March 13, 2012

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

Mendocino County Department of Transportation
Feliz Creek Dam Removal Project
WDID No. 1B12012WNME

Mendocino County

On February 21, 2012, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Mr. Park Steiner, of Mendocino County Department of Transportation (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects) for the Feliz Creek Dam Removal Project (Project), for activities associated with removing a concrete dam on Feliz Creek and allowing naturalization along six to nine miles of creek upstream of the dam. Project is located on Feliz Creek, latitude 38.984416°N, longitude 123.165934°W, 3563 Feliz Creek Road, in Mendocino County. The proposed project will cause permanent impacts to approximately 0.05 acres and 150 linear feet of bed and bank of Feliz Creek, Ukiah Hydrologic Subarea No. 114.31, Russian River Hydrologic Area 114.00.

An old 12-foot high concrete dam exists on Feliz Creek approximately four miles upstream from the confluence with the Russian River near Hopland, California. Gravels and sediment have accumulated behind the dam, filling the reservoir. The dam inhibits fish passage resulting in the loss of an estimated six to nine miles of anadromous salmonid spawning and rearing habitat (primarily steelhead). The left segment of the dam (facing downstream) is undermined and a catastrophic failure could adversely impact adjacent banks as well as a private facility above, other properties downstream, and various aquatic resources. This project proposes to remove the dam and restore a free-flowing fluvial ecosystem by allowing stored gravel and sediments to meter back into Feliz Creek during storm events, and then on into the Russian River below. Additional project objectives include protecting the slope below the private residence from scour and erosion, and removal of two deleterious structures from the reach below the dam (an old metal tank and the old right abutment from a previous dam). The project includes the following tasks:

1. Remove and haul offsite portions of the reinforced concrete dam (300 cubic yards) that cannot otherwise be incorporated into streambank protection;
2. Remove and haul offsite the remains of a failed concrete and boulder fishway (10 cubic yards) that cannot otherwise be incorporated into streambank protection or instream habitat;
3. Remove and haul off-site the remains of an old concrete abutment downstream (40 cubic yards) that cannot otherwise be incorporated into streambank protection;
4. Remove and recycle or dispose of old metal tank;
5. Excavate approximately 150 feet of keyway for rock slope protection (RSP) at the site of the private residence for added protection of the swimming pool and house;

6. Reconstruct a new domestic water line under the stream channel as a replacement for the existing waterline located on the downstream face of the dam;
7. Import and place RSP along approximately 150 feet of streambank beneath the private residence (not to exceed 2,000 cubic yards). This RSP is to incorporate bundles of willow plantings within the lower area to enhance revegetation;
8. Once the dam is removed, v-notch and taper the downstream edge of the accumulated gravel and sediment near the thalweg, to an appropriate slope to minimize abrupt gravel movement in initial gravel-transport storm events;
9. Revegetate disturbed areas with appropriate native riparian vegetation;
10. A historical access point to the streambed currently exists on the property approximately 100 ft. above the dam. A second temporary access point will be created approximately 600 feet above the dam to minimize disturbance and potential vibration to the nearby residence. All ingress and egress to the project site will occur from the stream bank at one of these sites, preferably the newly created temporary road.

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 Mendocino County Department of Transportation, 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. 2011072017) on October 5, 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 expected to take 42 working days and is scheduled for August 15-October 15, 2012.

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.