October 18, 2019

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)
Manchester Subsea Cables Project
ECM PIN CW-433492; WDID 1B190116WNME
Mendocino County

On August 12, 2019, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from John Markham on behalf of Chris Brungardt of RTI Infrastructure, Inc., requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities related to the proposed Manchester Subsea Cables Project (Project). On October 9, 2019, the application was determined to be complete.

Project Location

The Project contains a terrestrial and a marine component. The terrestrial component crosses numerous properties in Mendocino County located between latitudes 39.014987 and 39.966263 and longitudes -123.688305 and -123.686974. The marine component under State of California jurisdiction extends 3 nautical miles offshore from the high tide line into the Pacific Ocean near the community of Manchester.

Project Description

RTI Infrastructure proposes to install up to four transpacific fiber optic cables (cables) from Asia and/or Australia to the United States near the community of Manchester in Mendocino County. This would be achieved in four phases. Phase 1 would bring a cable from Hong Kong, Phase 2 from Guam, with Phase 3 and Phase 4 potentially from Singapore and Sydney. The Project consists of installing steel marine bore pipes for all four phases, but only connecting cables for Phase 1 and Phase 2. The Project consists of a marine and a terrestrial component.

In the marine environment where waters are deeper than 3,936 feet, cables would be directly laid (not buried) on the deep ocean floor and continental shelf. In waters shallower than 3,936 feet, cables would be buried beneath approximately 1 meter of sand by plow or by post-lay burial (ROV or driver-assisted jet burial) depending on substrate. From approximately 0.5 miles offshore to upland terrestrial areas, 5- to 6-inch- diameter steel marine bore pipes would be buried under the seafloor, beach, and bluff using horizontal directional drilling (HDD). Cables would be pulled through the pipes and to an onshore landing manhole (LMH) on a cable landing parcel (CLP). Once in the LMH, the cables would be carried through up to 10 miles (depending on the final cable landing station [CLS] location) of underground conduit system on both sides of State Route (SR) 1 and then to an existing telecommunication carrier interconnection point near the town of Manchester.

Horizontal directional drilling is a steered boring technique that drills horizontally under an object before returning to the surface on the other side. Throughout the entire terrestrial component, drilling bores would be used to avoid sensitive resource areas

(wetlands, creeks, riparian communities, and special-status species habitat), culverts, utilities, and other features. Drilling requires the use of a drilling fluid, typically a fine clay and water mix called bentonite. The fluid is under high pressure and used to seal the borehole, drive the drill motor at the end of the bore, and provide lubrication. In the marine environment, fluid leaks through fractured ground could cause temporary increases in turbidity and result in sedimentation. A frac-out plan has been developed for both the marine and terrestrial environments. Once a frac-out has occurred, drilling would cease immediately, and clean-up operations would commence. Agencies would be notified of any frac-outs.

Construction Timing
The project is expected to commence in October 2019 and be completed in May 2020.

Impacts
The Project would temporarily impact 3.36 acres of ocean/estuary/bay and permanently impact 0.1 acres of ocean/estuary/bay. The Project has been designed to avoid impacts to terrestrial and aquatic resources.

Mitigation for Project Impacts
To compensate for the impairment or loss of hard substrate–associated marine taxa and their role in marine ecosystems in the area, the applicant proposes to contribute funds to the U.C. Davis Wildlife Health Center's California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project or other conservation programs at $100,000 per 5,500 square feet (1,676 m) of high-relief, hard substrate affected by the proposed project. A final determination of the amount would be based on a review of the final burial report from the cable installation. The total assessment and methods used to calculate this figure would be provided to the State Lands Commission and the California Coastal Commission (CCC) for review and approval.

Monitoring and Reporting
Annual monitoring reports are not proposed for the Project.

Post-Construction Storm Water Treatment
The Project would not generate concentrated stormwater runoff of significance, thus Stormwater BMPs and LID treatment are not required.

Total Maximum Daily Load
The Project would not impact any waterbody with a TMDL.

Other Agency Permits
The applicant has applied for the following Federal, State, and Local licenses, permits, and agreements:

1. County of Mendocino: Coastal Development Permit,
2. California State Lands Commission: General Lease-Right of Way,

3. California Coastal Commission: Coastal Zone Management Act Consistency Certification for the USACE Section 404 Authorization Coastal Development Permit,
4. California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Fish and game Code 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement,
5. State Historic Preservation Office: Section 106 Compliance,
6. Mendocino County Air Quality Management District: Authority to Construct and Permit to Operate,
7. California Department of Transportation: Encroachment Permit,
8. United State Army Corps of Engineers: Clean Water Act Section 404 and Section 10 Permit (under Nationwide Permit No. 12),
9. United States Fish and Wildlife Service: Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) Section 7 consultation.

CEQA
As lead agency, the California State Lands Commission certified a Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH No. 2019049159), pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

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 would 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 Ryan Bey at (707) 576-2679 or Ryan.Bey@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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