

Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region
Timber Harvest and Non-Point Source Division

Work Plan for
Rural Roads Education and Outreach Program

Sediment is a primary impairment and threat to water quality in the North Coast Region. This is due in part to naturally occurring unstable and active geologies, plentiful rainfall and runoff, land use activities, and sensitive aquatic species. Rural roads have long been recognized as a significant source of sediment to watercourses and to the impairment of beneficial uses, including fisheries habitat.

There is currently no single, comprehensive nonpoint source (NPS) program that specifically addresses sediment discharges from rural roads outside of existing permitted activities and programs. The Forest Practice Rules (FPRs) and permitting under the Timber Harvest program address roads associated with timber harvest operations. Pursuant to the FPRs, roads are designed and treated to prevent erosion and treatment of controllable sediment discharge sources associated with roads are addressed through the timber harvest planning process. With the adoption of the Green Diamond Roads WDR (Order No. R1-2010-0044) and watershed WDRs (e.g. for Bear Creek – Order No. R1-2011-0100, and Jordan Creek – Order No. R1-2014-0036) the Regional Water Board is moving toward a comprehensive road management program within industrial timberlands. The United States Forest Service (USFS) Best Management Practices and permitting under the USFS NPS Waiver (Order No. R1-2010-0029) address road management of USFS roads; and the Waiver of WDRs and General Water Quality Certification for County Road Management and Activities conducted under the Five Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5C Waiver) (Order No R1-2013-0004) addresses county roads. The roads that largely remain as a significant threat to water quality are private rural roads. Development and implementation of a Rural Roads Education and Outreach Program (Rural Roads Program) will be a critical step in beginning to address this significant source of NPS pollution in the North Coast Region.

Two recent developments in the North Coast Region have advanced our efforts to address sediment discharges from rural roads. The first is the adoption of the 5C Waiver in 2013. This permit includes a mechanism for providing Waiver coverage for other non-county entities, including road associations, subject to public notice and approval by the Regional Water Board Executive Officer.

The second recent development is the update of the “Handbook for Forest, Ranch, and Rural Roads” (Roads Manual) by Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) and the Mendocino County RCD under a 319(h) grant. The Roads Manual was originally prepared 20 years ago. This updated handbook provides guidance on forest and ranch road design, construction, maintenance, and decommissioning; the update can be downloaded here:

<http://mcrwd.org/wp-content/uploads/HandBookforForest&RanchRoads.pdf>

The following work plan lays out our road map (pun intended) for developing and implementing an education and outreach program for addressing sediment and other NPS pollution from rural roads.

Task A Program Development

During the next year, staff will continue development of the Rural Roads Program. This task will involve developing partnerships and a comprehensive outreach strategy, educational materials including a Fact Sheet, a website, and a packaged presentation.

- A1. Research and gather educational materials and references.
Deadline: October 31, 2014, then ongoing.

Gather educational materials and references to support the development of the Website, Fact Sheet, presentations, and Field Tours.

- A2. Develop partnerships and an outreach strategy.
Deadline: initial outreach and draft December 31, 2014, then ongoing through December 31, 2015.

- Contact our partners in different parts of our region, such as the 5C Program, Resource Conservation Districts, and the National Resource Conservation Service, to get their assistance in identifying road segments to use for the field tours (Task C.3) and advertising the tours;
- Coordinate with Board of Forestry and CalFire regarding potential opportunities to address road construction and management standards on forest lands not under the jurisdiction of the FPRs;
- Reach out to known road associations and develop a comprehensive list of all road associations in the North Coast Region;
- Reach out to Bureau of Land Management (BLM), State Parks, and other public land managers;
- Work with our partners to identify three or four areas within the North Coast Region to use for the field tours and visit each of the prospective field tour locations to ensure the locations are suitable for the tours;
- Send out an email to an interested parties list to distribute the Fact Sheet, provide a link to the Website, and invite people to attend the field tours; and
- Follow up after the field tours to answer questions and to promote enrollment of road associations or other entities under the 5C Waiver.

- A.3. Develop a Website.
Deadline: January 31, 2015, then ongoing.

The Regional Water Board website will contain technical, regulatory, and funding information regarding design, maintenance, and upgrades of dirt roads including links to the following website information:

- Updated PWA Roads Manual;
- 5C Manual; and
- Potential funding sources for rural road work.

- A.4. Develop a Fact Sheet.
Deadline December 31, 2014.

The Fact Sheet will contain technical, regulatory, and funding information regarding design, maintenance, and upgrades of dirt roads.

- A.5. Develop a packaged PowerPoint presentation.
Deadline March 31, 2015.

This presentation would be used for meetings with road associations, County Supervisor's, etc. The purpose of the presentation is to:

- Identify simple road drainage techniques that can be installed by hand or with small equipment to reduce sediment impacts to water quality;
- Review potential funding sources for rural road work; and
- Encourage enrollment under the 5C Waiver.

Task B Project Management

- B.1. Annual Work Plans.
Deadline July 1, 2015.

By July 1 each year, staff will develop a brief annual work plan describing the years anticipated activities in implementing the Rural Roads Program. The workplan shall also identify Program tasks undertaken during the previous fiscal year and describe their status.

- B.2. Progress Report.
Deadline January 1, 2015 and January 1, 2016.

Provide regular updates to management and the Regional Water Board as required and requested.

Task C Program Implementation

Over the next year and a half, staff will implement the Rural Roads Program. This will involve coordination with partners, and conducting presentations and field tours.

- C.1. Coordination with partners to consider opportunities to apply Board of Forestry Road Rules to non-Forest Practice Rules roads.

Outreach with Cal Fire, Board of Forestry, Resource Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Rural Road Associations, BLM, State Parks, and other public land managers to encourage road inventory, prioritization, and treatment of sediment sources. Work with these partners to consider obtaining coverage under the 5C Waiver.

C.2. Presentations.

Deadline for first presentation June 30, 2015, then ongoing through December 31, 2015.

Schedule presentations on the Rural Roads Program with road associations, County Supervisors, and other interested parties.

C.3. Field Tours.

Deadline for first field tour June 30, 2015, then ongoing through October 31, 2015.

Conduct three or four field tours in different areas of the North Coast Region. It is anticipated the field tours will be completed by the end of the summer field season 2015.