

May 7, 2013

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

Humboldt County DPW – Briceland Thorn Road at McKee Creek, Bridge Scour Protection  
WDID No. 1B13034WNHU

Humboldt County

On March 6, 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 installation of rock slope protection (RSP) along both abutments of the bridge on Briceland Thorn Road over McKee Creek to prevent additional scour and protect the bridge structure from erosion during high flows in McKee Creek. The proposed project is located on Briceland Thorn Road at Post Mile 5.60 near Thorn Junction. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with McKee Creek in the Mattole River Hydrologic Area No. 112.30.

The proposed project involves placement of approximately 100 cubic yards of half-ton to two-ton rock riprap along the base of both bridge abutments. An excavator will be used to excavate a 35-foot long and 2-foot wide toe-trench below each abutment and extending approximately 5-linear feet upstream and downstream of the bridge alignment. RSP materials will be placed in the toe-trench and extending up the streambank to the abutment footing. RSP will be placed so that it will not decrease the flow capacity of McKee Creek as compared to the 1951 design channel. Material excavated from the toe-trench will be placed in the interstitial voids between the rocks while the RSP is being installed.

The applicant is planning to use a moderately sloping area along the left streambank, approximately 165 feet upstream of the bridge, to provide heavy equipment access to the bridge abutment area and to avoid impacts to the stream channel and riparian vegetation. RSP materials will be lowered into the channel from the roadway or bridge deck, or materials will be transported from the staging area to the abutment areas by front-end loader. The project will not require removal of any mature riparian trees; however, several tree limbs along the access route will be pruned as necessary to provide adequate clearance for the excavator. Proposed temporary impacts to riparian vegetation are not expected to significantly decrease the amount of shade on the stream channel. Upon completion of the project, straw mulch will be applied to all disturbed areas above the ordinary high water elevation.

The proposed RSP installation activities will result in permanent impacts to 70 linear feet and 140 square feet of streambank. The proposed temporary access route will result in temporary impacts to 10 linear feet and 200 square feet of streambank. 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 (BMPs) for materials staging and use of heavy equipment in a stream channel. The proposed project is scheduled for the summer low-flow period between 2013 and 2018, and is expected to take approximately 14 days to complete.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Nos. 3 and 14 pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The applicant has also 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 activities are intended to prevent ongoing erosion along the bridge abutments and 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.

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