

July 8, 2010

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 299 – Replace Downdrain with Rock-Lined Ditch
WDID No. 1B10015WNHU

Humboldt County

On February 18, 2010, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), requesting Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to the proposed Highway 299 Replacement of Downdrain with Rock-Lined Ditch (project). The proposed project will cause temporary impacts to waters of the United States U.S. and waters of the State associated with an unnamed tributary to Lupton Creek located within the Redwood Creek Unit No.107.00, in an undefined Hydrologic Sub-Area No. 107.20.

The proposed project is located on Route 299 at Post Mile 21.1, in Humboldt County. Caltrans proposes to replace a 36-inch diameter; 300-foot long corrugated steel pipe (CSP) downdrain with a 10-foot wide, 2-foot deep, 300-foot long rock lined ditch. Work will include excavating a trench 10 feet wide and 2-3 feet deep on the upland grassy shoulder of Highway 299 on a steep fill slope. The purpose of the proposed project is to replace a failed culvert downdrain and prevent erosion. Sections of the existing 36-inch diameter downdrain have separated, allowing water to escape and erode the hillside. Construction techniques will be implemented to minimize disturbances and all staging will be conducted on a gravel pullout next to Highway 299.

Caltrans has determined the temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and waters of the State would total approximately 900 feet² (300 linear feet). The proposed project would result in approximately 900 feet² (300 linear feet) of permanent impacts to waters of the State. Caltrans proposes to offset the impacts to waters of the State by creating a riparian canopy over the newly constructed rock lined ditch, which will likely improve beneficial uses and reduce temperatures and sediment transport into the unnamed tributary to Lupton Creek. Willow cuttings collected from a nearby source will be planted in a natural staggered pattern on 3'-8' centers. This project does not propose additional impervious surface. The replacement of a culvert with a rock-lined ditch will likely improve the beneficial uses in that it will reduce water velocity, thereby reducing erosion and sediment discharge. The rocky substrate also provides better habitat for reptiles and amphibians in comparison to a culverted downdrain

The proposed project will be conducted in summer months during low flow conditions. The proposed project activity is scheduled to be conducted between Sept. 1st, 2010 (or 2011) and October 15th, 2010 (or 2011). The entire project is expected to take 30 days to complete.

This project will have no effect on any listed species or sensitive biological resources. Caltrans has applied for authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under their Nationwide Permits No. 33 (Temporary Construction, Access, and Dewatering) and No. 46 (Discharges to Ditches) pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. In addition, Caltrans has applied to the California Department of Fish and Game for a 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement. Caltrans has determined that this project is categorically exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (Class 1 Categorical Exemption). In addition, Regional Water Board staff also determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Class 1 Categorical Exemption) and anticipates filling a Notice of Exemption.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within 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 or comments, please contact staff member Jeremiah Puget at (707) 576-2835 or jpuget@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed road construction 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 related documents and comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.