

**Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff Summary Report
February 18, 2026**

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: Public Hearing to consider adoption of Resolution No. R1-2026-0011 amending the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (Basin Plan) to incorporate the Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL (Joel Bisson)

BOARD ACTION: This is a public hearing for the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board) to consider adoption of amendments to the Basin Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The Gualala River spans a watershed of 298 square miles across Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, ultimately flowing into the Pacific Ocean. Since 1993 under section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act, the watershed has been designated as impaired due to high levels of sedimentation and siltation. In response, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) established a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for sediment in 2001, as supported by the Gualala River Watershed Technical Support Document for Sediment (TSD). The US EPA prescribed sediment TMDL is set at 475 tons per square mile annually.

Under section 13242 of the California Water Code, the North Coast Water Board developed the Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL and the supporting Staff Report. These documents summarize key parts of the Gualala River Sediment TMDL and its TSD, detailing measures to manage sediment sources and achieve water quality standards. The public comment period for the draft Action Plan and Staff Report opened on July 11, 2025, and closed on August 25, 2025. Staff presented the draft documents during a public Board workshop on August 14, 2025. On December 4, 2025, in the absence of a quorum, the North Coast Water Board staff conducted an informational briefing on the proposed Action Plan before the members present and the public. Public and Board member comments on the information item were received, and staff provided responses as appropriate. Information from the December 2025 meeting is available at the following link:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/12_2025/index.html

DISCUSSION:

Since development of the Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL was initiated in 2023, staff have completed the following:

- AB 52 Tribal Outreach – Staff invited government to government consultation from potentially interested Tribes, including Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Kashia Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Lytton Rancheria of Pomo Indians, and the Manchester Rancheria of Pomo Indians.
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Scoping – Staff conducted both a virtual CEQA scoping meeting on June 3, 2024 and a CEQA scoping meeting in person, in the Gualala Watershed on June 5, 2024. Documentation of all CEQA findings is presented in the *Revised Staff Report Supporting the Gualala River Sediment TMDL Action Plan and appendices* (Staff Report) (Attachment 3).
- Public Comment Period – The Draft Action Plan and Staff Report were made available for public review and comment from July 11, 2025 through August 25, 2025.
- Workshop – On August 14, 2025, staff conducted a public workshop during the advertised public comment period. Staff presented the *Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL, Staff Report Supporting the Gualala River Sediment TMDL Action Plan* and appendices, and the *Response to Public Comments on the Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL*. Information from the August 2025 meeting is available at the following link: https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/08_2025/index.html.
- Information Item - On December 4, 2025, in the absence of a quorum, the North Coast Water Board staff conducted an informational briefing on the proposed Action Plan before the members present and the public. Staff presented the *Proposed Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL*, a *Revised Staff Report Supporting the Gualala River Sediment TMDL Action Plan* and appendices, and the *Response to Public Comments on the Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL*. Public and Board member comments on the information item were received, and staff provided responses as appropriate.

During the December 4 meeting, a member of the public stated that prior comments on the Draft Action Plan had not been incorporated into the *Response to Public Comments on the Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL* (Attachment 4). Staff reviewed records and found no evidence of any written submissions. After contacting the individual, written comments were received on December 5, 2025, followed by an additional submission on January 20, 2026. In an effort to be comprehensive in our response to public input, staff has prepared an *Addendum to Response to Public Comments on the Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL* to address the commenter's questions and concerns (Attachment 5). The additional comments stressed the need for enforceable measures, such as a roads permit and note concerns related to road-related sediment, culvert design, slope stability, and smaller landowner

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roads. The proposed Action Plan addresses these by prioritizing sediment control, using various permitting mechanisms, and requiring North Coast Water Board staff to develop a rural roads order. No changes were made to the Proposed Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL or the Revised Staff Report Supporting the Gualala River Sediment TMDL Action Plan that were presented at the December 2025 public meeting in response to these additional comments.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend that the North Coast Water Board:

1. Adopt Resolution No. R1-2026-0011 amending the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region to include the *Action Plan for the Gualala Sediment TMDL*.
2. Authorize the Executive Officer or designee to submit the amendments adopted under North Coast Water Board Resolution No. R1-2026-0011, including any non-substantive changes, and the administrative record for this action to State Water Resources Control Board to consider approval.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. *Notice of Public Hearing to Consider Adoption of a Basin Plan Amendment Regarding the Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)*
2. *Proposed Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL*
3. *Revised Staff Report Supporting the Gualala River Sediment TMDL Action Plan* and appendices
4. *Response to Public Comments on the Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL*
5. *Addendum to Response to Public Comments on the Draft Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL*
6. *Resolution No. R1-2026-0011* adopting the *Action Plan for the Gualala River Sediment TMDL* into the Basin Plan.