



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

May 5, 2014

To: State Clearinghouse,
Responsible and Trustee Agencies,
Property Owners and Interested Parties

From: Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

DRY CREEK HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT, MILES 2-6

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project, Miles 2-6 (Dry Creek Project), in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Water Agency's Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA. The Water Agency will be the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA, and will consider all comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), including comments from responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and interested parties, regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR. This NOP describes the proposed project that will be analyzed in the EIR and identifies the issue areas that will be studied during the environmental review. Agencies and interested members of the public are invited to provide input on the scope of the environmental analysis and alternatives to be evaluated. The Dry Creek Project is required by the National Marine Fisheries Service's Russian River Biological Opinion issued in 2008.

SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY

The Water Agency is a special district created by the California Legislature and operates under the direction of a Board of Directors, composed of the members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The Water Agency's powers and duties, as authorized by the California Legislature, include the production and supply of surface water and groundwater for beneficial uses, control of flood waters, generation of electricity, provision of recreational facilities in connection with the Water Agency's facilities, and treatment and disposal of wastewater.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND NEED

From its outlet in Warm Springs Dam, Dry Creek meanders 14 miles to the Russian River. The creek is home to endangered coho salmon, and threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead (including steelhead raised at the Don Clausen Fish Hatchery). The creek also serves as a conduit for water that is released from Lake Sonoma by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control purposes and by the Water Agency for water supply.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued the *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation Improvement District in the Russian River Watershed* (Biological Opinion) on September 24, 2008.¹ NMFS' Biological Opinion is a culmination of more than a decade of consultation between the Water Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and NMFS regarding the impact of the Agency's and Corps' water supply and flood control activities on three fish species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act: Central California Coast steelhead, Central California Coast coho salmon, and California Coastal Chinook salmon. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) issued a consistency determination on November 9, 2009, finding that the Biological Opinion was consistent with the requirements of the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and adopted the measures identified in the Biological Opinion.

NMFS concluded in the Biological Opinion that the continued operations of Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Water Agency in a manner similar to recent historic practices, together with the Water Agency's stream channel maintenance activities and estuary management, are likely to jeopardize and adversely modify critical habitat for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead.

NMFS' Biological Opinion found that summer flows in the upper Russian River and Dry Creek are too high for optimal juvenile coho salmon and steelhead habitat. Current summer flows in Dry Creek range from 110 to 175 cubic feet per second (cfs), which makes it difficult for juvenile coho salmon and steelhead to thrive. NMFS' Biological Opinion recognizes that large reductions in the summertime flows in Dry Creek would impair the Water Agency's ability to deliver water to its customers. Therefore, the Biological Opinion requires habitat enhancement of six miles of Dry Creek to improve summer rearing conditions for coho salmon and steelhead while allowing the Water Agency to maintain the existing flow range in Dry Creek of 110 to 175 cfs for water supply purposes. The six miles of habitat enhancement are to be distributed over the entire length of Dry Creek below Warm Springs Dam, implemented at a minimum of eight locations on the creek. It is intended that the enhancements for summer rearing will also provide winter rearing and refugia habitat. The habitat enhancements are to be

¹ NMFS' Biological Opinion may be accessed online at www.sonomacountywater.org and may be reviewed at the Water Agency's office at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA.

implemented in phases to allow for evaluation of their effectiveness as the effort progresses.

One of the Water Agency's first steps toward meeting the requirements of the Biological Opinion was to conduct a habitat enhancement feasibility study on Dry Creek. This study, conducted for the Water Agency by Inter-Fluve, an environmental engineering firm specializing in the sustainable design and construction of river habitat restoration projects, helped to determine which areas of Dry Creek are candidates for habitat enhancement and evaluates the feasibility of designing projects that provide habitat enhancement while also accommodating high summertime flows and flood releases. Inter-Fluve also prepared a Dry Creek Current Conditions Inventory Report² which identifies numerous potential areas for habitat enhancement along Dry Creek.

