

September 21, 2010

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

Wohler Infiltration Ponds 1 and 2 Decommissioning Project  
WDID No. 1B1008WNSO

Sonoma County

On July 22, 2010, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Connie Barton Environmental Specialist on behalf of the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA)(applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with the Wohler Infiltration Ponds 1 and 2 Decommissioning Project (project). The proposed project will cause permanent disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and Waters of the State associated with the Russian River in the Russian River Hydrologic Unit No. 114.00.

The purpose of the proposed project is to decommission two infiltration ponds adjacent to the Russian River to prevent the entrapment of salmonids in the ponds after flood events and to reduce aquatic species entrapment in the ponds. The project is being completed as part of the National Marine Fisheries Service's Reasonable and Prudent Measures in the biological opinion for *Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District in the Russian River watershed*, dated September 24, 2008. The project consists of decommissioning the off-channel Wohler Infiltration Ponds 1 and 2 by removing two manual valves and re-grading the channels and ponds at a slope of 1% toward the Russian River. Re-grading the channels includes the removal of portions of the roads between the channel and ponds. A 1% slope will allow the ponds to fill with water during flood events, but will allow them to drain at the same rate as the receding Russian River.

Based on the mapped areas of the proposed project, and estimates of fill material needed, total estimated area of disturbance within Waters of the U.S. is 67,677 square feet (1.55 acres). The SCWA proposes to minimize the temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and State by implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) to provide erosion control and pollution prevention throughout the project area during construction. In addition, the SCWA will perform periodic maintenance of each pond. The grade will be checked by SCWA staff and will be re-graded as necessary to maintain the appropriate drainage. The project is designed to reduce entrapment for aquatic creatures, and should not impact temperature and turbidity of the Russian River. Therefore compensatory mitigation for impacts to waters of the U.S. and State is not necessary.

The applicant has received authorization from the Army Corp of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit No. 27, Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities Permit No. 1999-24721N, pursuant to Clean Water Act,

section 404. The applicant has received a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game, Permit No. 1600-2010-0265-R3. The Sonoma County Water Agency, as lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has filed a Notice of Exemption on March 4, 2010, categorical exemptions under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (i) Existing Facilities, 15304 (c) Minor Alterations to land, and 15307 Actions by Regulatory Agency for Protection of Natural Resources.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed activities. The application for Water Quality Certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed activities including maps and detailed design drawings. The application and Regional Water Board 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 Stephen Bargsten at (707) 576-2653 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.