

September 14, 2016

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

**Humboldt County
Fisherman's Channel Dredging Project
40.736362, -124.220176¹
WDID No. 1B16006WNHU, ECM PIN CW-821000**

Humboldt County

On January 8, 2016, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District (Applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to the proposed Fisherman's Channel Dredging Project in the community of King Salmon on Humboldt Bay. The January 8, 2016, application included a proposal to dredge approximately 4,150 cubic yards of sediment from approximately 1,400 linear feet of Fisherman's Channel in the community of King Salmon, approximately 2.5-miles south of Eureka in Humboldt County.

On August 12, 2016, the Applicant submitted a revised project proposal to dredge approximately 5,000 cubic yards of sediment from only the entrance of Fisherman's Channel (Project). According to the Applicant, the project scope was changed to reduce impacts to eelgrass and the associated eelgrass mitigation that would be required by resource agencies. The Applicant stated that the entrance channel presents the greatest navigational hazard and has the most urgent need for dredging in Fisherman's Channel.

Project Description

The purpose of the Project is to restore the entrance channel of Fisherman's Channel to a safe and navigable depth. Fisherman's Channel is currently inaccessible to larger vessels at lower low tide due to a sandbar at the channel entrance. Fisherman's Channel was formerly used by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) as an intake canal for the now-dismantled Humboldt Bay Power Plant. PG&E's routine maintenance dredging of the channel last occurred in 1982. The Project would use hydraulic dredging with a cutter head to remove approximately 500 cubic yards of sediment from the entrance channel to a depth of -6 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW). The Project locations and dredging areas are shown below in Figure 1.

The Fisherman's Channel sediment is proposed to be beneficially reused at the White Slough Project. The White Slough Project is sponsored by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and would return diked, subsided former agricultural land to a higher elevation suitable for development of salt marsh habitat². Beneficial reuse of dredged

¹ WGS84 datum

² The Regional Water Board issued a [401 certification for the White Slough Project](#) on July 28, 2015.

sediment has been identified as a potentially suitable source of material for the White Slough Project. Sediment sampling and analysis was performed per the 2012 *Workplan for Sediment Sampling and Analysis Prior to Dredging*. On December 2, 2015, the Regional Water Board found that the Fisherman's Channel sediment was acceptable for beneficial reuse at the White Slough Project.

Figure 1: Project Location and Dredging Areas—Stillwater Sciences



Dredged sediment would be delivered via an approximately 2.3-mile-long slurry pipeline to the White Slough Tidal Wetlands Restoration Project (White Slough Project), at approximate latitude/longitude 40.7049, -124.2111. The Pipeline route is shown below in Figure 2. The pipeline would be floated above the water surface for approximately 0.2 miles using approximately ten 2' x 4' x 8' plywood boxes with foam interiors. Five 11" x 24" x 40" anchors would be used to anchor the ten floats to the bay floor. The pipeline would come onshore via an existing dock as shown in Figure 1 and then extend approximately 0.75 miles along the side of an existing private roadway and cross Railroad Avenue before reaching the Fields Landing Boat Yard. At the Boat Yard, a booster pump would be used to convey dredge slurry 0.5 miles along a Harbor District roadway, and an additional 0.7 miles along an abandoned railroad track to the White Slough Project site. Removal of vegetation within five feet of the pipeline along the railroad right-of-way would be necessary.

Figure 2: Pipeline Route and Mitigation Area—Stillwater Sciences



Impacts

The proposed Project would result in approximately 0.23 acres of permanent impacts to eelgrass and 0.23 acres of temporary impacts to Humboldt Bay, both within the same footprint, as a result of dredging up to 500 cubic yards of sediment.

Mitigation

To mitigate for approximately 0.23 acres of permanent impacts to eelgrass, the Applicant is proposing to remove 500 remnant dock piles at Field's Landing (see Figure 2 for Field's Landing mitigation location). Removal of the pilings would provide the opportunity for eelgrass to colonize the area formerly occupied by the pilings and increase available sunlight for existing eelgrass. The pilings would be removed by a vibratory hammer mounted on a land-based crane. If a pile is broken, or broken during attempted removal, it would be cut below the mud line using a pneumatic underwater chainsaw or shears. Pilings that are exposed at low tide and not within eelgrass beds may be excavated and cut 1 to 2 ft below the sediment surface.

Avoidance and Minimization

All dredging activities would be completed by October 15, 2016, to avoid potential impacts to anadromous fish. To minimize sediment disturbance during pile removal, pilings would be cut off at the mud line if the mud line is subtidal. Pilings in intertidal areas would be cut

at least one foot below the mud line where the work can be accomplished during periods of low tide.

Dredging Timing

Dredging is expected to be performed before October 15, 2016. The Applicant has not yet proposed a timeline for mitigation implementation.

Other Agency Permits

The Applicant has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for an Individual Permit, pursuant to CWA, section 404, and section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The Applicant has initiated consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to address potential impacts to special-status species.

CEQA

As lead agency, the Humboldt Bay Harbor Recreation and Conservation District (Harbor District) prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Project (SCH No. 2016012041). The Harbor District signed a Notice of Determination adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration on August 26, 2016.

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.