

December 6, 2011

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

USDOT – FHA, Steven Memorial Bridge
and Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge Replacements
WDID No. 1A10127WNDN

Del Norte County

On December 20, 2010, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Federal Highway Administration, Central Federal Lands Highway Division (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with removal and replacement of the Steven Memorial Bridge and Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge on South Fork Smith River Road in Del Norte County. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the South Fork Smith River and Hurdy Gurdy Creek in the South Fork Smith River Hydrologic Area No. 103.20.

The applicant, in cooperation with the Six Rivers National Forest (SRNF) and Del Norte County, is proposing to complete this phased project to improve safety along South Fork Smith River Road by replacing several bridges and widening single-lane portions of the roadway to two lanes. Due to funding constraints the project was separated into two phases. The first phase included replacement of bridges over Rock Creek and Boulder Creek and the widening of single-lane sections of the roadway to two lanes. Construction of the first phase was completed in 2011. The proposed project involves replacement of the Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge and the Steven Memorial Bridge over the South Fork Smith River, and realignment and widening of both bridge approaches from single-lane to two-lane.

The existing Steven Memorial Bridge is a single-lane 330-foot long three-span structure that will be replaced with a two-lane 470-foot long three-span steel-girder bridge structure. The new bridge will be located approximately 65 to 80 feet downstream of the existing bridge to allow for full width construction while maintaining traffic on the existing bridge. The new bridge will have drilled shaft foundations under the abutments and both piers that will be socketed into bedrock. Each bridge pier will consist of one six-foot diameter concrete column. The bridge piers will be located below the elevation of ordinary high water (OHW); however, they will be above the wetted portion of the South Fork Smith River during pier construction activities. The bridge deck is designed to drain to the southeast corner and will not include any scupper drains directly over the active channel. Rock slope protection (RSP) will be installed along both banks and extending slightly below the elevation of OHW. Traffic will be moved onto the new bridge following completion and the existing bridge structures will be demolished.

Proposed activities associated with excavation and placement of rock riprap in existing roadside drainage channels at the Steven Memorial Bridge site will result in temporary

impacts to 780 linear feet and 2,252 square feet of waters of the United States. RSP placement will result in permanent impacts to 153 linear feet and 1,093 square feet of streambank. Construction of the eastern pier for the Steven Memorial Bridge will result in temporary impacts to 31 linear feet and 464 square feet of streambed. Together the two new piers will result in permanent impacts to 12 linear feet and 87 square feet of streambed.

The proposed project also includes removal of the existing one-lane 170-foot long two-span bridge over Hurdy Gurdy Creek and replacement with a two-lane single-span steel girder structure. The new bridge will be 190-feet long not including the 15-foot long approach slaps on each end of the bridge deck. Approaches to the new bridge will be reconstructed to consist of two 11-foot wide travel lanes with 1-foot wide shoulders. Construction activities include drilling 18-inch and 24-inch diameter shafts for each abutment foundation. A two-tier rockery wall structure will be installed around and below the westernmost bridge abutment. The proposed fill associated with bridge abutments, rockery wall, and support structures for the new Hurdy Gurdy Creek bridge will be located above the elevation of OHW. The bridge deck is designed to drain to the northwest corner and will not include any scupper drains directly over the active channel. The proposed new bridge will be located approximately 60 feet upstream (north) of the existing bridge. The new bridge will be constructed using full-width construction and the existing bridge will remain open until traffic can be routed onto the new bridge. Once traffic is moved onto the new bridge the existing bridge structures will be demolished.

Prior to conducting any demolition activities on either bridge site the contractor will submit a demolition plan for review and approval. The plan shall provide methods for containment of demolition debris to prevent debris from entering the stream channel. The existing abutments and piers will be removed and cut off at least two feet below the ground surface, exposed steel will be removed, and the cavities will be backfilled, compacted, and leveled to match the natural ground contours. All demolition materials will be hauled offsite.

Proposed activities associated with replacement of the Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge will result in permanent impacts to 148 linear feet and 339 square feet of waters of the United States due to filling and relocating a portion of an existing roadside drainage channel. Excavation of existing drainage channels along the existing road will result in temporary impacts to 147 linear feet and 295 square feet of waters of the United States. Proposed activities associated filling and relocating existing roadside drainage channels will also result in permanent impacts to 3,376 square feet of wetlands.

Compensatory mitigation is required for permanent impacts to riparian vegetation and wetlands. The applicant proposes to create a 7,400 square foot (0.17 acre) wetland and riparian mitigation area immediately adjacent to the southwest side of the Steven Memorial Bridge. Wetland plantings will include Woodland Strawberry, Bolander's Rush, Common Rush and Common Three-square. Riparian plantings will include White

Alder, Red Alder, California Blackberry and Arroyo Willow. The mitigation area will also be seeded with appropriate wetland and riparian seed mixes supplied by the SRNF. Additional plantings of Coast Douglas Fir and California Black Oak are required to replace 17 trees that will be removed from the riparian corridor for construction of the Steven Memorial Bridge and 48 trees that will be removed for construction of the Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge. Trees will be planted at a 1.25:1 ratio within the existing approach areas at the Hurdy Gurdy Creek Bridge and the eastern approach area at the Steven Memorial Bridge.

The entire phased project to improve safety along South Fork Smith River Road will result in an approximately five-percent increase in the amount of impervious surface area within the project vicinity including the Phase 1 portion that has already been completed. The Applicant has evaluated the potential impacts associated with increasing the amount of impervious surface area and determined that the increased runoff was very small and not measurable. Installation of treatment measures was determined to be infeasible because treatment measures located at any particular area would only treat a small fraction of the overall project. Numerous treatment areas would be necessary which would require significantly more grading impacts. This would be especially problematic at the four road widening areas where landslides have historically been an issue.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Number 14, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game is not required for this federal project on federal land. Construction is scheduled to begin in January 2012 and finish in October 2012.

On July 3, 2008, Del Norte County approved a mitigated negative declaration (SCH No. 2008052126) for the project in order to comply with CEQA. The mitigated negative declaration indicated that the piers for the new Steven Memorial Bridge would be located above the elevation of OHW and only riprap materials would be located below OHW. New information indicates that the piers for the new Steven Memorial Bridge must be located below OHW. The applicant requested Del Norte County, as CEQA lead agency, to review this change and make a determination with respect to the new project details. Del Norte County has indicated that although the piers are to be located below OHW they will be located above the elevation of the wetted channel during project construction and all construction activities will occur outside of the wetted channel. Furthermore, the span between the proposed piers will be longer than the span between existing piers. Del Norte County determined that the relocation of the bridge piers is a minor change that does not present more severe impacts and found that no supplemental CEQA review is necessary. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document and any proposed changes incorporated into the project or required as a condition of approval to avoid significant effects to the environment.

Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment near stream channels. Temporary erosion and sediment control BMPs will be implemented during construction to prevent offsite sedimentation to streams and wetlands. The applicant will require the bridge contractor to submit an acceptable bridge demolition plan and construct structurally adequate debris shields to prevent demolition debris from entering waterways, open travel lanes, and any other areas that are not to be disturbed.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed activities. The application for certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed activities including maps, plans 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 Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

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