

April 17, 2012

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 299 – Green Point Sink Project
WDID No. 1B11055WNHU

Humboldt County

On January 23, 2012, 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 299 – Green Point Sink project (project). Additional information regarding project specifics was received on March 30, 2012. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and waters of the State associated with the Redwood Creek Hydrologic Unit No.107.00.

The proposed project is located on Highway 299 at post mile (PM) 20.2-20.5, in Humboldt County. The purpose of the proposed project is to permanently repair and reconstruct the drainage facilities, the roadway, and culverts, which were damaged during the 2010/2011 winter storms. Temporary measures were taken following the initial storm damage; however, Caltrans proposes a project to restore the roadway and modify existing drainage features to reduce slope saturation which has led to failure of the highway. Caltrans is proposing to repair and install drainage features to minimize the infiltration of water into the roadway prism and construct retaining walls to support the highway alignment, which crosses an existing landslide. The projects includes installation and reconstruction drainage systems throughout the project limits, roadway excavation, reconstruction and widening, installing rock slope protection at culvert outfalls, construction of two retaining walls, and revegetation of disturbed areas.

Caltrans has determined that the proposed project will result in 0.022 acres (960 feet²) of permanent impacts to wetlands identified as waters of the US and waters of the State. The permanent impacts to unnamed tributaries to Redwood Creek identified as waters of the U.S. would total 0.032 acres (1,400 feet²), with an additional 0.047 acres (2,047 feet²) of permanent impact to surface waters identified as waters of the State. Temporary impacts to streams identified as waters of the U.S. associated with construction would total 0.023 acres (994 feet²). In addition, temporary impact to riparian areas identified as waters of the State will be 1.5 acres (65,122 feet²), with an additional 0.05 acres (1,002 feet²) of temporary impact to surface waters features.

The project will result in an increase of approximately 0.36 acres of impervious surface. Caltrans has determined that it is not feasible to include post-construction storm water treatment features within the project limits. Therefore, Caltrans will be required to develop a project which provides storm water treatment to approximately 0.4 acres of existing impervious surface within the Redwood Creek watershed. Storm water runoff

and modifications to the local hydrograph can be controlled primarily through the use of Low Impact Development (LID) best management practices.

Caltrans proposes to mitigate for direct impacts to waters of the State through on-site revegetation and off-site mitigation projects in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The on-site mitigation includes the restoration/creation of 180 linear feet of intermittent stream channel within the project limits and 1.5 acres of riparian revegetation and enhancement. In addition, Caltrans proposes to perform off-site mitigation within the Lacks Creek watershed (20 mi² tributary to Redwood Creek) managed by BLM which would decommission approximately 1.75 miles of abandoned road in the Lacks Creek watershed. The project would result in the restoration of 0.03 acres of freshwater seep wetlands and 0.33 acres (1,257 linear feet) of stream channel and riparian habitat and prevent and estimated 6,150 cubic yards of sediment from discharging to surface waters.

The proposed project will be conducted year round; however, work in surface waters will only be conducted in summer months during low flow conditions between May 15th and October 15th. The project will result in approximately 4 acres of disturbed soil area. Caltrans will utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to provide erosion control and pollution prevention throughout the project area during construction. All graded areas within the project affected by the construction activities will be appropriately stabilized and/or replanted with appropriate native vegetation.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under their Nationwide Permits No. 3, 14, and 33 (maintenance, linear transportation project, and temporary construction access and dewatering) pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. On September 27, 2011, Caltrans, acting as lead agency, certified an Initial Study with Proposed Negative Declaration for the proposed project in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (State Clearing House No. 2011072060). The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental documentation, including any proposed changes, and incorporates any avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures into the project as a condition of approval to avoid significant affects to the environment.

The Redwood Creek watershed is listed on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) list as impaired for sediment and temperature. On December 30, 1998, the U.S. EPA established sediment total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for the Redwood Creek watershed. Roads are a significant source of sediment in the watershed (directly, from surface erosion, and, indirectly, by triggering landslides. In addition, activities that impact stream bed, banks, and floodplains and reduce riparian vegetation are identified as sources contributing to increased stream temperatures. Such projects may involve removal of vegetation and/or channel alteration, and also have potential to increase sediment loads. 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, Basin Plan, and CEQA compliance.

To ensure compliance with Water Quality Objectives within the Basin Plan, adequate wetland and riparian protection and stringent requirements to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the sediment and temperature impacts associated with the proposed project will be incorporated as enforceable conditions in this Water Quality Certification. In addition, Caltrans will be required to conduct surface water monitoring, sampling, and analysis in accordance with the conditions of the Water Quality Certification. Additionally, storm water runoff monitoring, sampling, and analysis will be conducted as required by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Storm Water Discharges from the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Properties, Facilities and Activities Order No. 99 – 06 - DWQ. The surface water data collected will be utilized to assess the adequacy of BMPs during construction as well as site specific mitigation measures proposed to minimize impacts to the environment, including sediment and temperature impacts.

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.