June 13, 2013

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

City of Eureka – Martin Slough Sewer Interceptor Pipeline Project, Phase 2
WDID No. 1B13041WNHU

Humboldt County

On April 8, 2013, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the City of Eureka (City/applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, water quality certification for proposed activities associated with implementation of Phase 2 of the Martin Slough Interceptor Project (project). The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with wetlands, Martin Slough, and unnamed tributaries to Swain Slough in the Eureka Plain Hydrologic Unit No. 110.00.

Sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) have occurred at the City’s O Street lift station due to excessive inflow and infiltration into the sewer collection system during significant wet weather events. The City has been under pressure from the Regional Water Board to eliminate the SSO problems and the City has been fined for past SSOs. The Martin Slough Interceptor Project was determined to be the best solution for eliminating SSOs in the entire Martin Slough Basin.

The Martin Slough Interceptor Project has been designed to be constructed in three phases. Phase 1, which involved installation of a new gravity interceptor pipeline to convey wastewater from the O Street lift station to the Golf Course lift station, has been completed. Phase 2 (proposed project) will include construction of a new pump station and force main, and redirection of wastewater flows into the interceptor pipeline that was completed in Phase 1. Phase 3 will involve future construction activities, primarily by the Humboldt Community Services District, to decommission lift stations and install additional collector piping.

The various components of Phase 2 have been designed and planned to be implemented in three sub-phases. Phase 2a involved construction of the Martin Slough pump station near the existing Eureka Municipal Golf Course lift station and connection of the new pump station to the gravity interceptor pipeline completed in Phase 1. The City has initiated construction of the pump station because it is not located within jurisdictional waters. Remaining Phase 2a activities that will impact wetlands include completion of a permanent gravel access road for the new pump station, installation of a new storm drain inlet near the new pump station, and installation of a 6-inch diameter polyvinyl chloride (PVC) drain pipe from the new drain inlet to the Martin Slough streambank. Phase 2b involves installation of approximately 9,300 linear feet of 26-inch diameter high-density polyethylene or 24-inch diameter PVC force main pipeline extending from the new Martin Slough pump station to the City’s Elk River Wastewater Treatment Plant. The primary components of Phase 2c involve decommissioning of several lift stations, installation of
new manholes, construction of access roads, and redirection of wastewater flows into the interceptor pipeline completed in Phase 1.

Proposed activities associated with implementation of Phases 2b and 2c will result in disturbance to waters of the United States associated with wetlands, Martin Slough, and unnamed tributaries to Swain Slough. Implementation of Phase 2b will include construction of approximately 4,100 linear feet of the new force main pipeline by horizontal directional drilling (HDD) and jack-and-bore installation methods. The remaining 5,200 linear feet of force main piping will be installed by open-trench construction. The force main pipeline alignment will include one open-trench crossing of the Martin Slough channel near the new pump station and two open trench crossings of unnamed drainage channels tributary to Swain Slough. Phase 2b activities will also include installation of valves and other appurtenances along the new force main pipeline. Connection of the existing collector pipelines to the interceptor (Phase 2c) will require one open-trench crossing of the Martin Slough channel on the golf course and one crossing of the Martin Slough channel near the intersection of Campton Road and Fern Street.

Open-trench excavation activities will begin with the removal and separate stockpiling of the upper 6 to 12 inches of topsoil followed by excavation of the remaining materials to the required trench width and depth. excavated topsoil will be stockpiled separately and kept moist to preserve the root masses, rhizomes, seeds, and accumulated organic material. Stockpiled topsoil will be used to restore the final surface of the trench corridor after the pipeline has been installed. After the pipeline and backfill are installed across the stream channels the original streambank contours will be restored, appropriately sized washed gravel will be placed over the disturbed streambed area, and the streambanks will be revegetated consistent with pre-project conditions using native riparian and wetland plants, or vegetation consistent with agricultural or golf course use, as appropriate.

At locations where the native material in the bottom of the trench is not suitable for pipeline stability, the unsuitable material will be removed and replaced with appropriate stabilization materials that may consist of cement slurry or a variety of potential suitable rock materials. The pipeline will be placed on 6 to 12 inches of rock bedding that will be placed over the trench bottom or the trench stabilization materials. Additional rock backfill will then be placed around and over the pipe to a thickness of approximately 12 inches above the top of the pipe. There will typically be a minimum of two feet of upper trench backfill material placed above the pipe zone backfill to within 6 to 12 inches of the surface that will consist of native material in the unpaved areas and areas with existing paved or gravel surfaces will be backfilled above the pipe zone, compacted, and the existing surface treatment will be replaced.

