April 19, 2013

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

Humboldt County DPW – Briceland-Thorne Road Culvert Replacement and McKee Creek Streambank Stabilization
WDID No. 1B13019WNHU

Humboldt County

On February 1, 2013, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Public Works Department (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with replacement of existing culverts and installation of rock slope protection (RSP) to repair three embankment failure sites, prevent additional scour, and protect Briceland-Thorne Road during high flows in McKee Creek. The proposed projects are located on Briceland-Thorne Road Post Mile 1.8 and 2.0 near Thorn Junction. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with McKee Creek and unnamed tributaries to McKee Creek in the Mattole River Hydrologic Area No. 112.30.

Proposed culvert replacement and streambank stabilization activities are part of the larger Briceland-Thorne Road and Shelter Cove Road Curve Realignment Project, which involves realignment of sharp curves at four areas along Briceland-Thorne Road and two areas along Shelter Cove Road. The purpose of the curve realignment activities is to improve roadway safety by straightening tight curves and increasing sight distance. Proposed curve realignment activities at Post Mile 1.8 and 2.0 include activities associated with culvert replacement and installation of RSP along the bank of McKee Creek which flows adjacent to the roadway in several locations.

There are three embankment failure sites near Post Mile 1.8 that are encroaching into the road shoulder and undermining the embankment. Two failure sites are approximately 25-feet long and the other site is approximately 35-feet long. Proposed activities to stabilize all three sites are similar. An excavator will be used to excavate a 3-foot wide toe-trench into the streambed of McKee Creek and ¼-ton rock will be placed in the toe-trench and extending approximately 4 feet up the embankment slope. The excavator will pick up one rock at a time and carefully place the rocks along the failing embankment. Rocks will be stockpiled within the roadway, shoulder, or turnout areas adjacent to the failure sites. All excavator work will be done from the road shoulder and no equipment will enter the stream channel.

The proposed project includes culvert replacement activities at Post Mile 1.8 and Post Mile 2.0. An existing 15-inch diameter and 40-foot long corrugated steel pipe (CSP) at Post Mile 1.8 will be removed and replaced with an 18-inch diameter by 60-foot long CSP. An existing 18-inch diameter and 50-foot long CSP at Post Mile 2.0 will be removed and replaced with a 24-inch diameter and 70-foot long CSP. The new culverts will follow the same alignment as the existing culverts but they will be longer to accommodate realignment of the roadway toward the adjacent hillside and away from McKee Creek. Rocks will be added around the culvert outlets for scour protection.

The proposed activities to stabilize three embankment failures will result in 85 linear feet and 340 square feet of permanent impacts to the streambank of McKee Creek. Proposed culvert removal and replacement activities will result in 40 linear feet and 70 square feet of new permanent impacts to the existing culverted stream channels. The proposed project will not result in any temporary impacts to waters of the United States. Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Non-compensatory mitigation measures include implementation during the dry season when flows are low and the use of Best Management Practices for erosion control, materials staging, and use of heavy

equipment near a stream channel. All disturbed and exposed areas will be hydroseeded with a native seed mix. The proposed project is scheduled to occur during the summer dry season beginning in 2013 and all work will be completed by October 31.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under non-reporting provisions of Nationwide Permit No. 14 pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The applicant has applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (1600 Permit) from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Humboldt County Public Works determined that this project is categorically exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (section 15301 – existing facilities). Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Class 1, Section 15301 – existing facilities) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project.

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. Proposed embankment stabilization activities are designed to prevent ongoing erosion and sedimentation, and do not include removal of mature riparian vegetation. Culvert replacement and curve realignment activities require implementation of BMPs for sediment and erosion control, and implementation of impact avoidance measures. Accordingly, the proposed activities are consistent with and implement 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, design plans, and photos of the project area. 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.