

July 9, 2009

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

Bureau of Reclamation, Trinity River Restoration Program
Sawmill Rehabilitation Project and Sediment Management Activities
WDID No. 1A09062WNTR

Trinity County

On May 18, 2009, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation – Trinity River Restoration Program (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for proposed activities related to the Sawmill Rehabilitation Project and implementation of fine (silt and sand) and coarse (gravel) sediment management activities. The proposed projects include construction of the Sawmill Channel Rehabilitation Site, dredging of fine (silts and sand) sediment from the Hamilton Ponds on Grass Valley Creek, and placement of coarse sediment into the Trinity River during spring high flow releases from Lewiston Dam. The proposed projects are located near Lewiston, Trinity County. The proposed projects will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Grass Valley Creek and the Trinity River in the Douglas City Hydrologic Subarea No. 106.31.

The Sawmill Rehabilitation Project is located within a one-mile section of the Trinity River in the vicinity of Cemetery hole, approximately one-half mile downstream from the Old Lewiston Bridge. The primary purpose of the proposed project is to increase salmonid habitat for all life-stages. The project will improve juvenile rearing habitat on the mainstem Trinity River and in its side channels, and is designed to use alluvial processes of the Trinity River to maintain and increase rearing habitat and complexity over time. The proposed Sawmill Rehabilitation Project is part of a larger effort to restore the anadromous fishery of the Trinity River.

The proposed project will include habitat rehabilitation activities on both sides of the river, as well as work within an existing side channel and construction of high flow chutes to be inundated by flows from 1,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 8,000 cfs. Proposed channel rehabilitation activities are expected to immediately restore point bars and floodplain habitat. Creation of aquatic habitat features will be accomplished through the rescaling of the river channel and floodplain within several riverine rehabilitation areas, although there is an expectation that restoring natural alluvial processes in these areas may immediately affect a larger area. Modifications to this river section, including addition of point bars downstream of cemetery hole, are expected to work synergistically with past TRRP projects to re-establish dynamic alluvial processes through the reach.

Proposed habitat rehabilitation activities in the Sawmill Rehabilitation Project include: re-contouring the channel bed and banks including vegetation removal, constructing channel meander bends on the mainstem, enhancing and opening new portions of a presently cut-off low flow (300 cfs) side channel, creating a medium flow (>1,500 cfs) side channel, general lowering of the floodplain to inundate at flows between 1,500 cfs and 8,500 cfs, placement of gravel bars and large wood, and removal of up to six grade control structures in the mainstem Trinity River. Temporary low-flow crossings (fords)

will be placed in the mainstem Trinity River to provide for access for removal of up to six grade control structures and for placement of coarse sediment into the river at select habitat enhancement locations. Two temporary bridge crossings will be placed across the existing side channel to provide for access for removal of excavated materials from the Sawmill islands.

A total of 10,700 cubic yards of clean coarse sediment derived from local sources will be placed in the Sawmill Channel Rehabilitation site to complete the full restoration design; however, it is expected that only 5,700 cubic yards will be added during the summer 2009 construction season (between August 1 and September 15). Project designs include excavation of 76,300 cubic yards of alluvial material from the river and floodplain in order to construct mainstem meanders, side channels, point bars, and other stream rehabilitation features. Excavated material will be placed in upland disposal areas within the project reach. The proposed project is expected to result in 6.8 acres of temporary impacts to the river channel and banks. The proposed project will not result in any permanent impacts to waters of the United States. Temporary impacts to riparian wetlands have been minimized and avoided during design.

In addition to the Sawmill Channel Rehabilitation project, the Applicant is planning additional fine and coarse sediment management activities within the mainstem Trinity River and Grass Valley Creek. This portion of the proposed project will include dredging of the Hamilton Ponds on Grass Valley Creek near its confluence with the Trinity River. After fine sediment (decomposed granite) is dredged, the material will be stockpiled in a nearby upland disposal area. The Regional Water Board has authorized the same Hamilton Pond dredging activities in the past. Dredging occurs annually or as needed to ensure that accumulated fine sediment does not reach the mainstem Trinity River where it may impact the reproductive and rearing success of native salmon and steelhead. Up to 10,000 cubic yards of fine sediment is expected to be dredged from Upper Hamilton Pond in late summer or early fall of 2009.

The Applicant also proposes to continue annual high flow placement of clean gravel (1 to 4 inch in diameter) into the river. This fall, gravel will be processed from old dredge piles and gravel piles at the Sawmill Rehabilitation site to provide approximately 5,000 cubic yards of material for potential placement at three discrete locations during high flow releases from Lewiston dam in 2010. The high flow injection sites for 2010 are located near the Trinity River weir just up-river of the new bridge in Lewiston, at the Sawmill bluff (within the Sawmill Channel Rehabilitation project site), and near the mouth of Grass Valley Creek (within the Applicant's future Lowden Ranch Rehabilitation area). Gravel will be introduced into the river at high velocity areas with heavy equipment or by using a conveyor system to carry the gravel to mid-channel locations. The quantity of gravel introduced is dependent on the water year and resulting flows. The entire 5,000 cubic yards of stockpiled material would only be introduced if river flows in 2010 are greater than 6,000 cfs.

Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project activities. The project has been designed to avoid and minimize adverse impacts and permanent impacts to waters of the United States. Noncompensatory mitigation for the proposed project includes revegetation of disturbed areas, as appropriate, and the use of Best Management Practices for heavy equipment use in and near a waterway. The proposed project activities are scheduled to begin in August 2009.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Number 27, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region, is the lead agency for a Master Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse number 2008032110) and site specific Environmental Assessment/EIR for the project in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act. The public review period for these environmental documents is currently open and will end on July 28, 2009. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental documents and any proposed changes incorporated into the project or required as a condition of approval to avoid significant effects to the environment. The Applicant is not required to obtain a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the Applicant's proposed activities. Additional project information is available on the Trinity River Restoration Program's website at: <http://www.trrp.net/implementation/remainingP1.htm>. The application for Water Quality Certification and the Regional Water Board's file contain a significant amount of additional detail about the project. The application and Regional Water Board's 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.