

Regional Water Quality Control Board  
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report  
Thursday, October 9, 2014  
Best Western Miner's Inn  
Yreka, California

ITEM: 5

SUBJECT: Addressing Discharges from Roads in the North Coast Region – Update on Existing Regulatory and Education Programs (*Maggie Robinson, Tom Williams, & Mona Dougherty*)

BOARD ACTION: This item is an informational update. No action will be taken by the Regional Board.

DISCUSSION: Many rivers and streams across the North Coast Region have been identified as impaired by excess sediment under section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. Erosion and runoff from roads has been recognized as a leading source of excess sediment delivery to watercourses and to the impairment of beneficial uses. Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for north coast sediment-impaired waterbodies identify roads as the major source of sediment impairment.

Regional Water Board staff implement a variety of programs, permits and policies that address road-related sediment discharges from a variety of road and ownership types. The North Coast Region has been working to address road-related sediment discharges systematically over time.

The purpose of this item is to update the Regional Water Board on the programs, permits, and policies currently used by Regional Water Board staff to address road related discharges and to get Regional Water Board input on this strategy.

Roads located on timber lands and used for harvest-related land management activities are regulated on a harvest plan basis under existing general waste discharge requirements (GWDRs) and waivers of WDRs. Over the past several years, the Regional Water Board has also adopted timber harvest related ownership and watershed-wide WDRs, expanding permit coverage for roads on timber lands.

Discharges related to road management and maintenance activities on Green Diamond Resource Company's ownership, and conducted pursuant to their Aquatic Habitat Conservation Plan, are currently regulated under ownership-wide WDRs. Watershed-wide WDRs regulating timber harvest and related land management activities have been adopted for a few sediment-impaired watersheds in the region, including most recently, Bear and Jordan Creeks, as well as Freshwater Creek and Elk River.

County roads are also identified as a source of sediment discharge that is being addressed systematically over time. The Five Counties Salmonid Conservation Program (5C Program) is a county road maintenance and project program that covers road-related sediment discharges throughout much of the North Coast Region. The 5C Program is designed to protect salmonid species and water quality during road maintenance and project activities, examples of which include annual road grading, inboard ditch clearing, stabilization of road fills, and culvert repairs and replacements. In May 2013, the Regional Water Board adopted a Waiver of WDRs and General 401 Water Quality Certification for activities conducted under the 5C Program. The inclusion of General 401 Water Quality Certifications in General WDRs and Waivers provides a streamlined approach for permitting road-related projects that will disturb waters of the state, and minimizes the permitting paperwork that would otherwise be required for these projects.

Approximately fifty-five percent of the North Coast Region is national forest land administered and managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The national forest road network is extensive, serving the multiple uses associated with these lands, including timber harvesting, recreation, mining, and grazing. Nonpoint source discharges related to certain activities on national forest lands can be covered by the USFS Waiver of WDRs (USFS Waiver), scheduled for review and renewal by the Regional Water Board in spring 2015. The USFS Waiver currently addresses sediment discharges from national forest system roads on a project-by-project basis. The USFS also addresses issues related to its extensive road network through other national and/or forest-wide programs.

Construction and municipal storm water permits require best management practices (BMPs) and actions from permittees to address discharges of pollutants from roads during construction, after construction, and during maintenance activities. Regional Water Board staff implements statewide permits and our individual municipal storm water permit. The Construction General Storm Water Permit (CGP) requires the use of BMPs, contains numeric action levels for turbidity and pH, and requires rigorous planning, monitoring, and reporting for construction projects, including roads. The CGP also requires projects to construct post-construction treatment controls, primarily the use of low impact development (LID) treatment controls.

The North Coast Regional Board's statewide and region-specific municipal storm water permits require implementation of LID controls, and the use of specific and effective BMPs during road maintenance activities to reduce the discharge of sediment and other pollutants in storm water discharges. Regional Water Board staff has recently expanded areas covered under municipal storm water permits to better

address pollutant discharges from impervious surfaces and urbanization, as well as provide an additional tool for implementation of TMDLs. Caltrans has an individual statewide municipal storm water permit that covers activities and discharges from their facilities. Caltrans utilizes the CGP for their road construction projects.

Existing and potential discharges from private rural-roads present a current gap in the Regional Water Board's efforts to address road-related sediment discharges. To narrow this gap, a Rural Roads Education and Outreach Program is under development by Regional Water Board staff. A workplan to implement the Rural Roads Education and Outreach Program has been developed. Key elements of the workplan include development of partnerships with organizations to cooperatively address sediment discharges from private rural roads, and implementation of an education and outreach strategy which will include development of a website and fact sheet, field tours, and presentations to road associations and other interested parties.

Regional Water Board staff are seeking feedback from Board members on the Rural Roads Education and Outreach Program and on the existing regulatory programs addressing discharges from roads.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** Work Plan for Rural Roads Education and Outreach Program

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