
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Date: March 15, 2016

To: Interested Parties

From: Basin Planning Unit

Subject: **NOTICE OF CEQA SCOPING MEETING FOR A DRAFT AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE NORTH COAST REGION TO DESIGNATE THE SMITH RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES AS AN OUTSTANDING NATIONAL RESOURCE WATER (ONRW)**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that staff of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region (Regional Water Board) will hold a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) scoping meeting on a draft amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region* (Basin Plan) to designate the Smith River and its tributaries as an Outstanding National Resource Water (ONRW).

The scoping meeting will be held as follows:

When: March 25, 2016
9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Where: Del Norte County Council Chambers
981 H Street, Suite 200
Crescent City, CA 95531

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs) are high quality waters of the United States that are designated as an outstanding National resource, such as waters of National and State parks and wildlife refuges and waters of exceptional recreational or ecological significance. As an ONRW, such high quality water is afforded the greatest protection under the Clean Water Act through implementation of the federal Antidegradation policy, 40CFR131.12., which prohibits the lowering of water quality in an ONRW except to accommodate limited activities that result in temporary and short-term water quality changes. There are currently two ONRWs in California: Lake Tahoe and Mono Lake. As a result of its 2014 Triennial Review of the Basin Plan, the Regional Water Board identified as a high priority the designation of the Smith River and its tributaries as an ONRW.

CEQA SCOPING OVERVIEW

California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3775.5, subdivision (b) states the purpose of a scoping meeting is to seek input from public agencies and members of the public on the range of project actions, alternatives, reasonably foreseeable methods of compliance, significant impacts to be analyzed, cumulative impacts if any, and mitigation measures that will reduce impacts to a less than significant level as part of the development of the proposed amendment.

Adoption of an amendment to the Basin Plan to designate the Smith River and its tributaries as an ONRW is a discretionary action subject to CEQA; however, basin planning is certified as exempt from the requirement to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), or negative declaration and initial study. (Cal. Code Regs., tit.14, § 15251, subd.(g).) To amend the Basin Plan requires compliance with the basin planning requirements of Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, as well as CEQA. In lieu of an EIR or negative declaration and initial study, a substitute environmental document (SED) will be prepared, which simultaneously complies with both these environmental laws. The SED will be released for public review at a later date.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The CEQA scoping meeting will provide participants with: (1) a description of the proposed project and alternatives, (2) a discussion of reasonably foreseeable methods of compliance and potential environmental impacts, and (3) a discussion of mitigation measures that will reduce potential environmental effects to less than significant. Public involvement assists the Regional Water Board in refining the scope of the project, determining the range of environmental information to analyze, and the potential environmental impacts the project might have on various categories of environmental resources, such as aesthetics, air quality, water quality and others. At the meeting, members of the public will have the opportunity to present oral comments on the scope of the CEQA analysis for the draft project. Opportunity to provide written comment on the scope of the CEQA analysis for the draft project will extend to the end of the month with comment letters to be received no later than close of business at **5PM on Wednesday, March 30th, 2016**. Staff will consider all oral and written comments when conducting its CEQA analysis; but, written responses will not be produced.

Please transmit comments electronically to the attention of Wendy-Lynn Jones at the Regional Water Board at NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov. Comments can also be faxed to 707-523-0135 or mailed to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board - North Coast Region, ATTN: Wendy-Lynn Jones, 5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A, Santa Rosa, California 95403.

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

Information on the draft amendment to the Basin Plan to designate the Smith River and its tributaries as an ONRW will be posted on the Regional Water Board's website by the time of the CEQA Scoping meeting. A separate notice via the Regional Water Board's Basin Planning email list will be sent out with a link to the website when information is available.

Persons wishing to receive notices related to the Smith River ONRW should subscribe to the Basin Planning email list at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg1_subscribe.shtml.

ACCESSIBILITY

Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation to participate in the public meeting should contact Lisa Bernard at (707) 576-2677 or email at Lisa.Bernard@waterboards.ca.gov at least five days prior to the scheduled meeting. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. TTY users may contact the California Relay Service at 1-800-735-2929 or voice line at 1-800-735-2922.

STAFF CONTACTS

Questions regarding this meeting or general questions regarding the draft Smith River ONRW should be directed to Wendy-Lynn Jones, project staff, by phone at (707) 576-2065 or email at Wendy-Lynn.Jones@waterboards.ca.gov or Alydda Mangelsdorf, Senior Environmental Scientist, by phone at (707) 576-2220 or email at Alydda.Mangelsdorf@waterboards.ca.gov.