

September 9, 2010

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 128 - Geyserville Bridge Streambank Stabilization Project
WDID No. 1B10101WNSO

Sonoma County

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) anticipates receiving an application from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the near future, requesting Federal Clean Water Act, Section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to an urgent streambank stabilization project along the Russian River near Geyserville. The proposed project is located along the west side of the Russian River and directly upstream of the Highway 128 Bridge. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Russian River in the Geyserville Hydrologic Subarea No. 114.25.

Caltrans replaced the Highway 128 Bridge over the Russian River in 2006 after one of the bridge piers failed. The bridge was closed from January 2006 through August 2006 during emergency bridge reconstruction. For several reasons associated with the emergency nature of the reconstruction, the replacement bridge was not extended westerly to protect the western bridge approach from future scour events that could result in failure and closure of the highway.

In January 2010, Caltrans completed an emergency bank stabilization project along the western bridge approach that consisted of placing approximately 500 cubic yards of rock slope protection (RSP) in the river and on the west bank during high flows. An additional 2,000 cubic yards of RSP was placed on the top of the bank and against the bridge approach fill as an erodible buttress in the event that the 500 cubic yards that were placed in the river was insufficient to prevent further erosion. The area of emergency RSP placement was limited to Caltrans right-of-way, and the bare upstream bank was not protected.

The emergency RSP provided some level of erosion protection for the bridge approach during the winter and spring 2010. However, a portion of the emergency RSP created a back eddy that appeared to cause additional erosion and additional westward migration of the eroding streambank. Stabilization of the eroding streambank prior to the upcoming 2010-2011 high flow season is a high priority, as it appears that the west end of the previously installed emergency RSP will be flanked if the erosion continues.

The primary purpose of this anticipated bank stabilization project is to prevent additional westward migration of the eroding streambank in order to protect the highway and bridge approach. Regional Water Board staff and representatives from the California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and NOAA Fisheries have been in discussions with Caltrans and Syar Industries, the landowner adjacent to

the eroding bank, regarding proposed solutions to address this urgent situation. It appears that a project will be developed by Caltrans in the next few days, and Regional Water Board staff anticipates that an application for water quality certification will be submitted soon with a request to begin work immediately in order to complete the project before the rainy season.

Due to the nature of the project and the limited timeframe for implementation, Regional Water Board staff anticipates that certification will be issued in less than 21 days from the posting of this notice. Pursuant to title 23, California Code of Regulations, section 3858, if an emergency project requires that certification be issued in less than 21 days, public notice shall be provided as much in advance of issuance as possible, but no later than simultaneously with the issuance of certification. Although a complete application and project plans have not been submitted to date, Regional Water Board staff is working with Caltrans to ensure the project is designed to restore and improve lost riparian area and associated streambank habitat.

Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is statutorily exempt from CEQA review (Section 15269 – emergency projects) 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. Due to the urgency of the situation and the anticipated shortened public notice period, certification may be issued in less than 21-days and as early as the week of September 13, 2010. Questions and comments regarding this project should be provided to the Regional Water Board staff as soon as possible. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 as soon as possible.