North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff Summary Report
April 1, 2025

ITEM: 2

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on Resolution No. R1-2025-0003 (Proposed Resolution) to consider approval of Monitoring of Coastal Oceanography and Water Quality Work Plan and Biological Survey for Nordic Aquafarms California, LLC (Permittee), as required by National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R1-2023-0019 (Permit).

BOARD ACTION: The Board will consider approval of Proposed Resolution No. R1-2025-0003. The Proposed Resolution includes the Permittee's proposal for a water quality work plan and biological survey as required in the Permit.

BACKGROUND: The Permittee owns and operates an aquaculture and fish processing facility that is authorized to discharge 10.3 million gallons per day (MGD) through a 48-inch, 64 port diffuser outfall that terminates approximately 1.5 miles offshore in the Pacific Ocean. The Facility is currently scheduled to begin operation in 2030. The discharge pipe is owned and maintained by Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District (HBHRCD). HBHRCD is a Co-Permittee with Nordic Aquafarms California, LLC in the above-mentioned Permit.

As a condition of its approval of the Permit, the Regional Water Board required submittal, for the Regional Water Board's approval, a "Monitoring of Coastal Oceanography and Water Quality" Work Plan (section 6.3.2.3. of the Permit) (MCOWQ Work Plan). The main objectives of the MCOWQ Workplan are to measure current velocities, use of a conductivity, temperature, and depth (CTD) profiler to characterize spatial patterns of temperature and salinity of the ambient waters and any effects in proximity to the discharge, and to monitor nutrients (NHx, NOx, TN), suspended solids, turbidity, and chlorophyll a to confirm the predicted area of effect.

The Permit also includes a requirement for the Permittee to perform a "Biological Survey" as described in section 8.2 of the Monitoring and Reporting Plan. The goal of the Biological Survey is to characterize benthic and fish communities in the area of the outfall and at reference points to compare the aquatic species in pre-discharge and post-discharge scenarios.…The Proposed Resolution approves the MCOWQ Work Plan that includes a plan to conduct a supplemental Biological Survey as required by the

Permit. The MCOWQ Work Plan will commence with pre-discharge baseline monitoring. Baseline monitoring shall commence one to two years prior to beginning discharge from the facility. Post discharge receiving water monitoring shall commence following completion of Phase 1 operations[1] following the same methodology as the baseline monitoring. The post-discharge monitoring shall continue for three years to provide design criteria for the biological monitoring program.

DISCUSSION: Resolution No. R1-2025-0003 includes the details of the MCOWQ Work Plan and Biological Survey. The Permit requires the MCOWQ Work Plan and Biological Survey to be brought to the Regional Water Board for their approval. Regional Water Board staff evaluated the MCOWQ Work Plan and Biological Survey submitted by the Permittee and determined that it meets the requirements in the Permit.

A draft copy of the Proposed Resolution was posted on the Regional Water Board website and was available for public comment from January 22, 2025, through February 23, 2025 . One comment letter was received from the Permittee requesting editorial changes to the draft Resolution. Regional Water Board staff accepted the proposed editorial changes from the Permittee and made those changes to the Resolution. No substantive changes have been made to the draft Resolution.

Staff anticipate that the Proposed Resolution will be uncontested.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve Resolution No. R1-2025-0003, as proposed.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Proposed Resolution No. R1-2025-0003
2. Attachment 1: Monitoring of Coastal Oceanography and Water Quality Work Plan
3. Notice of Public Hearing
4. Response to Comments

[1] Phase 1 will include construction of the Phase 1 hatchery and production modules and the central utility structures, including connection to the intake and discharge infrastructure needed to bring water to the facility and discharge treated process wastewater. Following the construction of the Phase 1 production modules, construction will commence on the fish processing and administrative building. Access roadways will be built and expanded during each phase of construction, as construction proceeds along the site. As the construction footprint expands, a corresponding expansion of the stormwater management systems will be implemented to account for the increase in impervious surfaces.