
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

October 6, 2016

Mr. Preston Harris
Siskiyou Resource Conservation District
P.O. Box 268
Etna, CA 96027

Dear Mr. Harris:

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 SB12006GN

File: Lower French Creek Off-Channel Habitat Project; CW- 827890;
WDID 1A161171WNTR

This letter is to certify coverage of Siskiyou Resource Conservation District's *Lower French Creek Off-Channel Habitat Project* (project) under the General 401 Water Quality Certification Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects; Order No. SB12006GN (General 401 Order). The project will create a 0.25 acre off-channel pond to provide cold-water refugia and rearing habitat for coho salmon and other anadromous fish during the summer months and winter high-flow periods.

Background

On August 8, 2016, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received a Notice of Intent (NOI) from the Siskiyou Resource Conservation District (applicant) to comply with the terms of, and obtain project coverage under, the General 401 Order for the project.

Project Location

The project is located on French Creek, approximately 0.5 miles upstream of the confluence with the Scott River, within the Scott River Hydrologic Unit 105.42. Coordinates of the project are 41.4142° N, 122.8531° W.

Project Description

The Scott River watershed supports anadromous fish runs for Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead trout. Legacy effects of past management activities have significantly degraded habitat in the Scott River and its tributaries. Reconnecting the channel to the floodplain has been identified as a high priority for coho recovery. The construction of an off-channel pond with introduced coarse woody debris and riparian vegetation in lower French Creek could increase the carrying capacity for coho salmon during the critical periods of summer and winter rearing.

This project will create a 0.25 acre off-channel pond. The off-channel pond will be excavated to a minimum depth of eight feet deep from the base flow water surface elevation to preserve year-round intercept of groundwater and to allow for thermal stratification. Pond excavation will result in approximately 8,000 cubic yards of spoils (cobble, gravel, and sand) and the salvage of 9 alder and cottonwood trees ranging from seven to 14-inches in diameter. Up to 25 rootwads or pieces of large wood will be installed in the pond to provide shelter and increase habitat complexity. Root wads and large wood will be anchored by burying a portion (up to 50 percent) of the log in the bank of the pond. Brush bundles will then be pinned under the rootwads and large wood to increase shelter and habitat complexity.

Willow sprigs will be planted along the edges of the pond to reduce erosion and to eventually create overhanging vegetation. A single, approximately 60-foot long, flat-water access channel will be excavated to connect the pond to French Creek. To minimize erosion, large cobbles ranging from four to ten inches in diameter will be used to armor the access channel and approximately 50 feet of the river bank downstream from the access channel.

Heavy equipment access and operation will largely occur on existing dirt roads; however, heavy equipment will travel through approximately 100 feet of the riparian corridor and will result in the loss of up to eight alders and/or willows. Heavy equipment includes a 28,000 to 35,000 lb. excavator and a 10 yard dump truck. No mechanized equipment will operate within the wetted channel. All mechanized equipment fueling, servicing, and overnight parking will occur at least 200 feet from any wetted channel. All machinery will be thoroughly inspected and cleaned prior to project implementation.

Excavation of the pond, installation of the large wood and brush bundles, and 95 percent of the flat water access channel will be completed before the pond is connected to the creek. A small plug approximately 25 square feet will be left intact to separate the pond from French Creek. Once all other project construction has been completed the plug will be removed using an excavator. The excavator arm will reach into the wetted channel to remove the plug but the excavator itself will not enter the wetted channel. The excavation of the pond and the access channel and the final connection of the pond to the creek will occur during the driest time of year. A silt fence will be in place during final connection to prevent any sediment from entering French Creek. Exposed cutbanks and the access channel will be covered with large cobble (four to ten inch diameter) to minimize erosion.

All spoils generated by the project will be deposited and stabilized at an upland location on the landowner's property. Appropriate erosion control best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented to mitigate the threat of a sediment discharge to French Creek. A low-level and localized turbidity spike may occur when the pond is connected to the main channel of French Creek.

Project Size

The total of ground disturbance associated with the project is estimated to be 0.675 acres and 50 linear feet. The proposed project size does not exceed what is allowed for coverage under the General 401 Order and associated California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) categorical exemption (15333).

Project Associated Discharge

The discharge of material into waters of the state resulting from the project includes those associated with the individual logs and less than 0.5 yards of incidental sediment discharge associated with bank disturbance.

Project Time Frame

Proposed project start date: September 1, 2016

Expected date of completion: October 15, 2016

Seasonal work window: September 1 – October 15

Note: This certification authorizes project related activities and discharges for up to five years. If the applicant is unable to complete the project in 2016, they shall notify the Regional Water Board in writing of the proposed implementation time frame prior to subsequent seasonal work windows.

Agency Permits

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

- a. Army Corp of Engineers Section 404 Permit – Nationwide Permit 27 – Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
- b. California Department of Fish & Wildlife – Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act

Notice of Applicability & Project Determination

Regional Water Board staff has determined that the proposed activities as described in the NOI are categorically exempt from CEQA review and may proceed under the General 401 Order.

Receiving Water: French Creek, Scott River Hydrologic Unit 105.42

Total Impacts: Area temporarily impacted: 0.675 acres of floodplain
Length temporarily impacted: 50 feet of stream bank

Excavation Volume: 8,000 cubic yards

Discharge Volume: Up to 25 root wads and/or large wood pieces

Latitude/Longitude: 41.4142° N, 122.8531° W

Monitoring and Reporting

The purpose of the project is to improve the health and function of French Creek for aquatic organisms. The goal is to provide summer cold water refugia and over-wintering habitat for juvenile coho salmon. Measurable performance standards include water quality suitable to coho salmon juveniles and the presence of coho salmon juveniles. Project monitoring will consist of both biological and physical monitoring. Biological monitoring will include direct observational dive surveys for fish utilization, and physical monitoring will include temperature, dissolved oxygen, and water surface elevation measurements. Additionally, pre- and post- project implementation photo monitoring will be conducted.

As required in Section B, Item 4, of the *General 401 Order*, monitoring reports shall be submitted documenting the achievement of performance standards and project goals. Following the completion of each seasonal work period, and then on years one, three, and five following project completion, a report will be submitted to the Regional Water Board. This 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:

- a. Summary of findings
- b. Identification and discussion of problems with achieving performance standards
- c. Proposed corrective measures as needed (requires Regional Water Board approval)
- d. Monitoring Data

A Notice of Completion (NOC) shall be submitted by the applicant no later than 30 days after the project has been completed. A complete NOC includes at a minimum: photographs with a descriptive title, the date each photograph was taken, the name of the photographic site, the WDID number indicated above, and success criteria for the project. The NOC shall demonstrate that the project has been carried out in accordance with the project description as provided in the applicant's NOI. Please include the project name and WDID number with all future inquiries and document submittals. Document submittals shall be made electronically to: NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov.

The State Water Resources Control Board General 401 Order can be found here: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cwa401/docs/generalorders/shrpcert032713.pdf

Please call Jake Shannon at (707) 576-2673 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Matthias St. John
Executive Officer

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