

August 26, 2009

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

City of Willits, Wastewater Treatment Facility Enhancement Wetlands  
WDID No. 1B05149WNME  
Mendocino County

On November 25, 2005, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the City of Willits (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for construction of a wastewater treatment/enhancement wetland at the Willits wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) and installation of a new discharge outfall structure into Outlet Creek. The original scope of the project was reduced from previous designs. The applicant submitted a revised application on June 13, 2008 and an addendum on May 7, 2009. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Outlet Creek and seasonal wetlands adjacent to Outlet Creek Upper Main Eel River Hydrologic Area 111.60.

The proposed project is located in the Little Lake Valley on property owned by the City of Willits immediately north and east of the existing wastewater treatment facility adjacent to Outlet Creek just below the confluence of Baechtel and Broaddus Creeks.

The Applicant proposes to construct approximately 30 surface acres of treatment/enhancement wetlands in an area of uplands and existing seasonal wetland east of Outlet Creek. A total of 14.3 acres of the treatment/enhancement wetland would be constructed within seasonal wetlands. The enhancement wetlands will provide both storage and additional treatment of effluent from the mechanical portion of the Willits (WWTF). Once constructed, the treatment/enhancement wetlands will be considered part of the wastewater treatment plant and the Regional Water Board will not be consider these wetlands to be waters of the US or waters of the state. The project proposes installation of a 24 inch pipe undercrossing to convey treated effluent from the mechanical portion of the WWTF to the enhancement wetlands east of Outlet Creek. The enhancement wetlands will consist of 2 feet of active treatment depth, 3 feet of active storage, and 2 feet of emergency storage. The estimated active storage capacity will be approximately 90 acre-feet and the total storage capacity will be approximately 160 acre-feet with emergency storage.

A new irrigation pump station and concrete outfall structure is proposed to discharge treated effluent from the enhancement wetlands. During the periods between May 15 and September 30 and otherwise as weather allows each year, the irrigation pump station will be used for spray irrigation of treated effluent on adjacent pasturelands. The project proposes installation of a 12 inch pipe undercrossing to convey treated effluent from the enhancement wetlands to the pasture area west of Outlet Creek. During the period Between October 1 and May 14 each year treated effluent from the enhancement wetland may be discharged through the pump station to a proposed new outfall into Outlet Creek.

The proposed project would include installation of either a permanent or temporary crossing for heavy equipment to provide access to the east side of Outlet Creek facilitating construction of the enhancement wetlands and the new outfall structure. If installed, a permanent crossing would be located just downstream of the confluence of Baechtel and

Broaddus Creeks and designed to clear span the Outlet Creek with minimal constriction of flows due to abutment construction. If utilized, a temporary crossing would be designed to minimize turbidity and geomorphic impacts from bridge construction, use, and removal. A temporary crossing may only be placed after June 15. The crossing and associated fill will be removed once excavation ceases, but in any case, no later than October 15 each year. Heavy equipment passes will be limited.

The proposed Project would include construction of seasonal wetlands adjacent to Mill Creek and Outlet Creek near the enhancement wetlands to compensate for the loss of existing seasonal wetlands. The proposed mitigation wetlands adjacent to the east bank of Outlet Creek would also function as an inset floodplain, providing channel and floodplain connectivity and improving the conveyance of flood flows in this area. The wetland and floodplain mitigation would consist of lowering the ground elevation along the east bank of Outlet Creek and removing the levee adjacent to the creek to create an inset floodplain. Proposed wetland mitigation measures near the west bank of Outlet Creek and Mill Creek include lowering the ground elevation only. Additional mitigation measures would also include planting riparian vegetation along Outlet Creek and Mill Creek and exclusion of cattle except for the express purpose of managing invasive vegetative species. Proposed mitigation measures will ensure that there will be no net loss of wetland acreage, function and value as a result of this project

Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for debris, sediment, and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment in and adjacent to the stream channel. The proposed project is scheduled for construction during the summers of 2010 and 2011, but in no case will extend beyond the summer of 2012.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project 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 City of Willits, as lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has prepared and filed an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) with the Office of Planning and Research, (State Clearinghouse No. 2001032016, April 23, 2003), pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines.

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 Lisa Bernard at (707) 576-2677 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.