

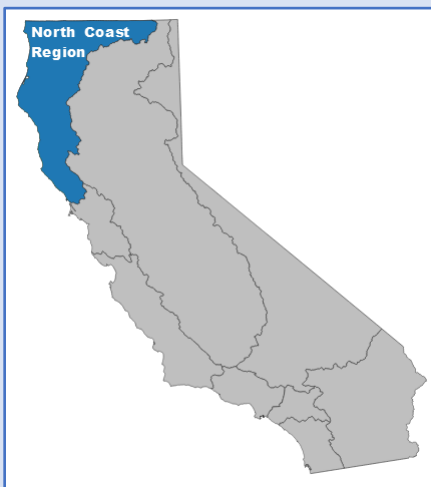


NORTH COAST WATER BOARD

Permitting for Emergency Notices:

What you need to know

Staff of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board) developed this memorandum to provide information to landowners, Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs), and Licensed Timber Operators (LTOs), about their permit responsibilities and requirements to protect water quality when conducting post-fire timber salvage projects in the North Coast Region.



Location of the North Coast Region

Wildfires and Water Quality

The impacts to the environment from catastrophic wildfires can be significant, especially relative to the health of streams, rivers, and wetlands. Following a wildfire, the landscape is exceptionally vulnerable to impacts as a result of land use activities. On private lands, landowners may choose to harvest merchantable timber shortly following a wildfire

in order to salvage the value of the trees before they degrade. While conducting timber salvage operations, landowners and their consulting RPFs and LTOs must be aware of all regulations that apply to their activities and ensure that operations are conducted in a manner that is protective of the environment, including water quality.

Water Quality Regulations

The North Coast Water Board is the state regulatory agency with primary responsibility for protection of water quality in the North Coast Region. In that role, the North Coast Water Board issues permits for activities that have the potential to discharge pollutants, such as sediment, to waters of the state.



High intensity wildfire makes watersheds more sensitive to disturbance

Some landowners, RPFs and LTOs may not be aware of the North Coast Water Board's water quality regulations and permitting that apply to their post-fire salvage operations. Post-fire salvage projects conducted under an Emergency Notice pursuant to the California Forest Practice Rules are typically covered under Category A of the North Coast Water Board's Order No. R1-2014-0011, *Categorical Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges Related to Timber Harvest Activities on Non-Federal Lands in the North Coast Region* (Categorical Waiver).

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issue_s/programs/forest_activities/private_forest_land/

Coverage for Projects

Emergency Notices are automatically covered by the Categorical Waiver once CAL FIRE has accepted the landowner's Emergency Notice for the project. The North Coast Water Board's permits for timber operations are intended to ensure that projects are designed and implemented to prevent sediment discharges and retain trees that provide shade to streams.



Post-fire Salvage must be conducted in a manner protective of water quality

These objectives can generally be met by compliance with applicable Forest Practice Rules (FPRs) but also require care on the part of consulting RPFs and LTOs.

Section I of the Categorical Waiver describes General Conditions that apply to all enrolled projects that landowners and their consultants should be aware of. Most pertinent for Emergency Notice fire salvage projects are the following:

1. The landowner shall comply with all applicable requirements, waste discharge prohibitions specified in the Basin Plan, and policies adopted by the State Water Board.
2. The landowner shall allow Regional Water Board staff entry onto the affected property for the purposes of observing, inspecting, photographing, videotaping, measuring, and/or collecting samples or other monitoring information.
3. The landowner shall conduct timber harvest activities and erosion control maintenance in compliance with the FPRs.

Inspections:

The North Coast Water Board, in its role overseeing water quality, may inspect the project to ensure compliance with the General Conditions. These inspections may occur with or without CAL FIRE, but we provide at least 48 hours of notification beforehand. Where we observe a project that is not in compliance, we will engage with the landowner and their consultants to correct the noncompliance. Our engagement often will take the form of verbal or written recommendations advising the landowner on actions needed to protect water quality but, in some cases, could rise to a formal enforcement action.



Roads like this one can contribute sediment to streams

The North Coast Water Board recognizes and supports the need for landowners to protect and improve their property following destructive wildfires. The Categorical Waiver is designed to expedite the permitting requirements while fulfilling the North Coast Water Board's statutory mandate to ensure protection of water quality.

We encourage landowners to contact North Coast Water Board staff with any questions or concerns. We can be reached by phone at (707)576-2220, or by email at northcoast@waterboards.ca.gov.