

March 8, 2013

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

California Department of Transportation
State Route 299 – Low Gap Buttress Project
WDID No. 1B12183WNHO

Humboldt County

On October 1, 2012, 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 State Route 299 – Low Gap Buttress Project (project). The proposed project would cause disturbances to waters of the United States (U.S.) associated with the Trinity River Hydrologic Unit, HU 106 (Willow Creek Hydrologic Sub-Area 106.12).

The proposed project is located on State Route 299 at post mile (PM) 30.7, in Humboldt County. The purpose of the project is to stabilize the existing roadway by modifying the existing up and downslope drainage systems. The scope of work includes:

- Re-grading the existing upslope cut bench to enhance drainage off the cut slope;
- Repairing the existing horizontal drain array and collection system;
- Placing new horizontal slope dewatering drains;
- Installing rock lined ditches along the back of the upslope cut bench and down the cut slope;
- Abandoning the existing overside drain to Willow Creek and constructing a new dike and drainage system to improve drainage conditions; and
- Constructing a new sand trap and drainage outlet.

The Willow Creek watershed is within the Trinity River HU (Lower Trinity Hydrologic Unit Area) and was listed on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) list in 2001 as impaired for sediment and temperature. Roads are a significant source of sediment in the watershed (directly, from surface erosion, and, indirectly, by destabilizing hillsides).

Caltrans has determined that the proposed project would result in approximately 0.025 acres of permanent and approximately 0.025 acres of temporary impacts to jurisdictional waters. Because the impacts are considered *de minimis*, because Caltrans has conservatively estimated the potential permanent impacts to jurisdictional waters, because project implementation would reduce sediment inputs to Willow Creek, and because a traction sand trap would be constructed to control roadway runoff pollutants, compensatory mitigation is not required. Caltrans also proposes to restore temporarily impacted areas to pre-construction condition following completion of construction activities.

The proposed project would be conducted between summer and fall of 2013 (estimated duration of 25 days). The project would result in less than one acre of disturbed soil area.

Caltrans would utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control pollutants during construction. All graded areas within the project affected by construction activities would be appropriately stabilized and/or replanted with appropriate native vegetation.

To ensure compliance with Water Quality Objectives within the Basin Plan, requirements to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the sediment impacts associated with the proposed project would be incorporated as enforceable conditions in the Water Quality Certification.

Caltrans has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Non-Reporting Nationwide Permit No. 14 (*Linear Transportation Projects*), pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. On August 18, 2011, Caltrans, acting as lead agency, certified a Class 1 Categorical Exemption for the proposed project in order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 6004, Activity 2 exemption under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Regional Water Board staff anticipates filing a Notice of Exemption. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental documentation, including any proposed changes, and incorporates any avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures into the project as a condition of approval to avoid significant affects to the environment.

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 Brendan Thompson at (707) 576-2699 or Brendan.Thompson@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of Caltrans's proposed road construction activities. The Regional Water Board's project file includes the application for Water Quality Certification and additional details about the proposed project, including maps and design drawings. Project documents and any 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.