

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff Summary Report
February 8, 2026

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT:

Public Workshop on DRAFT General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Lily Bulb Operations in the Smith River Plain and DRAFT Environmental Impact Report (David Kuszmar, Chris Watt, Brenna Sullivan, Ben Zabinsky)

BOARD ACTION:

This is a public workshop; no action will be taken by the Board.

BACKGROUND:

The Smith River Plain is a coastal plain located at the lower end of the Smith River watershed near the mouth of the mainstem Smith River. The drainage network of the Smith River Plain is comprised of several small coastal tributaries and the Smith River estuary, which provides high quality habitat for salmonids and other aquatic and riparian species, and which holds deep cultural and subsistence significance for the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. Commercial lily bulbs are cultivated in the Smith River Plain on a 3-5 year rotation with pasture and hay production on an area of roughly 1,000 acres. In recent years, no more than 250 of the 1,000 acres have been planted to lily bulbs in any growing season.

Cultivation of lily bulbs involves soil disturbance and agricultural chemical use that can generate discharges of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides to surface waters and pesticides and nutrients to groundwater. Without effective implementation of management practices, these discharges have the potential to degrade water quality, contribute to pollution or nuisance conditions, and/or impair beneficial uses of state waters.

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board) has developed Draft General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Lily Bulb Operations in the Smith River Plain (Draft Lily Bulb Order) to address potential water

quality threats associated with lily bulb cultivation activities in the Smith River Plain and to achieve Water Quality Objectives specified in the North Coast Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan). The North Coast Water Board has also developed a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) that analyzes the potential impacts to environmental resources resulting from implementation of the Draft Lily Bulb Order.

The Draft Lily Bulb Order, Draft EIR, and a Notice of Availability and Opportunity to Comment on the Draft EIR were released on January 30, 2026, for a 45-day public review and comment period. A separate Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment and Notice of Board Workshop for the Draft Lily Bulb Order was posted to the North Coast Water Board's webpage along with this Staff Summary Report. This workshop occurs within the public comment period for the Draft Lily Bulb Order and Draft EIR, which remains open through March 16, 2026.

Recent groundwater and surface water quality monitoring results and additional background information are available in the [Staff Summary Report](#) for Agenda Item 1 from the North Coast Water Board's October 8, 2025 meeting in Crescent City.

DISCUSSION:

As written, the [Draft Lily Bulb Order](#) would establish General Waste Discharge Requirements (GWDRs) that are consistent with the Statewide Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program and would include: (1) enrollment and payment of fees; (2) implementation and adaptation of management practices; and (3) monitoring and reporting. The Draft Lily Bulb Order would cover all commercial lily bulb farming operations in the Smith River Plain Hydrologic Subarea and the coastal terrace between Pyramid Point and the Oregon border (see Figure 1).

The Draft Lily Bulb Order would require commercial lily bulb farming operations to implement management practices in their planted lily bulb fields, appurtenant agricultural roads, and Streamside Areas to control agricultural discharges. Through a [Monitoring and Reporting Program](#), Enrollees would sample surface waters for pesticides and groundwater for pesticides and nitrates. When sampling results document exceedances of Water Quality Benchmarks¹ for constituents of concern, Enrollees would be required to implement improved management practices on a time schedule to meet Receiving Water Limitations.

As is consistent with the Statewide Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, Enrollees may enroll individually or through an approved Coalition, which manages fees and may conduct monitoring and reporting on behalf of Enrollees.

The [Draft EIR](#) evaluates environmental impacts from implementation of the Draft Lily Bulb Order. The Draft EIR found potentially significant and unavoidable impacts to Agriculture and Forestry Resources due to Streamside Area setbacks through the potential conversion of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural use. The Draft EIR identifies

¹ The Draft Lily Bulb Order would establish Water Quality Benchmarks as numeric interpretations of applicable narrative Water Quality Objectives. See [Findings Section G](#) of the Draft Lily Bulb Order for details.

potentially significant impacts to Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Tribal Cultural Resources and identifies mitigation measures that would reduce those impacts to less-than-significant levels (see [Attachment E](#) to the Draft Lily Bulb Order).

Following the public review and comment period, staff will revise the Draft Lily Bulb Order and Draft EIR and release updated versions of both documents (Proposed Order and Final EIR). The Proposed Order and Final EIR are scheduled to be considered by the North Coast Water Board for adoption and certification in August 2026.

