April 4, 2011

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)

Humboldt County Department of Public Works – Johnson Gulch and Bonanza Gulch Sediment Removal Project
WDID No. 1B10119WNHU

Humboldt County

On November 22, 2010, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Department of Public Works (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities associated with removal of accumulated sediment (aggregate) from Johnson Gulch and Bonanza Gulch to maintain flow capacity under bridges on Upper Bear River Road. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Johnson Gulch and Bonanza Gulch in the Capetown Hydrologic Area No. 112.2.

The Applicant maintains bridge crossings along Upper Bear River Road over Johnson Gulch and Bonanza Gulch. The Johnson Gulch and Bonanza Gulch stream channels are located in steep terrain that is subject to upland landslides and sedimentation. During high flow events these streams often transport substantial quantities of sediment and debris. As these high gradient stream channels exit the steep mountains and approach their confluence with the Bear River the channel gradients diminish, flow velocities are reduced, and the excess sediment is deposited beneath the bridges and downstream to their confluence with Bear River.

The proposed project includes removal of excess sediment from the Johnson Gulch and Bonanza Gulch stream channels during the dry season for the sole purpose of maintaining adequate flow capacity under the bridges. Removal of the excess sediment from these channels has been conducted in the past in order to protect the bridge structures and provide a safe travel route for the local population and emergency personnel. Past activities were conducted under a Lake and/or Streambed Alteration Agreement issued by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

<u>Johnson Gulch</u>
Johnson Gulch is a tributary to Bear River. The Johnson Gulch bridge site is located approximately 16 miles south of the community of Ferndale and approximately 2 miles east of Mattole Road at Capetown. Proposed sediment removal activities will occur downstream of the Upper Bear River Road bridge during normal maintenance activities for the purpose of restoring adequate flow capacity under the bridge. Proposed activities may occur as often as annually.

A bulldozer and/or loader working in the dry stream bed will be used to remove sediment to the top of the streambank where the material can be removed and stockpiled at nearby upland areas. An existing access route will be used by heavy equipment to enter and exit the stream channel. Proposed sediment removal activities will begin at the downstream edge of the bridge and extend downstream 175 linear feet. Proposed activities will temporarily impact 4,900 square feet and 175 linear feet of stream channel and up to 1,815 cubic yards of sediment may be removed during each

maintenance event. No riparian vegetation will be disturbed or removed during the project.

Bonanza Gulch

Bonanza Gulch is a tributary to Bear River located approximately 1.27 miles east (upstream) of the confluence of Johnson Gulch and Bear River. Proposed sediment removal activities will occur downstream of the Upper Bear River Road bridge during normal maintenance activities for the purpose of restoring adequate flow capacity under the bridge. Proposed activities may occur as often as annually.

Proposed sediment removal activities are similar to proposed activities at Johnson Gulch. A bulldozer and/or loader working in the dry stream bed will be used to remove sediment to the top of the streambank where the material can be removed and stockpiled at nearby upland areas. An existing access route will be used by heavy equipment to enter and exit the stream channel. Proposed sediment removal activities will begin at the downstream edge of the bridge and extend downstream 250 linear feet. Proposed activities will temporarily impact 7,500 square feet and 250 linear feet of stream channel and up to 2,775 cubic yards of sediment may be removed during each maintenance event. No riparian vegetation will be disturbed or removed during the project.

The Applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The Applicant has also applied to DFG for a Lake and/or Streambed Alteration Agreement. Humboldt County determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Section 15301 – Existing Facilities). Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Section 15301 – Existing Facilities) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for the proposed project. The proposed activities are expected to begin in 2011 and may occur as often as annually.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the Applicant's proposed activities. The application for Water Quality Certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed project including maps and photos. The application and Regional Water Board file are available for public review.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all comments submitted in writing and received at this office by mail during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. If you have any questions, please contact staff member Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

110404_DLP_humco_jhnsn_bnnza_pn.doc