June 20, 2013

Ms. Anna Halligan
Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 1966
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Dear Ms. Halligan:

Subject: Notice of Applicability (NOA) for Coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board General 401 Water Quality Certification Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects

File: Trout Unlimited – South Fork Garcia River Coho Habitat Enhancement

WDID No.: 1B13068WNME

This letter is to certify coverage of Trout Unlimited's *South Fork Garcia River Coho Habitat Enhancement Project* (hereinafter referred to as the "Project") under the General 401 Water Quality Certification Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects; Order No. SB12006GN. The Project proposes to directionally fall seventy (70) streamside trees into a 1.5 mile segment of the lower South Fork Garcia to improve instream habitat complexity and increased shelter for threatened and endangered salmonids.

Background:
On June 3, 2013, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received your Notice of Intent (NOI) along with application fees to comply with the terms of, and obtain coverage under, the General 401 Water Quality Certification Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects (General 401 Order) for the Project. The Project is being coordinated by Trout Unlimited in coordination with Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) and Blencowe Watershed Management (BWM). The Project is being funded in part from the Cal Fire and administered by the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District.

Project Location:
The Project is located within the South Fork of the Garcia River watershed in Mendocino County. The South Fork (SF) Garcia River supports populations of both coho salmon and steelhead trout. Data collected within the last decade show low quantities of functional large woody material (LWM) in the project area. Although woody material densities are very low, juvenile coho salmon and steelhead trout are consistently present during the spring and summer.

Project Description:
The specific goal of this project is to increase habitat complexity and cover along the 1.5 mile project reach of the South Fork Garcia River. Habitat complexity will be increased by strategically falling riparian trees, as well as recruiting downed trees and rootwads from areas adjacent to the channel. Specific objectives are to increase the length and depth of pools, improve spawning gravel retention and deposition downstream of scour areas, and provide additional pool shelter.

Approximately 70 logs will be generated through the felling of stream side trees. In some limited reaches where there is an inadequate supply of stream side conifers and equipment access is not available, alders will be utilized to create complex structure. All logs will be unanchored (no hardware anchoring) and shall be introduced as either "fixed logs" (wedged behind existing hard structures like boulders or trees) or "transport logs". Trees to be utilized are intended to be at least 1.5 times bankfull width to increase retention in the system.

Heavy equipment is not proposed to be utilized as part of the project. Large woody material will be introduced by way of directional falling utilizing a chainsaw. All chainsaw fueling and maintenance will occur away from the waterway and oil absorption sheets will be available in the event of a petroleum spill.

Where riparian trees are directly felled their removal will not reduce riparian overstory canopy by more than 20% per lineal 100 feet within 75 feet of a watercourse. Further, native trees with defects, cavities, leaning towards the stream channel, nests, late seral characteristics, or greater than 36 inches diameter breast height (DBH) and large snags >16 inches DBH and 20 feet high will be retained.

Project Size:
The total area of ground disturbance associated with the project is estimated to be 0.54 acres and 157.5 linear feet. The applicant has included project size calculations that were used to determine the total size of the Project. The average tree diameter is 2.5 feet at the large end and 75 feet long. The proposed Project size does not exceed what is allowed for coverage under the General 401 Certification for Small Habitat Restoration Projects and associated Categorical Exemption (15333) from the California Environmental Quality Act.

Project Associated Discharge:
The discharge of material into Waters of the State resulting from the Project include those associated with the individual large woody material pieces and some incidental sediment discharges associated with bank disturbance. The average tree diameter is 2.5 feet at the large end and 75 feet long. The estimated incidental sediment discharge is ~3 cubic yards of native soils as a result of tree falling.

Project Timeframes:
Proposed project start date: August 1, 2013
Expected date of completion: October 15, 2015
Seasonal Implementation Window: August 1 – October 31

Monitoring Plan:
MRC has two long-term channel monitoring segments within the proposed project reach: one located at the downstream end and the other at the upstream end of the reach. The NCRWQCB has also established a monitoring segment located within this reach. Both monitoring programs collect information on stream channel morphology (longitudinal profiles and cross sections), large woody material, and stream shade. MRC will monitor this long-term channel monitoring segment, on average, every six years.

Post-project tagging of downed wood pieces will allow MRC to determine the long-term effectiveness of the project. Furthermore, MRC also collects information on stream temperature and fish and amphibian distribution within this reach.

Additionally, Blencowe Watershed Management (BWM) staff will conduct monitoring of physical stream parameters both before and after implementation during the summer months and again following at least one winter after implementation. Project partners will classify and measure habitat units (based on a modified Level II CDFW Stream Habitat Inventory protocol), quantify instream shelter, and conduct a large wood count. To identify physical responses to the restoration effort, habitat characteristics and metrics of instream wood for the pre- and post-implementation phases of the project will be compared. Pre- and post-implementation photos will be taken at flagged locations.

Following the completion of the seasonal work period, an annual report will be submitted to all appropriate agencies (NMFS, ACOE, NCRWQCB, and CDFW). This annual report will include the findings that result from pre- and post-project monitoring. These findings should indicate the achievement of performance standards that are relative to the project goals. Each report will include the following information:

1. Summary of findings
2. Identification and discussion of problems with achieving performance standards
3. Proposed corrective measures (requires Regional Water Board approval)

Agency Permits:
The applicant has also submitted applications for permitting and/or coverage of:

a) Army Corp of Engineers Section 404 Permit – Permit 27 – Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
b) NOAA/NMFS Consistency Determination with Biological Opinion No. 151422SWR2006SR00190:JMA.
c) California Department of Fish and Game – Coho HELP Act

Notice of Applicability and Project Determination:
Regional Board staff has determined that the Project, as described in the NOI is categorically exempt from CEQA review (section 15333 - Small Habitat Restoration Projects) and meets the eligibility requirements for coverage under the General 401 Water Quality Certification Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects.

Receiving Water:	South Fork Garcia River, tributary to the Garcia River Watershed
Filled or Excavated Area:	None
Total Impacts:	Acreage Temporarily Impacted: 0.54 acres maximum Length Temporarily Impacted: 157.5 linear feet Acreage Permanently Impacted: 0.0 acres Length Permanently Impacted: 0 linear feet
Dredge Volume:	None
Discharge Volume:	70 streamside trees and ~3 cubic yards of sediment
Project Location :	Downstream: 38.8565 N. Latitude and -123.5618 W. Longitude Upstream: 38.848 N. Latitude and -123.552 W. Longitude

Regional Board staff has determined that the proposed activities may proceed under the General 401 Order.

Reporting:
As required in Section B, Item 4, of the *General 401 Water Quality Certification Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects*, a Monitoring Plan must also include at least an annual reporting of findings for the period stated. In addition, you must submit a Notice of Completion (NOC) no later than 30 days after project completion. A complete NOC includes photographs with a descriptive title, the date each photograph was taken, the name of the photographic site, the WDID number indicated above, and the photographic orientation. Also, please, include the project name and the WDID number with all future inquiries and document submittals.

Project Inspection:
Following the start of operations and prior to October 31, 2013, please contact Jonathan Warmerdam of my staff to allow for an inspection of the Project.

Please call Jonathan Warmerdam at (707) 576-2468 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Matthias St. John
Executive Officer

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cc: Dominic MacCormack, US Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch, 1455 Market Street, 16th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103-1398
Mr. Richard Macedo, California Department of Fish and Game, P.O. Box 47, Yountville, CA 94599
Mr. Bill Orme, Program Manager, Certification and Wetlands Program, SWRCB BOrme@waterboards.ca.gov
Joe Pecharich, NOAA, 777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 219a, Santa Rosa, CA 95404