

Gualala Roads Assessment Order & Sediment TMDL Action Plan Development January 2026 Update

You are receiving this email because you have signed up on the North Coast Water Board's email distribution list to receive regular updates on the Gualala River Watershed Sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Action Plan and Roads Assessment Order development projects. These projects are separate but related efforts to improve stream health and water quality in the Gualala River Watershed.

First Quarter 2026 Update

Gualala River Sediment TMDL Action Plan Adoption

A public hearing to consider **adoption of a Basin Plan Amendment regarding the Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL** has been scheduled for February 18, 2026 and will be held at the Elk Valley Rancheria, Sam Lopez Community Room, 2332 Howland Hill Road, Crescent City, CA 95531 and via Video and Teleconference. The meeting agenda will be posted on the [Board Meetings](#) website. All documents related to the project can be viewed on the [Gualala River Sediment TMDL](#) web page.

Revised Approach to the Gualala River Watershed

Staff of the North Coast Water Board's Watershed Assessment and Recovery Unit (WARU) are revising their approach to regulating road-related sediment sources in the Gualala River Watershed and will **pivot away from the watershed-specific Gualala Roads Permit**. Under the new approach, the WARU team will develop and issue two orders:

1. **A Gualala River Watershed-specific Investigative Order (Gualala Roads Assessment Order)** that requires the **inventory, assessment, and prioritization** of sediment-generating roads in the watershed. WARU staff anticipate a December 2026 proposed board adoption hearing. To learn more about this project, please visit the new Gualala Roads Program web page at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/gualala_roads/.
2. **A regionwide order** that requires the **inventory, assessment, prioritization, and treatment** of sediment-generating roads across the North Coast Region – including the Gualala River Watershed. Preliminary planning and schedule development is currently underway. Staff anticipate initiating public outreach for this project in Spring/Summer 2026. To receive project information as it becomes available, enroll in email notifications at the address below – select “Regionwide Roads Program” from the list of options provided. https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAWRCB/Subscriber/New?qsP=north_c_oast

The revised approach is necessary in order to better align program resources with the expected costs of enrollment, establish a more equitable regulatory program throughout the North Coast

Region, and maintain the focus and effort within the Gualala on assessment and prioritization through issuance of the roads assessment order.

An investigative order is a legally enforceable order that authorizes the North Coast Water Board to require the submission of technical information – in this case, road inventories and assessments. The order will allow WARU staff to maintain momentum toward watershed recovery and ensure that road assessments in the watershed begin promptly, ultimately accelerating road improvement efforts. Contract funds remain dedicated to supporting road assessments required by the investigative order.

This revised approach is not a major departure from that of the Gualala Roads Permit. The key differences impacting the Gualala River Watershed are a shift in timing and the regulatory mechanism of how road assessments and treatments are required. Where the Gualala Roads Permit would have included inventory, assessment, prioritization, and treatment requirements in a single order, the revised approach defers treatment requirements until the regionwide order is adopted.

Contract funds that have been directed to recovery in the Gualala River Watershed will remain. Contracting to support landowners in funding and conducting road assessments in the Gualala River Watershed continues to be developed. The Sonoma Resource Conservation District (Sonoma RCD) will continue managing a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to help guide the development of key watershed analyses and road prioritization reports. The Sonoma RCD will also plan and facilitate local community meetings and landowner trainings.

Upcoming Public Engagement Opportunities

The WARU team continues to hold recurring staff office hours that serve as unstructured meetings during which members of the community are encouraged to share any questions or comments they may have about this changing approach to recovery in the Gualala River Watershed.

WARU staff continue to work with the Sonoma RCD to hold three community meetings in the first half of 2026. The first meeting will be held on February 11, 2026. Details are posted on our web page at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/gualala_roads/.

Please contact us if you have any questions about this shift in the WARU's approach to roads permitting throughout the North Coast Region.

To receive timely updates on the development of the regionwide roads order, enroll in email list subscriptions at the address below – select “Regionwide Roads Program” from the options provided. https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAWRCB/subscriber/new?qs=north_coast

Future Quarterly Updates

North Coast Water Board staff will continue to provide quarterly updates throughout the development of the projects. Please forward this email and/or direct interested individuals or groups to subscribe at the following link for timely project information:

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAWRCB/subscriber/new?topic_id=r1_tmdl_gualala_river_watershed

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to know how to get further involved, please feel free to contact the following staff:

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