

March 7, 2012

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

Sonoma County Water Agency  
Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Demonstration Project  
WDID No. 1B12001WNSO

Sonoma County

On January 5, 2012, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Mr. David Cuneo, of Sonoma County Water Agency (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Demonstration Project (Project), for activities associated with implementing habitat enhancement, bank stabilization, vegetation management, and stream bed stabilization along a one mile reach of Dry Creek. Project is being done in response to the *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed*, issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service on September 24, 2008. A total of six (6) miles of habitat enhancement work is planned under the Biological Opinion within the fourteen (14) miles of Dry Creek between Warm Springs Dam and its confluence with the Russian River. The Project is a pilot project along a 1-mile section of Dry Creek to assess methods and success of habitat enhancement efforts. Project is located along Dry Creek, between confluence with Grape Creek (latitude 38.65979°N, longitude 122.93587°W, upstream end) and below the confluence with Crane Creek (latitude 38.64944°N, longitude 122.92354°W, downstream end), in Sonoma County. The proposed project will cause permanent impacts to approximately 21.1 acres and 4,600 linear feet of bed and bank of Dry Creek, Warm Springs Hydrologic Subarea No. 114.24, Russian River Hydrologic Area 114.00.

Project activities will consist of actions such as dewatering and bypass flow pumping, stockpiling of materials, removal of vegetation, excavation of backwater/alcove areas, and placement of boulder and log structures. Construction in or near the streambed will occur during the months of June through October during summer low-flows. Construction is scheduled for the summer and fall of 2012. Because the available construction window is limited to the June through October period, construction activities may need to be halted in October 2012 and resumed the following summer in 2013. All flows in Dry Creek (approximately 100 to 120 cfs) will need to be diverted around the work area during construction. Work areas will be isolated from the moving stream using some type of imported barrier or material (water filled bladders, gravel cofferdams, sheetpile cofferdams, etc.). Typically, the work area will be isolated and the creek flow will be allowed to continue flowing adjacent to the isolated work area. In some cases it may be necessary to completely isolate the creek from bank to bank. In this case, bypass pumping from the upstream end of the work area to the downstream end of the work area will occur to bypass creek flows around the work area. The

bypass pumping will result in the work area being dewatered during construction. Dewatering will require installation of cofferdams upstream and downstream of the project site and diverting stream flow around the project site.

Enhancements in the Project area will emphasize natural stream characteristics, or geomorphology, which refers to the manner in which water and sediment combine to create habitat features friendly to fish. By using enhancement practices that emulate natural geomorphic conditions, the benefits provided to young coho and steelhead and their longevity are optimized. The proposed Project will consist of the following enhancement practices: streambank stabilization; backwater channels, alcoves, and ponds; side channels; log jams; pool enhancement; riffle construction; and riparian vegetation management.

The Project incorporates adaptive management techniques to specify goals, objectives, and monitoring methods to verify effectiveness and longevity of habitat enhancements. An Adaptive Management and Monitoring Framework Plan includes implementation monitoring, effectiveness monitoring, and validation monitoring to determine if structures were installed as designed, if structures created habitat, and what the fish response to created habitat is, respectively. Reports will be submitted to the involved agencies annually. Future work may be adapted to improve performance of any of these factors.

Activities proposed within the Project are for the benefit of salmonids and other aquatic creatures and create more complex habitat within Dry Creek. Therefore, compensatory mitigation is unnecessary for this portion of the Project on Dry Creek.

Erosion control measures will be installed and in place by October 15 and maintained thereafter. At a minimum, the following construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be incorporated into the final project plans as appropriate in order to reduce and control soil erosion: work in and around waterways will be conducted during the dry season; installation of construction barrier fencing to preclude equipment entry into sensitive areas; straw wattles, straw bales, erosion control matting, and/or seeding of disturbed soil. Additionally, all required BMPs shall be biodegradable and on-site and ready for timely deployment before the start of construction activities.

The Sonoma County Water Agency, as lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, completed an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and filed a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse, (SCH No. 2010062082) on November 15, 2011, pursuant to CEQA guidelines.

The Applicant has applied to the California Department of Fish and Game for a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement.

The Applicant has applied to US Army Corps of Engineers for a Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit.

Project work is scheduled for June 1–October 15, 2012, and June 1–October 15, 2013.

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 Stephen Bargsten at (707) 576-2653 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 Project 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 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.

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