On November 15, 2011, the Water Agency's Board of Directors approved the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Dry Creek Habitat Demonstration Project (Demonstration Project), which includes the implementation of the first mile of habitat enhancement projects along Dry Creek. In 2012, the Water Agency began construction of the Demonstration Project, located in the Lambert Bridge area (approximately midway between Warm Springs Dam and the Dry Creek confluence with the Russian River). Construction of the Demonstration Project is expected to continue through 2014. The purpose of the Demonstration Project is to demonstrate to regulators, landowners, and local decision-makers the feasibility of Dry Creek habitat enhancements on a smaller scale and, in particular, to determine how they could be constructed, what they may ultimately look like, and how effective they are before implementing the remaining five miles of habitat enhancements on Dry Creek. Those remaining five miles of habitat enhancements on Dry Creek are the focus of the current Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project, Miles 2-6.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Dry Creek Project is to provide habitat in Dry Creek for threatened and endangered fish in order to comply with NMFS' Biological Opinion.

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The project sites are located within and adjacent to the Dry Creek channel and on private properties from approximately one-half mile downstream of Warm Springs Dam to the confluence with the Russian River in an unincorporated area of Sonoma County, California (Figure 1).

The type and extent of habitat modifications is still being determined; however, NMFS' Biological Opinion stresses the availability of off-channel habitats in low velocity areas with substantial cover and features such as log or rock weirs, deflectors, log jams, constructed alcoves, side channels, backwaters, and dam pools that can successfully increase the quantity and quality of summer and winter rearing habitat for coho salmon

² Inter-Fluve. *Draft Current Conditions Inventory Report – Dry Creek: Warm Springs Dam to Russian River, Sonoma County, CA.* March 2010.

and steelhead.³ The Water Agency is in the process of identifying feasible and sustainable enhancement techniques for implementation along two miles (miles 2 and 3) of Dry Creek at the project scale. These two miles of habitat construction would not be located all within a two-mile contiguous stretch of Dry Creek. Instead, the two miles of habitat area would be spread throughout the 14-mile length of Dry Creek between Warm Springs Dam and the Russian River. Miles 2 and 3 will be subject to project-level CEQA analysis because detailed information for specific sites and proposed designs will be available in order to determine potential environmental impacts. The remaining three miles (miles 4, 5, and 6) of required habitat enhancement will be evaluated at a programmatic level, where impacts in general can be identified for the types of projects being considered and the types of habitat that exist within the Dry Creek Valley, but specific sites or proposed project design details are not yet known.

The proposed enhancements are likely to include combinations of pool and riffle enhancement, off-channel backwater and alcove enhancement and/or creation, side-channel enhancement and/or creation, and enhancement and stabilization of streambanks. For example, pools may be enhanced with large woody debris provide places for juvenile coho and steelhead to avoid predators, escape high water velocities, and find food. Enhancements of riffles may include expanding existing riffles or constructing new riffles in appropriate locations, which may also enhance pools by slowing pool velocities. Streambank enhancements may address chronic erosion in critical locations and provide additional cover along the channel margins.

Construction activities will vary depending upon which structures are installed and where they are located, but typically these types of construction activities can include dewatering the construction area, grading, installation of large boulders as anchor material, installation of large wood logs, planting of vegetation, and installation of erosion control measures (e.g. fabric, straw, seeding). While it is not anticipated that the habitat enhancement structures will require regular maintenance work over the long term, temporary irrigation may be required to maintain newly-installed vegetation and periodic vegetation management may take place in certain locations to enhance fish habitat. Maintenance activities may also include repair to damaged structures or adjustments to structures if they are not functioning as intended.

JURISDICTIONAL/PERMITTING AGENCIES

The following are public entities and agencies that may require review of the project or that may have jurisdiction over the project area:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region
- Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department
- State Water Resources Control Board

³ Biological Opinion, page 264.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AREAS

The EIR will analyze the potential environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively, associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed project. Specific areas of analysis in the EIR may include: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological and Fisheries Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems. Where feasible, mitigation measures will be proposed to reduce or avoid impacts. Other areas of analysis may be added based on input from the public and public agencies during the Notice of Preparation review period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, property owners, and interested persons and parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR after it is published and circulated for public review.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on June 12th, which is 38 days after the date of publication and one month after the date of the . Please include a name, address, and telephone number of a contact person in your agency for all future correspondence on this subject. **Please send comments to:**

