

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT (Abigail Smith)
MEETING DATE: April 13, 2011

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: **Sonoma County Water Agency, Sonoma County Water Agency's Stream Maintenance Program, Sonoma County** – Adoption of Waste Discharge Requirements and Water Quality Certification

CHRONOLOGY: The Board has not considered this item before.

DISCUSSION: This item would issue water quality certification and waste discharge requirements to the Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) to implement its Stream Maintenance Program (Program) as specified in its Program Manual. The purpose of the Program and the Manual is to ensure that all stream maintenance activities are done in a manner that is protective and beneficial to the environment, and that maintenance activities are only conducted when absolutely necessary. The Revised Tentative Order (Appendix A) authorizes routine maintenance activities including sediment removal, vegetation management, and bank stabilization, within the Petaluma River and Sonoma Creek watersheds, consistent with the Program and the Manual.

In taking a new approach to stream maintenance, the Agency will reduce stream maintenance impacts by prioritizing and limiting the areas within stream channels where sediment and vegetation will be removed, rather than removing sediment and vegetation along entire channel lengths. While the Program's approach is aimed at minimizing impacts, some impacts will be unavoidable. These impacts were identified in the Program's Environmental Impact Report and include potential impacts to water quality and aquatic species (including habitat for special status species).

The Agency will work to minimize these impacts by implementing a vegetation management and planting plan that will reduce the need for overall maintenance at project sites, and through funding watershed projects that will ultimately reduce sediment loads to flood control channels.

To compensate for the unavoidable impacts, the Agency will implement a three-tiered approach to mitigation. Tier 1 and 2 entail creating or enhancing mitigation habitat. Tier 1 mitigation will occur at the project site, whereas Tier 2 mitigation will be conducted offsite and only pursued when impacts cannot be mitigated at the project site. Tier 3 mitigation involves providing mitigation funds to third parties for watershed-level mitigation projects.

A draft tentative order was circulated on February 18, 2011. The comment period ended March 21, 2011. Staff received comments only from the Agency (Appendix B). To resolve these comments, we made minor revisions to the tentative order as described in the response to comments (Appendix C). Staff also incorporated self-initiated editorial and clarifying revisions during this process.

**RECOMMEN-
DATION:**

Adoption of Revised Tentative Order

**CIWQS Place
Number:**

760352

APPENDICES:

- A. Revised Tentative Order
 - Attachment A: Monitoring and Reporting Program
 - Attachment B: [Stream Maintenance Program Manual](#)
 - Attachment C: [Appendices to SMP Manual](#)
- B. Comments on Tentative Order
- C. Response to Comments