



New Water Quality Permit for Gualala River Watershed Landowners

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The North Coast Water Board is developing a new water quality permit that applies to private, rural roads in the Gualala River watershed. This permit aims to address excess sediment and high water temperatures that are harming the river's ecosystem, particularly its native salmon and trout populations. This permit is in the early stages of development, and the North Coast Water Board is committed to engaging the public throughout this process. Landowners and community members will have multiple opportunities to provide input and inform the final permit requirements.

Why is this permit 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 are negatively impacting cold-water fish like salmon and trout, affecting their migration, spawning, and early development.

Who will be affected by the permit?

All landowners in the watershed will now be required to maintain their roads to reduce erosion and sediment runoff into waterways. Landowners with 1,000 acres or more, or those with roads that pose a significant risk to water quality, will have additional requirements as "Designated Landowners" under the permit.

What will Designated Landowners need to do?

Designated Landowners will need to reduce sediment sources on their roads by disconnecting road drainage from waterways and upgrading or replacing stream crossings where necessary. They will also need to:

- **Inventory and assess their roads and stream crossings**
- **Prioritize areas that need repairs first**
- **Repair sediment sources on their roads**
- **Monitor and report on their progress**
- **Maintain roads to prevent future erosion**
- **Follow an implementation schedule for road repairs**



Where can I find more information?

Contact Devon Rabellino at RB1-Gualala@waterboards.ca.gov or visit the North Coast Water Board's website at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/waru/.



What are the potential costs for Designated Landowners?

Designated Landowners can expect costs for permit fees (initial and/or annual) and road assessments, repairs, and maintenance necessary to address sediment sources. These costs will vary based on specific property conditions.

Is funding and assistance available?

Yes! The North Coast Water Board is funding assessments of high-priority roads and providing training for landowners. Additionally, federal and state grants are available and North Coast Water Board staff offer assistance with answering questions about grant opportunities.

What are some benefits of improved roads?

Improved roads will lead to long-term cost savings through preventive maintenance, protection and recovery of fish populations, and safeguarding of water sources for drinking and irrigation.

What is the timeline for the development of the permit?

Summer 2025—In-person and/or virtual meetings to solicit input on the environmental analysis document being developed to support the permit.

Summer 2026—Review and comment on the draft permit and environmental analysis document and public workshop.

Fall 2026—Proposed adoption hearing for the permit and supporting environmental analysis document.

How can I get involved?

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



The North Coast Water Board plays a crucial role in protecting and improving water quality in the region. This new permit is part of a broader strategy to address sediment issues in the Gualala River Watershed and will work alongside other existing 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://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/about_us/pdf/Reg1_factsheet_24.pdf.