

July 29, 2009

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

Humboldt County Department of Public Works – Williams Creek Road, Post Mile 1.97,
Culvert Replacement
WDID No. 1B09075WNHU

Humboldt County

On June 19, 2009, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Department of Public Works (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for proposed culvert replacement activities on Williams Creek Road at Post Mile 1.97. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with an unnamed tributary to Williams Creek in the Ferndale Hydrologic Subarea No. 111.11.

Williams Creek Road is a rural road that meanders along Williams Creek through private property consisting mostly of ranchland and timberland. Williams Creek Road crosses an unnamed ephemeral tributary to Williams Creek at post mile 1.97. The existing stream crossing consists of a 3-foot diameter and 40-foot long corrugated metal culvert with its outlet on the bank of Williams Creek. The invert of the existing culvert is completely rusted through and flows out of the deteriorated invert have eroded an approximately 100 square foot area of the Williams Creek streambank below the culvert outlet.

The proposed project involves replacing the existing deteriorated culvert with a new 3-foot diameter plastic (HDPE) culvert. An excavator will be used to remove approximately 40 cubic yards of fill from the roadway and the existing culvert. The new culvert will be installed over a bed of crushed rock and backfilled with the excavated fill material. Any remaining fill material will be trucked to an appropriate upland disposal site. All heavy equipment work will be conducted from the roadway and no equipment will enter Williams Creek.

The existing culvert outlet is perched approximately 8 feet above the Williams Creek streambed. In order to protect the outlet area of the new culvert from further erosion, rock riprap will be placed along the edge of the Williams Creek channel and continuing up the embankment to fill the eroded area. Riprap will also be placed around the culvert inlet for erosion protection. Riprap will not be placed within the wetted channel of Williams Creek. The new culvert may be slightly shorter than the existing culvert in order to compensate for the streambank area that was eroded by flows exiting the deteriorated invert of the existing culvert.

The unnamed tributary is expected to be dry during culvert replacement activities. If surface water is present in the unnamed tributary during construction, flows will be diverted around the project. If surface water diversion is necessary, the diversion will consist of a sandbag dam placed upstream of the project area and an 18-inch gravity

pipe will be used to convey the water around the project and back to the stream below the project area.

Williams Creek was an anadromous stream until it was diverted from the Salt River watershed to the Old River watershed in 1998. The Old River is not a perennial water course and it no longer connects to any anadromous waters. While salmon and steelhead no longer have migratory access to Williams Creek, access was historically available and suitable habitat exists so there is a possibility that resident trout may be present in Williams Creek. The proposed project will not encroach on the Williams Creek channel. Only the scoured streambank area will be filled with rock riprap.

Due to the project location, road type, project duration, and infrequent traffic use by mainly local property owners, a temporary detour around the project area will not be provided. The proposed project is expected to take up to three days to complete and the road is expected to be closed to through traffic for all or part of one full work day. The Applicant will post notices to inform local residents of the upcoming short-term road closure.

The new culvert will be placed in the same location and will be the same size as the existing culvert or slightly shorter. The proposed new culvert will not result in additional permanent impacts to the unnamed tributary. The proposed rock riprap to protect the inlet area of the new culvert will result in permanent impacts to 10 square feet and 5 linear feet of the unnamed tributary channel. The proposed rock riprap to fill the scoured streambank area and provide outlet protection will result in approximately 75 square feet and 15 linear feet of permanent impacts to the Williams Creek streambank. The majority of the proposed rock riprap in Williams Creek will be placed above the ordinary high water elevation. Proposed culvert excavation and replacement activities will also result in temporary impacts to approximately 250 square feet and 50 linear feet of the unnamed tributary. One 6-inch diameter alder tree, which is currently leaning on the existing culvert near its outlet, will be removed along with low-lying vegetation that mainly consists of Himalayan blackberry. Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment in a stream channel. Noncompensatory mitigation also includes revegetation of disturbed areas using a fast growing native grass seed mix. The proposed project is scheduled for construction during the summer of 2009.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Numbers 3 and 13, pursuant to Clean Water Act Section 404. The Applicant has applied to the California Department of Fish and Game for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement. The County of Humboldt determined that this project is categorically exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to section 15301, class 1 – existing facilities and section 15304, class 4 – minor alterations to land. Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (class

1, section 15301 – existing facilities, and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project.

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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