Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff Summary Report
December 3, 2026

ITEM: 3

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on Order No. R1-2026-0045 to consider adoption of proposed Waste Discharge Requirements for the California Redwood Company and Trinity River Timber Company, DBA North Fork Lumber Company, Korbel Sawmill, WDID No. 1B80020OHUM, NPDES No. CA0005932 (Matthew Herman)

BOARD ACTION: The Board will consider adoption of Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R1-2026-0045. The Order will serve as a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for a period of five years.

BACKGROUND: The Korbel Sawmill (Facility), located at 1165 Maple Creek Road, Korbel, Humboldt County, is owned by California Redwood Company, and operated by Trinity River Timber Company dba North Fork Lumber Company (Permittees). Onsite operations for the Facility include decking and sprinkling fir logs; debarking and bucking; sawing, milling, and planing operations; lumber storage and shipping; and by-product generation. Discharge water only originates from stormwater runoff and log-deck sprinkler water that is treated using settlement basins and a constructed wetland prior to discharge to the Mad River at 40° 52’ 27” N latitude and 123° 57’ 25” W longitude.

The Facility is currently regulated under Waste Discharge Requirements and Water Recycling Permit, Order No. R1-2019-0005, which serves as a NPDES permit for waste discharges to surface waters.

The wet decking operations include the application of water to log decks via sprinkler heads up to 24 hours per day to prevent whole logs from drying out and cracking. Log deck sprinkling occurs year-round. Storm water runoff and log-deck sprinkler water is conveyed from approximately 42 acres of the log deck and scale yard area, through ditches and culverts into four primary catch basins. Each catch basin is vegetated and equipped with a screened outlet. From the catch basins, the commingled process water flows into a large concrete settling/stilling basin. Water for log deck sprinkling is provided from on-site wells and recirculated water from the settling/stilling basin.

Stormwater runoff from the dry decked lower log yard is collected and conveyed to a settling basin and pump station, referred to as Station 9. This stormwater runoff water empties into the second chamber of Station 9, which has concrete baffle walls and absorbent booms. Water flows into the third and fourth chambers, then to the pump station where it is transferred to the large concrete settling/stilling basin.

Water from the settling/stilling basin is either recirculated to the log deck sprinklers, pumped to the large storage basin (WSB-1), or allowed to flow over the outlet weir of the basin into the constructed wetland. Water in WSB-1 can be transferred to the adjacent swale (WSB-2) via gate valve near the base of WSB-1. Water in WSB-2 can then be transferred back to the constructed wetland or be added back to the large concrete settling/stilling basin for log deck sprinkler water. The Permittee has the ability to operate an ozone generator trailer to provide additional treatment to water in WSB-2 prior to transferring it to the constructed wetland. When necessary, water is discharged from the constructed wetland to the North Fork Mad River.

DISCUSSION: Order No. R1-2026-0045 (Proposed Permit), replaces Order No. R1-2019-0005 (Previous Permit). The Proposed Permit prescribes water quality-based effluent limitations for pH for discharges to the South Fork Eel River and retains the special provisions which require studies and reports to ensure compliance with operations and aquatic toxicity requirements. Noteworthy changes to the Proposed Permit include the following:

1. **Removal of Receiving Water Limitations.** This Order removes generalized receiving water limitations contained in the Permittee's prior waste discharge requirements. The removal of this requirement is consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's holding in City and County of San Francisco, California v. Environmental Protection Agency (2025). (Factsheet section 5.1).

2. **Water Effect Ratio.** Site-specific water effect ratios (WERs) for total nickel (10.9) and total zinc (3.11) were used in the Facility's reasonable potential analysis (RPA). Because both ratios are greater than 1, the toxicity tests indicate that nickel and zinc were less toxic in site water than in standard laboratory water. The WERs adjust the applicable water quality criteria to reflect that result; the RPA then uses the adjusted criteria, along with discharge data and other required factors, to assess whether the Facility's discharges could cause or contribute to an exceedance of water quality standards.

