

June 30, 2011

**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. 1B11096WNSO

Sonoma County

On June 15, 2011, 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 128 – Geyserville Bridge Streambank Stabilization Project. 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.

In the summer of 2010, Caltrans conducted an emergency streambank stabilization project to address the eroding bank and eminent threat to the highway. The primary purpose of the stabilization project was to prevent additional westward migration of the eroding streambank in order to protect the highway and bridge approach. The bank stabilization project was designed to provide a repair to resist erosion and redirect flows away from the streambank. Willow and cottonwood plantings and large woody debris were incorporated into the project design to restore native riparian vegetation and improve fish habitat along the eroded streambank.

Based on monitoring of the site during the 2010/2011 wet season, it is apparent that an approximate 90 foot section of the river bank located at the northwest approach section (the Crescent) demonstrates continued bank scour. As part of Caltrans adaptive management efforts they intend to repair the existing scour so that the project's objective to protect the bridge approach is not jeopardized. In addition, the proposed work will provide a more uniform bank curvature and uses brush layering of harvested willows, cottonwood and willow pole plantings in conjunction with slope reconstruction to provide additional bank stability and shade.

Caltrans has determined that total project permanent impacts to waters of the U.S. and State (Russian River) will be approximately 0.087 acres (3,775 feet², 90 linear feet). Due to the nature of the stabilization project and the proposal to conduct additional native plantings, compensatory mitigation is not required. Project activities are anticipated to take approximately 15 days to complete and will be conducted in the dry season between June 1 and October 15. Caltrans' contractor will be required to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) for construction and post-construction phases of the project to provide erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention throughout the project area. 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 a Department of the Army Permit pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. In addition, Caltrans has applied for a 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game and has consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service. Caltrans has determined that this project is Statutorily Exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (Emergency Exemption). In addition, Regional Water Board staff also determined that this project is 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 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.