February 8, 2012

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 101, Airport Blvd / Fulton Rd Interchange Modification Project
WDID No. 1B11101WNSO

Sonoma County

On June 30, 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 101, Airport Blvd / Fulton Rd Interchange Modification (Project). Additional information was received on January 27, 2012. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and waters of the State associated with intermittent and ephemeral drainages, wetlands, streams and riparian areas that are located within the Russian River Hydrologic Unit No.114.00 (Mark West Creek Hydrologic Sub-Area No.113.85).

The project is located along Highway 101 in Sonoma County from Post Mile (PM) 25.6 to PM 26.9 and from PM 28.18 to 29.17 and is Phase B of the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Widening project from Windsor to Santa Rosa. In Phase B, Caltrans is proposing to convert the two existing partial interchanges at Fulton Rd and at Airport Blvd into a single complete interchange by modifying the off-ramps and on-ramps at Airport Blvd and eliminating the off-ramps and on-ramps at Fulton Rd. In addition, the Project will replace the existing two-lane Airport Blvd Overcrossing at Highway 101 with a new five-lane overcrossing bridge structure. As part of the new interchange design Caltrans proposes to construct a new bridge over Mark West Creek as an off-ramp to Airport Blvd. Additionally, four sound walls will be constructed along Highway 101 between the Shiloh Rd and Windsor River Rd Interchanges. One sound wall will be constructed on the west side of Highway 101 and three sound walls will be constructed on the east side of Highway 101.

Caltrans has determined that the total project permanent impacts to wetlands identified as waters of the U.S. will be 0.224 acres and 0.0092 acres of isolated waters of the State. Permanent impacts to streams identified as waters of the U.S. will be approximate 0.0004 acres (16 ft^2, 10 linear feet). In addition, permanent impacts to the banks and riparian area of Mark West Creek above the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) will be 0.53 acres (177 linear feet). The temporary project impacts from construction activities to streams identified as other waters of the U.S. will be approximately 0.33 acres (314 linear feet). In addition, the temporary impacts to the stream banks and riparian area identified as waters of the State will total approximately 0.28 acres (135 linear feet). Additionally, Caltrans proposed to permanently impact 0.28 acres (135 linear feet) of roadside ditches identified as waters of the State.

Caltrans proposes to mitigate for Phase B through on-site and off-site mitigation projects in cooperating with the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA). The on-site mitigation includes the establishment of 255 linear feet of intermittent stream channel within the project limits and 510 linear feet of riparian creation and enhancement. In addition, Caltrans has proposed to install 54 linear feet of large woody material along the bank of Mark West Creek as habitat enhancement for fish and other aquatic species. Additional compensatory mitigation will include approximately 1,000 linear feet of off-site riparian enhancement via plantings along Mark West and Porter Creeks in the upper Mark West watershed. The off-site mitigation project is on property owned and managed by the Sonoma County Agricultural Land and Open Space District. Additionally, permanent impacts to wetlands and California Tiger Salamander habitat will be mitigated through the purchase of 0.35 acres of credits from the Hazel Mitigation Preserve located in Sonoma County.

Phase B construction activities will cumulatively result in approximately 50 acres of disturbed soil area (DSA). Caltrans proposes to conduct work year round, but will limit work within Mark West Creek to the dry season from June 15 to October 15. The project is anticipated to take one year to construct. 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 and potential pollution is minimized and controlled.

The project will result in an increase of approximately three new acres of impervious surface. Caltrans has determined that it is practicable to treat approximately nine acres of impervious surface with post-construction storm water treatment BMPs. Storm water runoff and modifications to the local hydrograph will be controlled primarily through the use of low impact development (LID) BMPs, primarily through infiltration to native and amended soils. The project will incorporate three bio-retention areas and eight infiltration areas to treat storm water runoff from the site which will result in a total of 9.1 acres of treatment.

Caltrans has applied for authorization from the Unites States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under their Nationwide Permits No. 14 (linear transportation projects) and No. 33 (Temporary Access, Construction, and Dewatering) 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. On October 24, 2007, Caltrans adopted an Environmental Impact Report [EIR (State Clearing House No.2003062101)] for the Project in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On May 20, 2010, Caltrans approved a CEQA revalidation (amendment) to the EIR for design modifications to Phase B of the project. 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 Russian River watershed is listed on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) list as impaired for sediment and temperature. 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.

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.