

August 3, 2016

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

**Benbow Inn Bank Stabilization Project
40.068, -123.78976¹
ECM PIN CW-826726, WDID No. 1B161000WNHU**

On July 22, 2016, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Benbow Historic Inn (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to the proposed Benbow Inn Bank Stabilization Project (Project).

Receiving Waters

The proposed Project would cause disturbances to the East Fork of the South Fork Eel River (EFSF) in the Benbow Hydrologic Subarea (Basin Planning Area No. 111.32).

Project Description

The purpose of the Project is to stabilize the left bank of the EFSF, which failed during a March 2016 high-flow event. The failed bank has undermined a corner of the Benbow Inn Terrace Building. Bank stabilization activities include micropile installation, slope stabilization using soil nails, placement of riprap at the toe of the slope and along the lower river bank, and installation of willow and alders within the riprap interstices.

Depending on the EFSF flow level at the time of construction, there will either be a pool or low-flow channel at the base of the slide. Unless the area is dry, the area will need to be isolated and fish removal activities will be performed prior to construction.

The Project area would be accessed from the western-most parking lot of the Benbow Lake State Recreation Area. Construction equipment would utilize the existing Benbow Dam removal access road for a short distance before moving north to traverse the left gravel bar of the EFSR. The Applicant has noted that only dry portions of the gravel bar would be used for construction access.

Avoidance and Minimization of Impacts

Work would occur during late summer or early fall to avoid the need to work within the active river channel. The Applicant has prepared a Fish Capture and Relocation Plan that

¹ WGS84 datum

must be approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife prior to commencement of Project construction.

Construction Timing

The Project is expected to be completed in two weeks during the late summer or early fall of 2016.

Project Impacts

Approximately 120 linear feet (0.06 acres) of the EFSF left bank would be permanently impacted due to bank hardening associated with placement of riprap, shotcrete, and wire mesh. Approximately 120 linear feet of the EFSF would be temporarily impacted beneath the bank for construction access.

Mitigation for Project Impacts

To mitigate for permanent impacts associated with placement of riprap, the Applicant is proposing to use willow and alder planting within the riprap. This will provide shading, habitat, and increased bank stability that would not be provided with exclusive use of riprap.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)

The Project area is approximately 1,300-feet upstream from the EFSR confluence with the South Fork Eel River. The South Fork Eel River is identified as impaired for sediment and temperature under Clean Water Act section 303(d). The United States Environmental Protection Agency established a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the South Fork Eel River in 1999. Because the Project will stabilize an actively eroding river bank, Project implementation would result in a net reduction of sediment contributions to the South Fork Eel River. Effective shade was reduced in the Project area after the March 2016 bank failure. This Project will incorporate riparian plantings that will provide increasing shade in the future as the willows grow. As such, the Project will improve effective shade and not increase stream temperatures. This certification would not certify any activities that would contribute to the Eel River sediment or temperature impairment, and would be consistent with and implement the South Fork Eel River TMDL.

Other Agency Actions

The Applicant has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for Nationwide Permit No. 13, *Bank Stabilization*, pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The Applicant has applied for a 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

CEQA Compliance

The Regional Water Board may file a categorical exemption for the Project, if deemed appropriate.

Public Comments

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 phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this notice and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Brendan Thompson at (707) 576-2699 or Brendan.Thompson@waterboards.ca.gov within 21 days of the posting of this notice.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the Applicant's proposed activities. The Regional Water Board's Project file includes the application for certification and additional details of the proposed Project, including maps and design drawings. Project documents and any comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.