July 19, 2019

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

Powers Creek Multiuse Bridge Project
ECM PIN CW-859201 WDID 1B190077WNHU

Humboldt County

On June 20, 2019, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from SHN on behalf of the City of Blue Lake (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to the proposed Powers Creek Multiuse Project (project).

Project Location

The project is located at a pedestrian crossing through Powers Creek in the city of Blue Lake, at latitude 40.880128°N and longitude 123.993711°W. The proposed project would cause disturbances to Powers Creek, in the Mad River hydrologic area (109.10).

Project Description

The City is proposing the construction of a multi-use bridge (pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian) over Powers Creek. The proposed project will decrease habitat disturbances by creating an elevated path to that which currently exists through Powers Creek. Furthermore, the proposed project will improve public access and safety along Powers Creek by offering a formal crossing between two popular public destinations, the Rodeo Grounds and residences to the north, and the multi-use trail and Business Park to the south.

The proposed bridge project has been designed by SHN, the City's consulting engineer. The channel grading proposed in the SHN plans is consistent with the design plans developed by Greenway Partners for the larger Power Creek Fish Habitat Restoration Project (Appendix 4). The City proposes to construct a 9-ft. x 60-ft. concrete foot bridge over Powers Creek. The bridge will consist of pre-cast footings, steel girders, and pre-cast concrete deck panels. Surficial fill will be placed on the interior channel banks to accommodate a total bridge length of 60 ft. The channel slope under the bridge, as well as any fill protruding into the channel, will be protected with rock slope protection (RSP). The proposed bridge design includes the construction of a 34-ft.-long northern approach and 50-ft.-long southern approach to provide a transition between the proposed bridge and the existing pathways consistent with the Accessibility Requirements provided in the California Building Code.

The proposed project is one part of a larger effort undertaken by various entities and organizations who actively strive to aid in the recovery and resiliency of Powers Creek and the lower Mad River. Related projects are not included within the scope of this particular project, but work in conjunction with this project to achieve overall habitat restoration and enhancement goals within Powers Creek and the lower Mad River.

Riparian vegetation will be removed as a result of grading and construction activities. As previously mentioned, in partnership with Mad River Alliance, the City of Blue Lake has undertaken invasive vegetation removal within the Powers Creek riparian corridor. These efforts have occurred within portions of the project site, as well areas upstream and downstream of the project site. Invasive and nonnative vegetation removal will continue prior to and following the proposed project. In order to reestablish native riparian vegetation surrounding the project site, the proposed project will rely on revegetation efforts undertaken by Mad River Alliance under a grant from the Habitat Conservation Fund (HA-12-001). These revegetation efforts will occur consistent with the design plans prepared by Greenway Partners for the larger Power Creek Fish Habitat Restoration Project.

Planting will occur within 50 feet on both sides of the channel, in appropriate locations. Plantings will be spaced alongside existing native vegetation. The short-term goal is to provide coverage to discourage the reestablishment of invasive species. The long-term goal is to provide a native riparian corridor along Powers Creek.

Construction Timing

The project is expected to be completed between August 1, and October 31, 2019. In-stream work will take approximately 30 days to complete. The seasonal work period for riparian and upland revegetation conducted by Mad River Alliance under the Habitat Conservation Fund grant (HA-12-001) is proposed between November 1, 2019 and March 1, 2020.

Impacts

The proposed project will temporarily impact 0.002 acres (20 linear feet) of riparian habitat for site preparation. The proposed project will permanently impact 0.007 acres (21 linear feet) of riparian habitat for the construction of bridge approaches. The proposed project will temporarily impact 0.016 acres (71 linear feet) of streambank for site preparation. The proposed project will permanently impact 0.009 acres (24 linear feet) of streambed for the installation of rock slope protection and the construction of bridge footings and approaches. Finally, the proposed project will temporarily impact 0.099 acres (102 linear feet) of streambed for site preparation and channel alignment. The proposed project will permanently impact 0.008 acres (26 linear feet) of streambed for the installation of rock slope protection and the construction of bridge footings and approaches.

Mitigation for Project Impacts

In partnership with Mad River Alliance, the City of Blue Lake has undertaken invasive vegetation removal within the Powers Creek riparian corridor. These efforts have occurred within portions of the project site, as well areas upstream and downstream of the project site. Invasive and nonnative vegetation removal will continue prior to and following the proposed project. In order to reestablish native riparian vegetation surrounding the project site, the proposed project will rely on revegetation efforts undertaken by Mad River Alliance under a grant from the Habitat Conservation Fund (HA-12-001). Planting will occur within 50 feet on both sides of the channel, in appropriate locations. Plantings will be spaced alongside existing native vegetation. The short-term goal is to provide coverage to discourage the reestablishment of invasive species. The long-term goal is to provide a continuous, native riparian corridor along Powers Creek.

Post-Construction Storm Water Treatment

Project implementation resulted in less than one acre of disturbed soil area. The Applicant shall utilize appropriate erosion control, sediment control, and site management Best Management Practices to prevent discharge of pollutants during construction.

TMDL

The Mad River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for sediment and turbidity was established in 2007 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, because the State of California determined that the water quality standards for the Mad River are exceeded due to excessive sediment and turbidity. Roads and bank erosion are identified as sources contributing to the sediment impairment. The primary adverse impacts associated with excessive sediment and turbidity in the Mad River pertain to cold freshwater habitat, primarily anadromous salmonid habitat. Project activities involve removal of an existing unnatural structure from the stream channel and require implementation of BMPs for sediment and turbidity control. The project also includes stabilization and revegetation of the existing access road approach into the stream channel. Accordingly, the project activities are consistent with, and implement portions of the Mad River TMDL.

Other Agency Permits

The applicant has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers for Nationwide Permit, pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The applicant has also submitted a section 1600 Notification of Lake or Streambed Alteration to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The applicant has also applied for a City of Blue Lake Grading Permit.

CEQA

The North Coast Regional Water Board, as lead California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) agency, has determined that the project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption, 15303: New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, and will file a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse concurrent with issuance of the 401 Water Quality Certification, pursuant to CEQA guidelines.

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 Brandon Stevens at (707) 576-2377 or Brandon.Stevens@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.

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