

April 8, 2013

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

USDI, Bureau of Land Management – Mattole River Estuary Habitat Improvement
WDID No. 1B13004WNHU

Humboldt County

On January 14, 2013, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM/applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with the Mattole River Estuary Habitat Improvement Project (project). The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Mattole River in the Mattole River Hydrologic Area No. 112.30.

The applicant and the Mattole Salmon Group (MSG) propose to build up to 40 complex large log habitat structures, up to 15 small wood habitat structures, and stabilize up to 1,000 linear feet of streambank using natural materials. Proposed habitat improvement activities are located in the Mattole River estuary area. The Mattole River estuary area is managed by the applicant as part of the King Range National Conservation Area.

The primary objective of the proposed project is to improve and restore aquatic habitat in the Mattole River for salmonids. The proposed wood structures will be constructed in a manner that mimics naturally formed wood jams that occur in estuaries and the lower portions of rivers. The proposed project will use techniques and materials described in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual (manual) in addition to habitat improvement techniques developed by MSG in coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries Service.

Proposed habitat structures include logs, root wads, and boulder combinations as described in the manual. Large boulders will be incorporated into these structures as ballast on a site-specific basis and the structures will be securely anchored in place using standard cabling and pinning techniques. Proposed habitat structures also include unanchored wood structures consisting of whole trees with attached root wads. Trees will be placed in various configurations on the edges of the river and along the edges of mid-channel islands to promote channel stability and provide salmonid habitat.

Trenched baffles are proposed for construction on islands and along terrace margins where topography permits excavation to the water table. Baffles are also proposed on lower elevation surfaces where they will be associated with wood structures or other isolated topographic features on the gravel bar. Trenched baffles will be installed by excavating a trench to below the depth of the water surface. A combination of large rocks, wood, organic matter, and cottonwood and/or willow cuttings, will be placed along the bottom of the trench and then buried under the previously excavated material. Tree cuttings will be obtained from local sources.

Proposed habitat structures will be installed using a large excavator positioned on the river bar. The wetted portion of the work area will be isolated by a silt fence or turbidity curtain. All logs, root wads, and trees will be transported to the river bar from an offsite location using heavy equipment or helicopter. Access to the project area will be via BLM land and may require annual installation and removal of a temporary bridge or culvert crossing in order for heavy equipment to cross the Mattole River. Exact locations of any crossings will be selected based on the low flow channel configuration and to minimize potential adverse impacts to the river channel. Fill material used to construct temporary crossings will consist of native river-run aggregate scraped from a borrow area located on the adjacent dry gravel bar. When a crossing is removed the aggregate fill material will be returned to the borrow area and the disturbed area will be restored.

The proposed project will result in temporary impacts to 40 linear feet of streambank and 425 square feet of stream channel. The proposed project will permanently impact 1,440 linear feet and 0.8 acre of stream channel. Permanent impacts include 1,000 linear feet of bioengineered streambank stabilization and 440 linear feet of habitat improvement structures. Compensatory mitigation is not required for these permanent impacts due to the nature of these habitat improvement activities.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit No. 27, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is not required. Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Section 15333 – small habitat restoration) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project. Proposed project activities will occur during the summer months (June through September) during low flows and dry weather. The proposed project is scheduled to beginning in 2013 and is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2017.

The Mattole River Technical Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for sediment and temperature was established in 2002 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, because the State of California determined that the water quality standards for the Mattole River are exceeded due to excessive sediment and temperature. Roads and bank erosion are identified as sources contributing to the sediment impairment. In addition, activities that impact the riparian zone and reduce riparian vegetation are identified as sources contributing to increased stream temperatures. The primary adverse impacts associated with excessive temperature and sediment in the Mattole River pertain to cold freshwater habitat, primarily anadromous salmonid habitat. Activities authorized by this certification are designed to increase riparian vegetation and reduce sediment discharges from ranchlands. Authorized activities require implementation of BMPs for sediment and turbidity control, and implementation of impact avoidance measures as described above. Accordingly, the proposed project is consistent with and implements portions of the Mattole River TMDL.

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 activities including maps, plans, 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.

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