**Anne Crealock
Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

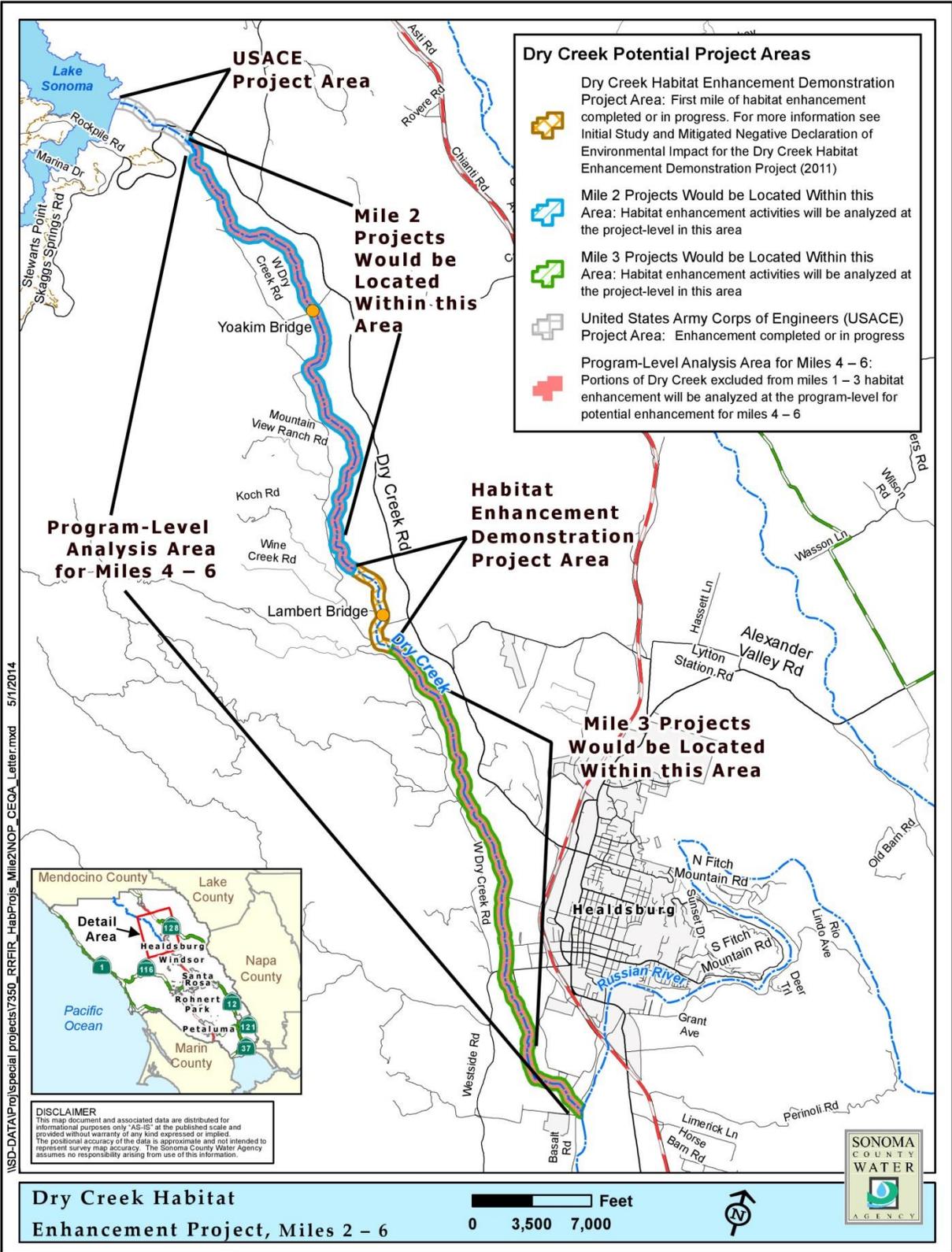
Comments may also be submitted electronically to: anne.crealock@scwa.ca.gov

SCOPING MEETING

The public and regulatory agencies are invited to attend a public meeting to learn more about the project, ask questions, or provide input. Comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit written comments at the scoping meeting; written comments may also be submitted anytime during the NOP review period.

Monday, May 12th
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Warm Springs Dam Visitor Center
3333 Skaggs Springs Road
Geyserville

Documents or files related to the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project are available for review online at www.sonomacountywater.org/drycreek, or at the Water Agency's office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403. If you have any questions regarding this NOP, or if you wish to update information on our mailing list, please contact Anne Crealock, Senior Environmental Specialist, at (707) 547-1948.



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**DRY CREEK HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT,
MILES 2 - 6**

Upcoming Scoping Meeting

Date: Monday, May 12th
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Warm Springs Dam Visitor Center
3333 Skaggs Springs Road, Geyserville

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