



Roads Assessment Order for Gualala River Watershed Landowners

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The North Coast Water Board has adjusted its approach to addressing water quality conditions in the Gualala River Watershed. Previously, the watershed-specific “Gualala Roads Permit” was being developed to require the inventory, assessment, prioritization, and treatment of sediment-generating rural roads. The new approach will involve two related components: a **Gualala River Watershed-specific order** and a **region-wide order**. The two orders aim to address the excess sediment and elevated water temperatures that impact much of the North Coast Region, harming its native salmon and trout populations and jeopardizing municipal, domestic, and agricultural water supplies.

The revised approach is necessary 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 assessments and prioritization through issuance of the Gualala Roads Assessment Order (GRAO). The North Coast Water Board remains committed to engaging the public throughout the process. See below for information on how to stay involved.

Similarities to Previous Approach

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 tools through which 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.

North Coast Water Board staff anticipate a December 2026 adoption hearing for the GRAO. The target date for the regionwide roads order proposed adoption is spring 2029. Necessary road treatments will not be required of landowners in the Gualala River Watershed until the regionwide order is implemented.



Where can I find more information?

Contact Matt Graves at RB1-Gualala@waterboards.ca.gov or visit the North Coast Water Board's Gualala Roads Program web page at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/gualala_roads/.



Who Will Be Affected?

Landowners with ownership of 1,000 acres or greater and roads that pose a significant risk to water quality will be required to inventory, assess, and prioritize their roads under the GRAO. North Coast Water Board staff are currently identifying criteria through which risk determinations will be made.

Costs to Affected Landowners

Unlike permits, the GRAO order will not require application or annual enrollment fees. The North Coast Water Board has contract funds available to support landowners with road assessments. Landowners who decline this support will be responsible for conducting assessments out-of-pocket.

Why is this Order Needed?

The Gualala River is considered “impaired” under the Clean Water Act due to too much sediment in the water and elevated water temperatures. These conditions negatively impact cold-water fish like salmon and trout, affecting their migration, spawning, and early development and jeopardize the availability of domestic, municipal, and agricultural water supplies.

How Can I Get Involved?

You can participate in the order development process by attending community meetings and staff office hours, scheduling meetings with North Coast Water Board staff, commenting on draft documents when available, and joining the email subscription list using this link: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAWRCB/subscriber/new?qsp=north_coast.

What is the Timeline for Development of the GRAO?

February 2026—Community meeting to solicit feedback from the public. Meeting scope will include summary of revised approach, overview of Technical Advisory Committee, and group discussion.

April 2026—Community meeting to solicit feedback from the public. Meeting scope TBD.

June 2026—Community meeting to solicit feedback from the public. Meeting scope TBD.

Summer 2026—Review and comment on the draft Gualala Roads Assessment Order.

December 2026—Proposed adoption hearing for the Gualala Roads Assessment Order.



The North Coast Water Board plays a crucial role in protecting and improving water quality in the region. This roads assessment order is part of a broader strategy to address sediment issues in the Gualala River Watershed and will work alongside existing and future permits that regulate various land use activities to protect water quality and critical habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Learn more about the North Coast Water Board here: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/about_us/pdf/R1FactSheet_English_April2025.pdf.