July 16, 2012

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

Humboldt County DPW – Waddington Road Bridge Replacement at Salt River
WDID No. 1B11145WNHU

Humboldt County

On May 11, 2012, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Public Works Department (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with removal and replacement of the Waddington Road Bridge over Salt River near Ferndale. The proposed project is located on Waddington Road where it crosses the historical headwaters of the Salt River, approximately 0.6 miles south of the intersection of Waddington Road and Pleasant Point Road. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with wetlands and the Salt River in the Ferndale Hydrologic Subarea No. 111.11.

The existing Waddington Road Bridge is a concrete truss structure that was built in 1946. The existing structure is 121-feet long by 19-feet wide. The roadway approaches consist of two 11-foot wide travel lanes with no shoulders. Recent structural evaluation determined the bridge is seismically deficient and in need of repairs. A cost analysis determined that replacement of the bridge is the most cost effective alternative.

The existing bridge spans a historical and current segment of the Salt River. The bridge does not span the active Salt River stream channel. The applicant's analysis of the area around the bridge showed the area has remained relatively flat and conditions have not changed significantly since the existing bridge was constructed 66 years ago. The analysis showed the existing bridge was also built over a low lying area where storm water runoff from adjacent agricultural farmland accumulates and backs up under the bridge. Water depths at the bridge crossing vary up to 3-feet deep during the winter months but the area is typically dry during the summer when construction activities will occur.

The proposed project involves removal of the existing bridge and replacement with a reinforced concrete box culvert crossing consisting of seven separate spans. Each span/box culvert will be 37.5-feet long by 12-feet wide by 10-feet high. The box culverts will be countersunk approximately 2 feet below the ground surface to allow for reestablishment of wetland vegetation within the culvert bottoms. In addition, both of the roadway approaches to the bridge will be improved with the addition of paved shoulders and guardrails where necessary.

Waddington Road will be completely closed to all traffic during bridge replacement activities and a temporary detour will be available. Traffic will be directed onto Lawson Lane via Pleasant Point Road to the west and Grizzly Bluff Road to the east. Stockpiling and staging activities will occur on Waddington Road to avoid impacts to adjoining wetlands.

Demolition of the existing bridge will be accomplished by using a bulldozer, an excavator with a jackhammer attachment, and possibly a crane to move large pieces. Standing water is usually only present under the bridge during the winter and early spring. If necessary, standing water will be pumped from under the bridge and dispersed at an upland location. Once all the large pieces of the existing bridge are removed, including pilings and abutments, the area under the bridge will be excavated 4 to 6-feet deep for installation of engineered backfill, the box culverts and cutoff walls. Any small pieces of concrete that remained on the surface following bridge

demolition will be removed with excavation of the surface layer of soil. All bridge demolition debris will be removed from the project area and transported to an appropriate disposal facility.

Once the foundation and reinforced concrete cutoff walls are installed, a crane will lift and place each of the seven precast concrete box culverts. Once all the box culverts are installed and secured, work will begin on the structural backfill and retaining wall structures. The existing roadway will also be improved by raising the approach elevations to establish proper grades and conform to the existing roadway approximately 300 to 400 feet in both directions.

A jurisdictional wetland determination was conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2002. The area underneath and surrounding the existing bridge consists of wetlands that are used for cattle grazing and farming purposes. Although the determination is outdated, the conditions at the site have not changed. The applicant has designed the project to avoid and minimize impacts to agricultural wetlands. A net increase in agricultural wetland area is expected after the project and wetland mitigation are complete. Proposed wetland mitigation involves removing portions of existing road fills along the westerly side of the bridge to provide lower elevations that are more susceptible to wetland establishment.

The proposed construction activities will result in temporary impacts to 5,238 square feet of wetlands. Construction of new abutments and approaches will result in permanent impacts to 1,437 square feet of wetlands. Compensatory mitigation is required for permanent impacts to wetlands. Proposed mitigation involves onsite wetland creation through removal of roadside fill slopes to create 3,032 square feet of new wetland area. Removal of the existing bridge piers provides an additional 34 square feet of wetland creation area. The proposed new box culverts will also be countersunk deep enough (1.5-2 feet) for wetland vegetation to grow on the soil covered box culvert bottoms.

Non-compensatory mitigation measures include revegetation of disturbed areas, use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment and erosion control, and BMPs for use of heavy equipment in a wetland. Immediately after construction is complete, all disturbed areas will be seeded and mulched for erosion control. Wetland creation areas will be seeded or prepared for natural propagation of agricultural grasses. All disturbed areas will be monitored yearly for plant growth and coverage for a minimum of two years after construction is complete. If plant cover does not meet success criteria through planting or natural propagation, the area will be reassessed to determine if conditions can be created or modified to improve conditions for plants. Monitoring will continue annually until the success criteria have been achieved.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (File No. 27046N) to perform the project under pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The applicant has also applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game. Humboldt County determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Section 15301 – existing facilities, 15302 – replacement or reconstruction, and 15304 – minor alterations to land). Regional Water Board staff has determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Section 15302 – replacement or reconstruction) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for the project. The project is scheduled for construction between 2012 and 2014 and is expected to take approximately 60 days to complete.

The Lower Eel River Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for temperature and sediment was established in 2007 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 Lower Eel 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 Lower Eel River pertain to cold freshwater habitat, primarily anadromous salmonid habitat. The proposed project does not impact riparian vegetation and includes implementation of BMPs for sediment and erosion control, and impact avoidance measures as described above. Accordingly, the proposed project is consistent with and implements portions of the Lower Eel 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 activities including maps and detailed design drawings. 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.