

March 10, 2011

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 101 – Confusion Hill Decommissioning
WDID No. 1B10074WNME

Mendocino County

On June 28, 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 101 – Confusion Hill Decommissioning project (project). Additional project information was received on January 19, 2011. Caltrans proposes to remove the bypassed portion of Highway 101 resulting from the Confusion Hill Roadway Relocation Project. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and waters of the State associated with unnamed tributaries within Eel River Hydrologic Unit No.111.00 and Benbow Hydrologic Sub-Area 111.32.

The proposed project is located on Highway 101 from post mile (PM) 99.8 to PM 100.00, in Mendocino County, south of Piercy. The purpose of the proposed project is to minimize the likelihood of manmade features entering the South Fork Eel River. The project includes: removal of the roadway and eight structures; rock fall mesh; brugg netting; metal beam guard rail; fencing; culverts; and k-rail. Roadway removal will require re-grading the old roadbed to allow for natural drainage and slope stability. In addition, Caltrans is required to revegetate approximately 9 acres (within the roadway relocation area and decommissioning project area) to compensate for impacts to vegetation as part of the Confusion Hill Roadway Relocation Project. The decommissioning project proposes to restore self-sustaining native vegetative cover and to avoid the spread or establishment of invasive plants. Planting efforts will include restoration of staging areas, fill slopes, and disposal sites associated with the realignment project. The decommissioning project will result in a 2.9 acre decrease in impervious surface, the revegetation of 2.4 acres, and the restoration of 0.33 acres of drainage channels.

The total disturbed soil area is approximately 3.3 acres, which is estimated on the area of the removed structures, removed pavement, and limits of earthwork. Caltrans' contractor will be required to prepare a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that will include Best Management Practices (BMPs) for construction and post construction phases of the project. Caltrans will utilize BMPs to provide erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention throughout the project area during construction. All graded areas within the project affected by the construction activities will be appropriately stabilized and BMPs will be implemented to ensure erosion is minimized and controlled.

Caltrans has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under their Non-Reporting Nationwide Permit No. 27 (Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities) pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. Caltrans has determined that this project is Categorical Exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In addition, Regional Water Board staff also determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA and anticipates filing 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 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.