The pipeline and trench backfill will be installed in a manner that is designed to prevent movement of groundwater along the pipeline corridor. Transverse baffles will be installed in areas of the trench that have the potential to act as a preferential groundwater flow pathway in order to prevent groundwater drainage through the backfill material. After the
trench backfill is completed using the stockpiled topsoil, the disturbed ground surface will be restored.

Trench excavation, pipe staging areas, and excavated material stockpiling activities will be conducted within a 60-foot wide construction easement and a permanent 30-foot-wide pipeline easement, both centered longitudinally along the pipeline alignment running along the centerline of the force main pipeline. An approximately 60-foot wide by 75-foot long area will be temporary impacted by construction activities at the HDD entry pit and a similar sized triangular-shaped area will be temporary impacted at the HDD exit pit. The maximum trench width will be 6 feet and trench depths will range from 7 to 10 feet below the ground surface depending on the required pipe elevations and existing topography.

The proposed open-trench excavation activities are located in wetlands adjacent to Martin Slough at the Eureka Municipal Golf Course area, and wetlands located approximately 1,000 to 2,000 feet north of Herrick Avenue along the east side of Highway 101. Proposed open-trench pipeline construction activities, and construction of temporary entry and exit pits for trenchless pipeline installation, will result in 456,317 square feet (10.475 acres) of temporary impacts to existing wetlands, and 12,900 square feet (0.297 acre) and 230 linear feet of temporary impacts to stream channels. Installation of new manholes and new access roads will result in 6,723 square feet (0.154 acre) of permanent impacts to wetlands. Removal of existing manholes will result in onsite restoration of 0.002 acre of wetland. Compensatory mitigation is required for the remaining 0.152 acre of permanent impacts to wetlands.

Compensatory mitigation will be provided by using 0.152 acre of the City's available mitigation credits at the Fay Slough Wildlife Area. Noncompensatory mitigation for temporary wetland impacts involves replacement of the upper 6 to 12 inches of topsoil to restore the wetland surface and existing vegetation. Noncompensatory mitigation will also include the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment and erosion control and for operation of heavy equipment in wetlands and stream channels.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit No. 12 (File No. 2002-27200), pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The Applicant has also applied for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game. Implementation of Phase 2 is scheduled to begin in July 2013 and is expected to be completed by December, 2014. Stream crossing activities will be implemented between June 15 and October 15 in order to avoid potential impacts to aquatic life.

On October 5, 2004, the City of Eureka certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR SCH No. 2002082043) for the project, and subsequently prepared an addendum to the EIR that addresses project changes, in order to comply with CEQA. The Regional Water Board has considered the environmental document. The project may have the following significant effects on the environment: construction related nonpoint source water quality effects; facilitation of development having significant cumulative hydrological effects on aquatic
environments; facilitation of development with significant cumulative water quality effects; potential for directly affecting listed fish species through mobilization of sediment or pollutant release in the construction zone that subsequently enters the aquatic environment; facilitation of development in areas served by the project will alter hydrological patterns in the Martin Slough basin, affecting aquatic habitat values for sensitive species and other aquatic resources; sediment and other nonpoint source pollutants from development in the areas that will be served by the project may adversely affect sensitive fish species; and, project construction will result in permanent loss of wetland area and contribute to cumulative losses of wetland function in the Martin Slough valley.

Mitigation measures identified in the EIR as necessary to reduce or eliminate significant effects on the environment include: implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to avoid or minimize mobilization of sediment and other pollutants; restoration of pre-construction conditions in diked former tidal lands, grassland-dominated floodplain seasonal wetlands, and streams and ditches; measures to reduce pollution and runoff intensification; measures to reduce pollution and runoff intensification shall be incorporated in new development facilitated by the project; review and monitoring of construction by qualified biologists to assure a lack of adverse fishery effects and adverse effects on wetland areas and functions; prevention of wetland drainage by installation of transverse trench baffles; and, compensatory mitigation for permanent wetland impacts. Mitigation measures identified in the EIR will be incorporated as conditions of approval in any water quality certification Order issued for the project.

The Elk River watershed is listed on the State of California's Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list as impaired for sediment because the State of California determined that the water quality standards for the Elk River are exceeded due to excessive sediment. At present, there are no watershed-specific Total Daily Maximum Load implementation plans for this watershed. Pursuant to Regional Water Board Resolution R1-2004-0087, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Policy Statement for Sediment-Impaired Receiving Waters within the North Coast Region (Sediment TMDL Implementation Policy), the Executive Officer is directed to "rely on the use of all available authorities, including existing regulatory standards, and permitting and enforcement tools to more effectively and efficaciously pursue compliance with sediment-related standards by all dischargers of sediment waste." Proposed activities include implementation of BMPs for sediment and erosion control and restoration of disturbed areas. Accordingly, the proposed activities are consistent with and implement portions of the Elk River TMDL.

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 activities including maps, design plans, and photos of the project areas. 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 Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.