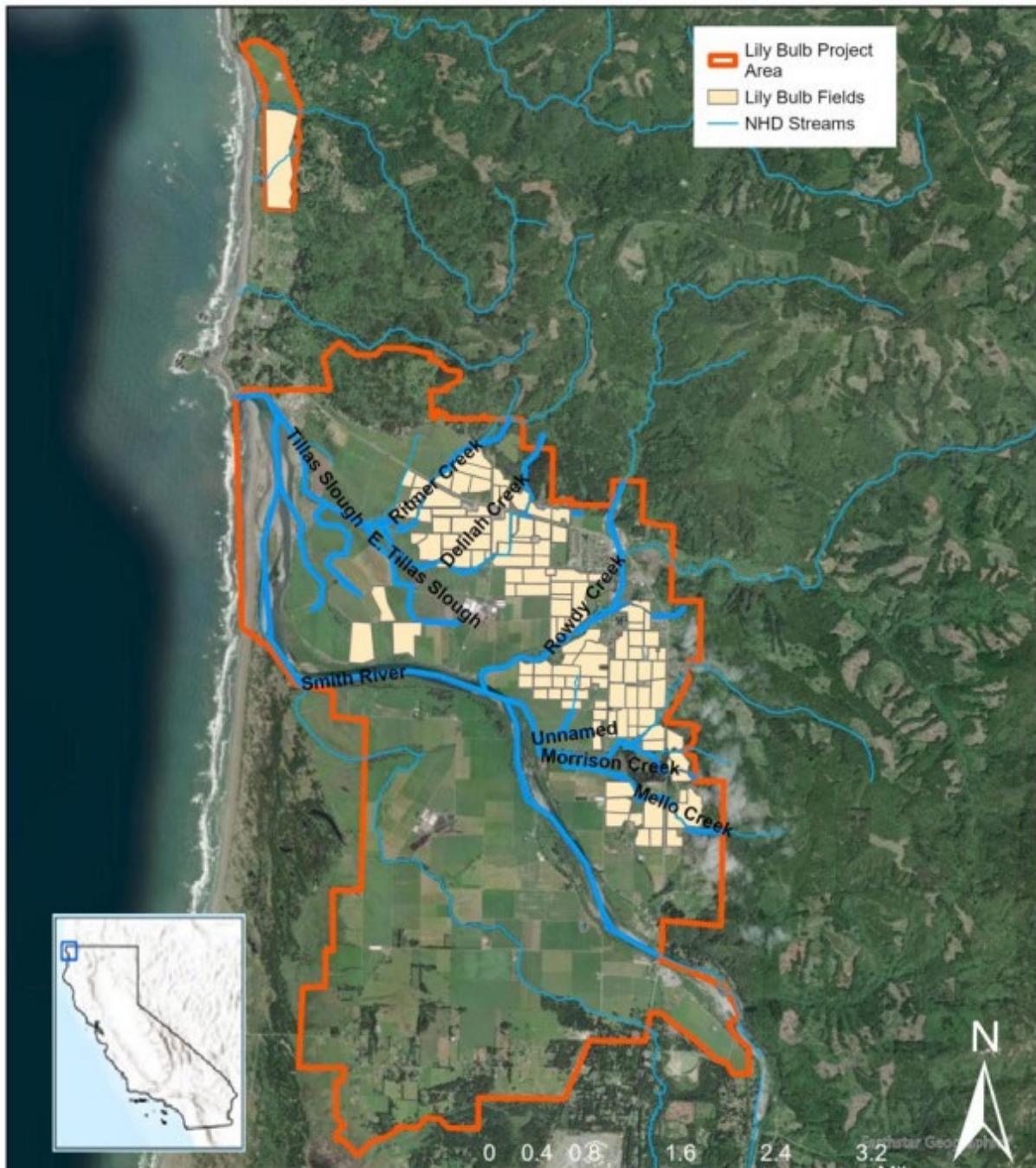


Figure 1: Fields used in rotation for lily bulb cultivation as reported in 2024 as part of the Smith River Water Quality Management Plan and major coastal tributaries of the Smith River Plain.

RECOMMENDATION:

Not applicable.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- [Draft General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Lily Bulb Operations in the Smith River Plain](#)
 - Attachment A: Monitoring and Reporting Program
 - Attachment B: Management Practices
 - Attachment C: Grower Coalition Requirements
 - Attachment D: Methodologies and Procedures
 - Attachment E: CEQA Mitigation Measures
 - Attachment F: Forms and Templates
- [Draft Environmental Impact Report for General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Lily Bulb Operations in the Smith River Plain](#)
- [Notice of Availability and Opportunity to Comment on the Draft EIR](#)
- [Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment and Notice of Board Workshop for the Draft Lily Bulb Order](#)