
Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff Summary Report
May 7-8, 2026

ITEM: 2

SUBJECT: Upper Elk River Sediment TMDL Stewardship 2026 Update

Public meeting to provide an informational update on Stewardship Program efforts to address health and safety, coordinated monitoring and sediment remediation improvements.

BOARD ACTION:

This is an information item only; no formal action will be taken by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board).

BACKGROUND:

The North Coast Water Board approved the Upper Elk Sediment Total Maximum Daily Load Action Plan (Action Plan) in 2016 and all steps to add it to the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (Basin Plan) were completed in 2018. The Action Plan is an implementation framework designed to alleviate beneficial use impairment caused by the accelerated discharge of fine-grained sediment. Specifically, the goals of the TMDL are to achieve sediment related water quality standards, including the protection of the beneficial uses of water and the prevention of flooding, which constitutes a nuisance condition under Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. To achieve its goals, the Action Plan's program of implementation relies on source control through issuance of waste discharge requirements (WDR) permits and waivers of WDRs, recovery planning in the form of the Elk River Recovery Assessment, and a Watershed Stewardship Program to engage in a collaborative process to address health and safety projects, remediation and restoration activities, and science and coordinated monitoring.

Table 4 of the Action Plan identifies a suite of implementation actions for WDRs, Sediment Source Control, Sediment Remediation, Watershed Stewardship and TMDL and Watershed Stewardship Effectiveness. Table 4 also identifies that a series of five-year updates be provided to the North Coast Water Board (2021, 2026, and 2031). Due to COVID-19 related constraints and staffing issues, the 2021 update was provided in 2022. For the 2022 update, staff initiated a review of TMDL implementation actions from 2017-2021. The findings of that review as well as 13 recommendations (six for Watershed Stewardship, two for Recovery Planning, five for WDRs) are provided in the 2022 Staff Report-Upper Elk River Sediment TMDL: Assessment of the First Five Years

(2022 Staff Report). Detailed TMDL background and discussion for the 2017-2021 time period is found in the 2022 Staff Report.

DISCUSSION:

Table 4 of the Action Plan states that, “*By 2026, the Regional Water Board shall evaluate the available information to assess the degree to which recommended health and safety, coordinated monitoring, and sediment remediation improvements have been achieved.*” Therefore, consistent with the Action Plan, this agenda item will provide a focused update on those aspects of TMDL implementation as well as an update on each of the 13 staff recommendations included in the 2022 Staff Report. The supporting documents provide additional background and discussion on key stewardship efforts. The 2026 Elk River Stewardship Water Delivery Summary is a comprehensive overview of the water delivery needs, regulatory authority, drinking water programs/potential project funding sources, staff efforts to address drinking water needs, and water delivery project status. The 2026 Elk River Stewardship Health and Safety Summary is a comprehensive discussion of the health and safety topics and efforts undertaken by the Elk River Stewardship Program 2022-2026 including nuisance flooding, water supply, safe transportation, public and private property impacts, emergency response, and community engagement. The Status Update: Implementation Recommendations from 2022 Upper Elk River Sediment TMDL Staff Report provides an update on the 13 staff generated implementation recommendations presented to the Board at the 2022 update.

It is important to note that as the regulatory tool used by the North Coast Regional Water Board to control nonpoint source pollution, WDRs are recognized as one of the three core elements of the Action Plan’s program of implementation. The WDR is proposed for revisions at this Board meeting as a separate item. The specifics on WDR implementation will not be covered in this presentation.

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A. No action will be considered by the North Coast Regional Water Board at this meeting.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. 2026 Elk River Stewardship: Water Delivery Summary
2. 2026 Elk River Stewardship: Health and Safety Summary
3. 2026 Status Update: Implementation Recommendations from 2022 Upper Elk River Sediment TMDL Staff Report