

December 20, 2011

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

City of Eureka – Hiksari Trail and Elk River Access Improvements Project
WDID No. 1B09113WNHU

Humboldt County

On October 31, 2011, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the City of Eureka (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with construction of the Hiksari Trail and Elk River Access Improvements Project. The project will be part of the envisioned 6.5-mile long segment of the California Coastal Trail along the entire Eureka waterfront. The proposed trail improvements will typically consist of a 10-foot wide hard surface trail with 4 feet of adjacent soft path. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with wetlands in the Eureka Plain Hydrologic Unit No. 110.00.

The proposed project is located along Humboldt Bay in the southwest area of Eureka. The purpose of the proposed project is to create 1.5 miles of contiguous multiple-purpose trail to enhance coastal access for non-motorized public recreation and transportation to the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary (ERWS), Elk River Estuary, and Humboldt Bay between Truesdale Road and Pound Road. The project is intended to encourage an appreciation of the environment and historic uses of the area, improve public health, increase safety for Parkway visitors, and improve native habitat values where possible. The project is scheduled for construction during the spring/summer of 2012.

The proposed project includes the following nine major elements/segments:

1. Truesdale Vista Point: Located between Truesdale Street and the City of Eureka's McCullens Avenue lift station is an existing dirt lot with a largely unimproved surface. Public Access improvements within this element include a scenic visitor area with day use facilities and signage, upgraded parking area to accommodate 23 vehicles, new multi-purpose trailhead, 380 linear feet of trail, and an earthen observation platform for bay/wildlife viewing.
2. Truesdale Park: The former City of Eureka storage yard area located south of the McCullens Avenue lift station will become an open space park with playground facilities and 425 linear feet of the multi-use trail including a trailhead to a paddling access point.
3. Truesdale to Hilfiker: Improvements to the former Crowley property north of Hilfiker Lane include 650 linear feet of the multi-use trail, invasive exotic plant removal and revegetation, interpretive signs, and a slightly raised earthen platform for bay/wildlife viewing.
4. Elk River Paddling Access: A paddle boat parking area with a footpath will be created at the corner of Hilfiker Lane and southwest end of the former Crowley property for access to an existing "primitive" beach launch. Improvements include

picnic tables, trash receptacle/dog cleanup station, and a restroom facility. The parking area will have a permeable crushed rock surface and space for eight vehicles.

5. Hilfiker Lane Trail: The multi-use trail continues for approximately 1,500 linear feet adjacent to Hilfiker Lane between the corner of Hilfiker Lane and the Hilfiker Lane Trailhead. The trail will depart from the shoreline and onto the roadway until an easement or purchase of private property allows continuation of the trail off the roadway.
6. Hilfiker Lane/ERWS Trailhead: The proposed multi-use trail continues to an existing asphalt parking lot at the south end of Hilfiker Lane where it meets the existing ERWS public trail. The existing parking lot is currently adequate for proposed trailhead and day use area improvements. The area will be improved for day use activities with the addition of picnic tables, a trash receptacle/dog cleanup station, and restroom facilities. Existing cyclone fencing and large boulders will be removed and replaced with more aesthetic vehicular access controls.
7. Existing ERWS Trail: Surfacing improvements to the existing informal trail south of the Hilfiker Lane/ERWS Trailhead will include vegetation removal in a 16-foot wide corridor, grading, and application of trail base surfacing materials. The paved portion of the trail will consist of 10-foot wide asphalt concrete. An approximately 26-foot long and 12-foot wide bridge will be installed over a narrow finger of slough channel northwest of the railroad crossing at the south end of the ERWS. Trailside interpretive signs will be placed along the trail.
8. Riverside Footpath: South of the ERWS parking lot there is an existing footpath to the edge of Elk River which makes a loop back to the ERWS trail. Approximately 1,090 linear feet of this trail will be surfaced with a 4-foot wide crushed shale or similar surface. Proposed trail improvements are intended to reduce off-trail travel along the river's edge.
9. Pound Road Access: An 8-foot wide asphalt trail will be developed for 255 linear feet along Pound Road. The trail will be separated from Pound Road by a raised curb from the Park-and-Ride lot to the entrance to Pro-Pacific where a crosswalk will provide access to the pedestrian/bicycle access adjacent to a proposed gate. Pedestrian/bicycle traffic will share Pound Road between the proposed gate and the existing informal parking area. The existing gate adjacent to the parking area will be removed and installed on Pound Road west of the entrance to Pro-Pacific to limit vehicle access to City maintenance workers and one private land owner, and to prioritize pedestrian/bicycle use for the remainder of Pound Road.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to complete the project under Nationwide Permit 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 project. On January 11, 2011, the City of Eureka approved a Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH No. 2010112050) for the project in order to comply with CEQA. 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. The

project will result in 12,089 square feet of permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands due to direct filling associated with trail construction and improvements between the Hilfiker Lane/ERWS Trailhead and parking lot at the Pound Road Access. Compensatory mitigation is required for proposed permanent impacts to wetlands.

A wetland mitigation, monitoring, and reporting plan has been prepared for the proposed project that includes wetland creation at a 4 to 1 (wetland creation to wetland loss) ratio. Proposed mitigation for the permanent impacts to 0.26 acre of freshwater wetland and 0.02 acres of salt marsh wetland includes onsite creation of 1.11 acre (48,356 square feet) of salt marsh wetlands. The proposed mitigation area is located west of the southern Crowley property between existing salt marsh wetlands and proposed trail improvements. Implementation of a mitigation plan to provide for creation of both freshwater wetlands and salt marsh wetlands was considered. Creation of both freshwater wetlands and salt marsh wetlands would require multiple sites and result in disconnected mitigation areas. Creation of salt marsh wetlands at the selected mitigation site will provide a continuous connection between salt marsh habitats along Humboldt Bay.

The Elk River watershed is listed on the State of California Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list as impaired for sediment. Roads are a significant source of sediment in the watershed (directly, from surface erosion, and, indirectly, by triggering landslides). In addition, activities that impact the riparian zone and reduce riparian vegetation are identified as sources contributing to increased stream temperatures. A focus on measures to reduce sediment discharges to surface waters from roads in the watershed, and measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on riparian zones is essential for achieving TMDL compliance. Proposed activities are located along the estuary area of the Elk River watershed where roads and landslides are not known to be a significant source of sediment. The proposed project is required to develop a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan for the entire project and appropriate Best Management Practices for sediment and erosion control will be implemented.

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 Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.