

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

California Department of Transportation
Highway 254 and Highway 101, Culvert Rehabilitation (9 Culverts) Project
WDID No. 1B10131WNHU

Humboldt County

On December 28, 2010, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), requesting Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities related to the proposed Highways 254 and 101 Culvert Rehabilitation (9 Culverts) Project. Additional information was received on August 24, 2011 and September 13, 2011. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) and waters of the State associated with ephemeral drainages and perennial streams within the Eel River Hydrologic Unit No. 111.00 (Ferndale Hydrologic Sub-Area No.111.11, Weott Hydrologic Sub-Area No.111.31, and Benbow Hydrologic Sub-Area No. 111.32)

The proposed project consists of the rehabilitation or replacement of 9 drainage systems in Humboldt County along Highways 101 and 254. Project locations are on Highway 101 from 0.7 miles north of the Richardson Grove Undercrossing, to 0.04 miles north of the Loleta Drive Overcrossing, and on Highway 254 from 7.20 miles north of the junction with 101/254, to 0.3 miles south of Myers Flat Separation. The proposed project will upgrade six culverts, invert-pave one culvert, partially invert-pave another, and raise existing ditches at three locations. Additional work will involve placing headwalls or drain inlets, replacing down-drain systems, replacing a retaining wall/headwall at Location 3, and placing rock slope protection (RSP) at several locations.

Caltrans has determined that the total project permanent impacts to ephemeral drainages and perennial streams will be 0.017 acres (73 linear feet). The temporary project impacts to watercourses identified as other waters of the U.S. will be approximately 0.078 acres (692 linear feet). Based on the nature of the impacts and on site revegetation activities, compensatory mitigation will not be required. Revegetation activities including planting 0.02 acres of riparian habitats which improve water quality and enhance habitat for aquatic species by providing shade and sediment retention. Additionally, Caltrans proposes day-lighting 29 linear feet of existing culverts, which will improve aquatic habitat and further support beneficial uses.

Project activities will be conducted between May 15th and October 15th; however, work within flowing drainages will be limited to between June 15th and October 15th. The work is anticipated to take 50 days. Caltrans' contractor will be required to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) for construction and post-construction phases of the project to provide erosion and sediment control and pollution prevention throughout the project area. All graded areas within the project affected by the construction activities will be appropriately stabilized and BMPs will be implemented to ensure erosion and potential pollution is minimized and controlled.

Caltrans has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under their Non-Reporting Nationwide Permit No. 14 (linear transportation projects) pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. In addition, Caltrans has applied for a 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game. On March 29, 2007, Caltrans, acting as lead agency, determined that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA – Class 1, existing facilities). In addition, Regional Water Board staff also determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA and anticipates filing a notice of exemption.

The South Fork Eel River watershed is listed on the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list as impaired for sediment and temperature. On December 16, 1999, the U.S. EPA established sediment and temperature Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the South Fork Eel River. In addition, the Lower Eel River watershed is listed on the CWA section 303(d) list as impaired for sediment and temperature. On December 18, 2007, the U.S. EPA established sediment and temperature TMDLs for the Lower Eel River. The primary purpose of the TMDLs for the Eel River is to assure that all beneficial uses of fresh water habitat (such as cold freshwater salmonid habitat) are protected from elevated levels of sediment and temperature. Roads are a significant source of sediment in the watershed (directly, from surface erosion, and, indirectly, by triggering landslides). In addition, activities that impact the riparian zone and reduce riparian vegetation are identified as sources contributing to increased stream temperatures. A focus on measures to reduce sediment discharges to surface waters from roads in the watershed, and measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on riparian zones are essential for achieving TMDL compliance.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within 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 or comments, please contact staff member Jeremiah Puget at (707) 576-2835 or JPuget@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed road construction activities. The application for Water Quality Certification in the Regional Water Board's file contains additional details about the proposed project including maps and design drawings. The related documents and comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.