3. **Reasonable Potential.** Water Quality Based Effluent Limitations (WQBELs) for nickel and zinc were removed as the reasonable potential Analysis (RPA) results indicate that reasonable potential no longer exists after making use of the incorporated site-specific WER values. (Order section 4.1.1.1)

4. **Aquatic Toxicity Effluent Limitations.** Reasonable potential for both acute and chronic aquatic toxicity was determined to be present, therefore effluent limitations

for chronic toxicity have been included as required by the new Toxicity Provisions. (Order Section 4.1.2)

5. **Monitoring and Reporting Requirements.** Noteworthy changes to the monitoring and reporting program (MRP) include the following:

   a. Pesticides Characterization Study. A requirement to complete a pesticide characterization study has been added for the Permittee to assess the reasonable potential for pesticides to be present in the Facility's discharge. (Order section 10.1.1)
   b. The Whole Effluent Toxicity Testing Requirements included in the monitoring and reporting program have been updated significantly to reflect the new Toxicity Provisions. (MRP Section 5)

A single comment letter on the Draft Permit was received from the Permittee. A full explanation of the comments and Regional Water Board Staff's (Staff) responses is provided in the attached Response to Comments document. The Proposed Permit has been revised in response to some of the comments received. The most significant concerns expressed in the comments are summarized in the following enumerated paragraphs with Staff's response and proposed resolution where applicable.

1. **Composite Sampling Method.** The Permittee requested to be allowed to continue the practice of collecting composite samples by collecting three hourly grab samples over a three-hour period instead of using a composite sampler over a 24-hour period. The permittee identified that they use this method because they have no power or buildings near the discharge location and that the discharge is very intermittent in nature.

   Staff identified that Section 1.1 of the proposed Order's Monitoring and Reporting Program already allows for composite samples to be taken by a proportional sampling devise or by compositing grab samples collected at sample intervals not exceeding 1 hour, and that the Permittee may continue to collect their samples as described.

2. **Species Sensitivity Screening.** The Permittee identified some concerns with the species sensitivity screening sections for aquatic toxicity, Sections 5.1.4 and 5.2.5 of the Proposed Order's MRP, in the draft Order's Monitoring and Reporting Program. These sections included a reference to a Surface Water Discharge Report and language that directed the species sensitivity screening to be conducted before discharge would be allowed.

   Staff confirmed that the Surface Water Discharge Report was not applicable to dischargers that have already discharged and have removed all references to this report. Additionally, Staff have updated the language in these sections to indicate that the species sensitivity screening must be completed within 18 months of the Order's adoption.

3. **Instream Waste Concentration Explanation.** The Permittee requested that additional information be provided within the Proposed Order's Fact Sheet regarding why compliance for aquatic toxicity is based on an instream waste concentration (IWC) of 100 percent while the discharge flow limit is held at one percent of the receiving water flow.

   Staff identified that determination of the applicable IWC and the one percent flow limitation are separate policies utilized by the Regional Water Board and serve different functions. Specifically, the 100 percent IWC governs the concentration of effluent used for aquatic toxicity compliance determinations, whereas the one percent flow limitation governs the allowable volume of discharge relative to the receiving water flow to ensure protection of beneficial uses.

   It is further explained that dischargers may request to complete a dilution study to become eligible for a reduced IWC at the Regional Water Board's discretion and that the one percent flow limitation is a Basin Plan requirement to ensure that the beneficial uses of the receiving water remain protected. As both these topics are already covered in the proposed Order's Fact Sheet, no changes were made to the proposed Order.

A copy of the Draft Permit was posted on the Regional Water Board website and was available for public comment from September 4 through October 5, 2026, for a 30-day comment period. Additionally, Regional Water Board staff held a virtual meeting with the Permittee on November 9, 2026, to discuss the Draft Permit. The Permittee indicated that Staff's response to the Permittee's comments and changes made to the Proposed Permit are acceptable to the Permittee. Staff anticipates that the Proposed Permit will be uncontested.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Order No. R1-2026-0045, as proposed.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Proposed Order R1-2026-0045
2. Notice of Public Hearing
3. Response to Comments Document
4. Copy of the comment letter received regarding this Order has been provided to Board members and is available to the public upon request by emailing Matthew.Herman@Waterboards.ca.gov