

April 28, 2014

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

**Humboldt County DPW – Holmes-Larabee Temporary Low-Water Crossing Detour  
Project**

**WDID No. 1B14036WNHU**

**Humboldt County**

On April 21, 2014, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Public Works Department, Andrew Bundschuh (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities associated with annual installation and removal of the Humboldt County DPW – Holmes-Larabee Temporary Low-Water Crossing Detour Project (Project). The proposed Project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the Eel River within the Larabee Creek Hydrologic Sub-Area No. 111.13. The Project is located at approximately Holmes Flat Road, Post Mile 1.68, Redcrest, Humboldt County. The Water Quality Certification previously issued for seasonal bridge activities on February 21, 2013, includes activities in conjunction with these proposed temporary activities. The Project site is located at latitude 40.420021°N, and longitude 123.935499°W. The Project will cause no permanent impacts to waters of the U.S. and the State. Temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and the State Eel River channel bed and bank would be approximately 80 linear feet (0.50 acres) of river bed and bank.

The Holmes-Larabee Low-Water Crossing is located at the crossing of Holmes Flat Road over the Eel River and immediately downstream of the confluence of Larabee Creek. This crossing is necessary to provide community access and emergency services during summer months when access roads to the community are closed to residents and public by logging companies. The permanent portions of the existing bridge structure were originally constructed by the Pacific Lumber Company in 1937, to provide access to farms, ranches, residences, and timberland on the east side of the Eel River. Humboldt County acquired the bridge and associated right-of-way in 1959.

To date the Holmes-Larabee summer low-water crossing included a permitted 90-foot long by 12-foot wide temporary flatcar bridge crossing, installed annually, over a secondary flow channel feature located along the right (east) bank, and the permanent low-water bridge crossing constructed in 1937. During a routine bridge inspection in December, 2013, it was determined that the permanent bridge was in such poor condition that immediate closure was recommended. While Humboldt County conducts repairs (possibly 2 – 3 years) a temporary detour will be installed to provide access to the public, services and emergency services for residents during summer months. In addition to the installation of the permitted 90-foot long by 12-foot wide temporary flatcar bridge crossing over a secondary flow channel feature located along the right (east) bank the county proposes to install a crossing over the Eel River main channel to complete the crossing to the west bank. The county proposes to annually install a Bailey bridge over the main channel for use during most of the summer months, followed up with a flatcar bridge during the late summer as the Bailey bridge is removed.

Proposed Project activities include grading 0.50 acres of gravel bar to form an access road to the western crossing as well as excavation of aggregate material from the adjacent dry gravel bar creating the approaches and abutments for the bridges. Following annual bridge removal, the aggregate materials used in the approach ramps will be returned to the borrow area and graded to ensure that runoff will drain toward the river channel in the downstream direction. The proposed Project does not require vegetation removal.

The proposed Project may temporarily impact approximately 80 linear feet (0.50 acre) of the river channel bed and bank including the fill area of the bridge approaches and the aggregate borrow area. The proposed Project is not anticipated to result in any permanent impacts to the channel and compensatory mitigation is not required. Best Management Practices for sediment and turbidity control, operation of heavy equipment near a river, as well as, aquatic species and habit protection are proposed to avoid and minimize temporary impacts.

The Applicant proposes to install the bridges on June 15, and remove them in October or November each year, depending on weather conditions and flows in the Eel River.

The Applicant has obtained authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers for a Clean Water Act, section 404 (permit No. 268971N). The Applicant has applied to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to obtain a Streambed Alteration Agreement.

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, as lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has determined that the project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption, 15301 (c)(d) Existing Facilities, and will file a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse concurrent with issuance of the 401 Water Quality Certification, pursuant to CEQA guidelines.

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 Project including maps 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 Gil Falcone at (707) 576-2830 or Stephen Bargsten at (707) 576-2653 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.