May 29, 2012

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

Trinity County Resource Conservation District – Road Decommissioning in the South Fork Trinity River Watershed
WDID No. 1A12016WNTR

Trinity County

On March 14, 2012, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Trinity County Resources Conservation District (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities associated with road decommissioning on federal lands within the South Fork Trinity River watershed. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Goods Creek, Hayfork Creek, and unnamed tributaries to Hayfork Creek, Dubakella Creek, Flume Gulch, Glade Creek, Post Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, Little Rattlesnake Creek, North Fork Rattlesnake Creek, and South Fork Trinity River in the South Fork Trinity River Hydrologic Area No. 106.20.

The primary purpose of the proposed project is to implement the United States Forest Service Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan by improving water quality and reducing existing negative environmental conditions on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Proposed activities involve decommissioning roads that currently pose risks to water quality and watershed resources, and are no longer necessary for public or administrative access. The proposed project focuses on removal of engineered fills from stream crossings and restoration of the stream channels and adjacent riparian habitat. The proposed project will decommission approximately 13.3 miles of forest roads and restore stream channels at 54 water crossings. The proposed project is expected to result in approximately 20,800 cubic yards of sediment savings.

Channel restoration at each stream crossing includes excavation of fill materials and grading of the stream bottom and banks to match or approximate the original site topography. The upper banks will be graded to match adjacent slopes or to achieve stable slopes. Scour control, bank protection, and slope stabilization structures will be used as necessary. Rock and large woody debris that are available onsite will be used as much as possible for streambed and streambank stabilization. Excavated fill materials will be disposed of within stable locations outside waters of the United States. Disturbed areas will be revegetated with native plant species. The proposed project activities will occur in the late summer or fall when the streams are at seasonal low flow.

The majority of the stream crossings are located on intermittent and ephemeral stream channels. Two stream crossings (Roads U29N83C and U29N35A) are located on perennial streams that will require flow diversion and de-watering of the project area. A diversion dam will be installed upstream of the excavation area and stream flows will be routed around the disturbed area in a flexible drain pipe before discharging back to the stream channel downstream. An energy dissipater will be installed below the bypass

discharge pipe outlet to prevent scour. After the crossing site is fully excavated the diversion structure will be removed slowly and flows will be returned to the channel.

Proposed restoration activities will temporarily impact a total of 4 acres and 4,685 linear feet of stream channel. All of the proposed activities are intended to reduce sediment discharge and restore stream and wetland functions. Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed activities. Noncompensatory mitigation includes the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment and turbidity control and for operation of heavy equipment in a stream channel.

The Applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit No. 27 (File No. 2012-00094N), pursuant to Clean Water Act section 404. A Lake and/or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game is not required for this project on federal land. Proposed activities are scheduled to begin in August 2012 and be completed by October 2017

On October 10, 2011, the California Department of Parks and Recreation – Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division approved a Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH No. 2011082081) for the project in order to comply with CEQA. BMPs to avoid significant adverse impacts to the environment have been incorporated into the project description. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document, BMPs, and any proposed changes incorporated into the project or required as a condition of approval to avoid significant effects to the environment.

The South Fork Trinity River Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for temperature and sediment was established in 1998 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, because the State of California determined that the water quality standards for the South Fork Trinity River are exceeded due to excessive temperature and sediment. Roads and bank erosion are identified as sources contributing to the sediment impairment. In addition, activities that impact the riparian zone and reduce riparian vegetation are identified as sources contributing to increased stream temperatures. The primary adverse impacts associated with excessive temperature and sediment in the South Fork Trinity River pertain to cold freshwater habitat, primarily anadromous salmonid habitat. The proposed project involves decommissioning of roads and removal of stream crossings that currently pose risks to water quality. In addition, authorized activities will require implementation of BMPs for sediment and erosion control. Accordingly, this Order is consistent with, and implements portions of the South Fork Trinity River TMDL.

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 project including maps and photos. 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.

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