

June 10, 2015

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

**White Slough Tidal Wetlands Restoration Project
WDID No. 1B15030WNHU**

Humboldt County

On March 17, 2015, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities associated with the White Slough Tidal Wetlands Restoration Project (Project). The proposed Project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States and the State associated with wetlands within Humboldt Bay in the Eureka Plain Hydrologic Unit No. 110.00. The Project is located within the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge White Slough Unit, Loleta, Humboldt County, at latitude 40.7049°N, and longitude 124.211°W. No permanent impacts to waters of the U.S. and the State are proposed. Temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and the State include approximately 37.5 acres of diked subsided former tidelands. Project activities are proposed to restore or enhance 61 acres of waters of the State.

The primary purpose of the Project is to restore salt marsh habitat on diked subsided former tidelands and to enhance existing brackish and freshwater wetlands. The applicant proposes to restore tidal wetlands and other habitats to be higher ecological function than existing resources as well as be self-sustaining systems adaptive to sea level rise. The proposed Project would include creating construction access and building three earthen tidal ridges to divide the project area into tidal basins. The tidal ridges will be used as access roads. Existing vegetation will be removed as necessary and clean imported fill will be graded to restore tidal wetland elevations. Dewatering of channels will occur when necessary and flow will be restored upon completion of grading and shaping of the restored area. The Applicant has submitted plans for dewatering to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources. Additionally, to restore functions to the tidelands, tide gates will be removed and dikes breached to create higher functioning brackish and salt marshes as well as a mosaic of other aquatic habitats.

The proposed Project includes a plan to revegetate disturbed areas with a combination of plantings at higher elevations and natural recruitment from the native seed bank within the Humboldt Bay tidal system and surrounding aquatic systems. The Project proposes to employ best management practices to prevent or reduce any discharges during and after construction.

The Project is planned to begin in the summer of 2015. Due to the size and scope the project is proposed to be conducted through 2020 with construction work at various locations planned to last approximately 5 years.

The Applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers for a Clean Water Act, section 404 permit. The Applicant has applied to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to obtain a Streambed Alteration Agreement.

On March 26, 2015, the California Coastal Conservancy, as lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has produced an Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and filed with the State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2015022040), 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.