRA). The RGSP campground is located approximately 6 miles south of Garberville in Humboldt County and the SHSRA campground is located approximately 1 mile north of Leggett in Mendocino County.

The RGSP and SHSRA were established in 1922. Both parks have two campground units located on the Highway 101 side that are accessible by vehicles and one unit that is only accessible during the summer months after installation of seasonal bridges. These camping areas, referred to as “Oak Flat” at RGSP and “Redwood” at SHSRA are only needed during the peak summer use period. During the rest of the year, the campgrounds located on the Highway side of the parks meet the visitors’ needs.

Historically these seasonal bridges were constructed using railroad flatcars. Because of their limited span (about 45’ long); the low flow river channel had to be narrowed to a width of about thirty feet. This was accomplished by moving river gravels into the flowing channel to narrow the river to a width that could support the ends of the flatcars. To reduce the risk of the bridges being washed out in a summer rain event, the channel was usually deepened under the bridge by making a couple of passes with a bulldozer.

In 1996, the applicant purchased two 100-foot long Bailey bridges to replace the flatcar bridges. A Bailey bridge was first installed at SHSRA in 1997 and at RGSP in 1998. These longer bridges have flexible bridge designs that allow the low flow channel to be spanned without moving any material into the flowing water. Bridge lengths can vary (ten-foot increments: 80, 90, 100, or 110 feet) annually to accommodate seasonal changes to the river bars and low flow channel configuration.

Bridge abutments and approach ramps are constructed first. Bridge abutments consist of gravel-filled concrete pipes or large boulders backfilled with river gravel. In order for the far side bridge abutments and approach ramps to be constructed, heavy equipment must ford the river. Typically, these "wet crossings" at each bridge site will not exceed two crossings per day for no more than six days. A wet crossing is defined as one round trip for one piece of heavy equipment.

Approach ramps on each side of the river will be constructed from the level of the river bar up to the level of the abutments and driving surface of the bridges. Ramp height varies from four to six feet high and from fifty to a hundred feet long. Ramps would typically be 35 to 40 feet wide to provide a safe and adequate bridge assembly area. Ramp/abutment volumes range from 250 to 650 cubic yards on each side. If there is a deficit of gravel near the bridge sites for constructing the ramps, additional material may be gathered from other parts of the river bar. Excavating gravel will not occur every year because ramp gravels are stockpiled above the ordinary high water mark and stored over winter for reuse. If gravel collection does occur, collection areas will be selected from high water gravel bar deposits that are free of native vegetation. No willow banks will be disturbed during gravel collection and no gravel removal will occur on the head-of-bar (upper third of bar). Gravel excavation would not extend deeper than two feet above water level at time of excavation. Upon completion of gravel collection, the excavation site would be graded to slope toward the river channel without any depressions.

Once bridge abutments and ramp approaches are completed, installation of the bridges will be accomplished using heavy equipment to move and align parts and hand labor to assemble. A loader would be used to stage and move bridge segments onto steel assembly rollers. A set of cables with hooks connected to an excavator bucket will lift and hold the bridge pieces as needed for assembly. A ground crew will assemble the pieces using hand and power tools. After a segment of the bridge is assembled, it is pushed out over the river on the steel rollers and suspended by lowering into place with a manual hydraulic jack. The entire bridge assembly process takes place on dry ground to avoid disturbance to the summer low flow channel. After the bridge is in place wood decking is attached to provide an even driving surface. Concurrently with the bridge installation, a temporary water supply line (2-inch poly pipe) is attached to permanent supply lines that are located above the high water mark on each side of the river. The temporary water supply lines will be buried in temporary berms along the approach roads on the river bar and then physically attached to the underside of the bridge. The temporary supply lines provide treated drinking water to the campgrounds and restrooms on the far side of the river.

Temporary roads will be constructed from the paved campground access points on both sides of the river, across the river bar, to the location of the bridge. The approach roads are constructed by grading the river bar gravel with a dozer and motor grader, soaking with a water truck, and compacting with a vibratory roller. The water truck would draw water from the river following accepted drafting guidelines outlined by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). The temporary roads will be about 25-feet wide

to allow for two-way traffic. Grading spoils would be side cast into a small berm on either side of the road to define the limits of the road surface and discourage vehicles from leaving the road.

Stream channel configuration does fluctuate from year to year following the winter flow regimen, which occasionally results in a split channel configuration. At the time of bridge installation, there would typically be a primary channel and perhaps a secondary channel. The secondary channel may be carrying a smaller percentage of the total river flow, or the water level may have dropped such that the secondary channel consists of low lying areas of standing water. In a split channel scenario, culverts are typically installed in the secondary channel and covered with gravel. Culverts would be sized to handle the anticipated flow (typically one or two 24-inch diameter culverts). The road surface over the culverts will be shaped so that if culverts are inundated, flows would pass over the top of the gravel instead of diverting to other parts of the river bar. In the event that a secondary channel is greater than twenty feet in width or one foot in depth, or the percentage of flow cannot be conveyed through two 24-inch diameter culverts, the trustee agencies will be consulted and the resulting determination would be amended to this document.

The bridges and temporary roads will be dismantled and removed prior to the onset of winter season flows. The river bar will be excavated back to natural grade, width, and alignment as much as practicable. Excess gravel from ramps will be stockpiled above ordinary high water mark for use the following year. Stockpiles will be stabilized to prevent sediment discharge during the winter.

The proposed activities at RGSP will temporarily impact up to 216,500 square feet (4.14 acres) and 1,000 linear feet of stream channel including the fill area of the bridge approaches, temporary roads and the aggregate borrow area. The proposed activities at SHSRA will temporarily impact up to 36,000 square feet (0.83 acre) and 250 linear feet of stream channel including the fill area of the bridge approaches, temporary roads and the aggregate borrow area. Due to seasonal variations in the river and the potential for the bridges and access roads to be placed in slightly different locations, the areas of temporary impact stated above are the total jurisdictional areas that could potentially be affected over multiple seasons of these activities. The actual amount of seasonal disturbance that will occur each season will be less. The proposed project is not anticipated to result in any permanent impacts to the stream channel. Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of Best Management Practices for sediment and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment in a stream channel.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under a nationwide permit, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The applicant has also applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G). The bridges will be installed and removed annually between the period of June 1 through October 1. The California Department of Parks and Recreation prepared a Mitigated Negative

Declaration (SCH No. 2009032060) for the proposed project 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 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.