July 2, 2009

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

Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District – Shelter Cove Breakwater Rehabilitation
WDID No. 1B07027WNHU

Humboldt County

On March 16, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities associated with rehabilitating an existing breakwater in Shelter Cove. The proposed project will cause disturbance to waters of the United States associated with the Pacific Ocean adjacent to the Cape Mendocino Hydrologic Unit No. 112.00.

Shelter Cove is a popular sport fishing destination on the southern Humboldt County coastline and the only harbor of refuge between Noyo Harbor and Humboldt Bay. The existing Shelter Cove breakwater was completed in 1970. The breakwater has settled, lost rock, and deteriorated over time as a result of wave action. The breakwater is largely under water during high tides and its effectiveness at protecting the boat launch facility has been greatly compromised. The purpose of the proposed project is to restore the effectiveness of the breakwater to reduce the difficulty and risks associated with launching boats at Shelter Cove.

The proposed project involves rehabilitation of the breakwater in essentially its current configuration to provide similar dimensions, level of protection, and area of protection as it did prior to reaching its existing deteriorated condition. The breakwater will be rehabilitated in sections using the existing rock and approximately 4,700 cubic yards of rock that will be imported from a local quarry. The rehabilitated breakwater is designed to be sturdier than the original to better withstand the waves.

The breakwater rehabilitation design includes a base layer of 6-inch rock, an under-layer of quarter-ton and half-ton rock, and an outer armor layer of 3-ton to 5-ton rock. The first section will be rehabilitated with equipment working from the shore. As each section is completed a layer of crushed rock will be placed on top of the proposed 11-foot wide crest of the breakwater to create an accessible path. The path will allow equipment to continue moving seaward to repeat the incremental rehabilitation process. The rehabilitated breakwater will have a footprint of approximately 17,080 square feet in the intertidal zone, an increase of approximately 4,400 square feet over the existing breakwater condition. Based on an engineering analysis for the proposed project, it is assumed that a minor amount (5%-10%) of damage will occur to the rock layer on an average of every 10 years. Damage to the armor rock will be repaired on an “as-needed” basis using the same construction methods and best management practices (BMPs) that will be used for the rehabilitation activities.

Natural currents and beach processes result in sand being deposited in the launch ramp area. The breakwater design and these same natural processes also result in the sand moving through the launch ramp area and out of the area to the west. Occasionally, an excessive amount of sand accumulates in the launch ramp area which makes boat launching difficult and dangerous. The Applicant proposes periodic cleaning of sand from the launch ramp area. A front-end loader or other heavy equipment may be used to remove sand from the launch ramp area and relocate the sand to the southwest (down current) side of the breakwater where it will continue its natural migration to the west toward Point Delgada and offshore. Boat ramp cleaning activities will be conducted during low tides and only on an “as-needed” basis.

The proposed project will result in permanent impacts to 17,080 square feet of waters of the United States including approximately 12,680 square feet of existing breakwater footprint. Permanent impacts are intended to restore the breakwater to approximate its original footprint. The annual removal of sand from the boat ramp area could result in annual temporary impacts of up to approximately 24,000 square feet. Deposition of the removed sand on the southwest side of the breakwater will temporarily impact approximately 900 square feet of upper beach area.

Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of BMPs for sediment and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment near water. The Applicant will also ensure that the breakwater rehabilitation is constructed to avoid unanticipated expansion of the breakwater footprint in the seaward direction and impacts to vegetated intertidal rock. Activities will also be conducted during low tides to avoid impacts to the marine environment. The rate of construction will primarily depend on the rock delivery rate which is dependent on the local rock quarry’s rate of production. The quarry estimated that it will take approximately four months to produce the volume of rock needed for this project. The proposed project is expected to take up to seven months to complete.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE File No. 2007-00717N) to perform the project under individual permit, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish is not required. On November 14, 2006, the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District approved an Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2005042024) for the 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, cross-sections, 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.

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