



## NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

January 28, 2009

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

**FROM:** Sonoma County Water Agency  
P.O. Box 11628  
Santa Rosa, CA 95406

### STREAM MAINTENANCE PROGRAM DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) has prepared a programmatic Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to assess potential environmental effects of its Stream Maintenance Program (Program). The Agency has established a 45-day review period which begins January 30, 2009 and extends to March 16, 2009.

**BACKGROUND:** The Agency is a special district that was created by the California Legislature in 1949 and operates under the direction of a Board of Directors (Board), composed of the members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The law that created the Agency and defines its powers and duties gives it the authority to produce and furnish surface water and groundwater for beneficial uses, to control flood waters, to generate electricity, and to provide recreational opportunities in connection with the Agency's facilities. Legislation enacted in 1994 added the treatment and disposal of wastewater to the Agency's powers and duties.

In 1958, nine geographical zones were established as a means of financing the construction and maintenance of flood protection facilities within Sonoma County. Zones 1A, 2A, and 3A have Zone Advisory Committees that annually prioritize and recommend capital improvement projects for their respective zones.

#### Facilities

The channel facilities that the Agency maintains include: (1) engineered channels - including owned in fee, and easement maintained flood control channels; (2) modified channels - natural channels with earthen beds and banks that have been modified to improve flow conveyance; and (3) natural channels - non-engineered and non-modified creek systems.

The Agency maintains approximately 76 miles of engineered channels that have been designed to a 10-, 25-, or 100-year storm flow capacity. Routine maintenance is required for proper functioning of channels for flood protection. The Agency also holds permissive maintenance easements on approximately 150 miles of modified and natural channels throughout Sonoma County.

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**PROGRAM LOCATION:** The program is principally located in Sonoma County, California. The majority of the engineered flood control channels are located within and around the Cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Petaluma, Sonoma, and the Town of Windsor.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

### Objectives

The Stream Maintenance Program has been developed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Provide adequate flood protection and channel conveyance capacity for channels under SCWA's authority;
2. Use an informed, systemic, and scientific understanding of the biotic and physical processes in watershed and individual stream reaches to guide maintenance activities and avoid and minimize environmental impacts;
3. Improve communication, coordination, and permitting efficiency between regulatory agencies and SCWA through an open and collaborative process;
4. Develop an adaptable and sustainable program that can respond to changing environmental, maintenance, and regulatory conditions;
5. Provide an administratively stable program that provides consistency in oversight and implementation of annual program activities;
6. Obtain and maintain 10-year programmatic permits that regulate program activities;
7. Adhere and comply with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

### Program Activities

The Program includes three primary activities: sediment management, vegetation management, and bank stabilization. These core maintenance activities occur mainly in engineered flood control channels, but may also occur in other facilities including other in-channel engineered structures, and sediment basins on an as-needed basis. In addition to the three core activities, the Program also includes other smaller and infrequent maintenance activities such as road maintenance, sediment removal around reservoir inlet structures, and debris removal. The Program also includes the transport and disposal of collected sediment and vegetation. Maintenance activities in modified and natural channels are limited to debris removal that could have a detrimental effect on channel stability at the Agency's discretion.

### *Sediment Management*

Sediment management refers to the removal of excess accumulated sediment from engineered flood control channels and facilities. This accumulated sediment reduces flow capacity and increases the potential for flooding. Ecologically, the accumulated sediment encourages cattail growth and reduced species and habitat diversity in the Program's channels. Sediment management activities seek to provide flow capacity while also enhancing geomorphic and ecologic channel functions.

Sediment management activities are generally conducted from June 15<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> when streams are typically at their driest. The number of sediment removal projects undertaken annually and the

quantity of sediment removed in a given year depend on recent weather and hydrologic conditions, as well as the frequency and extent of past maintenance activities.

#### *Bank Stabilization*

This activity involves the repair and stabilization of stream or reservoir banks when a weakened, unstable, or failing stream bank causes or threatens damage to an adjacent property; increases the flood hazard; threatens public safety; impairs roads, transportation, or access; generates erosion, increases downstream sediment yields; or impacts riparian habitat and/or other natural resource values.

Bank stabilization activities occur in engineered channels and other facilities including culvert outlets along stream banks or banks around reservoirs. Bank stabilization activities are generally conducted June 15<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> when streams are at their driest.

#### *Vegetation Management*

Vegetation management refers to the trimming, mowing, and removal of flow-constricting vegetation within the flood control channels and other maintained facilities. Vegetation management activities are conducted to maintain flow conveyance capacity, establish a canopy of riparian trees, and control invasive vegetation. Vegetation management and removal activities are relatively consistent from year to year, though locations and maintenance techniques change depending on existing canopy, recent growth and blockages. Vegetation management also includes the planting of new trees and shrubs in engineered channels in accordance with the Program's restoration and mitigation program. The long term goal of vegetation management is to improve and increase the riparian canopy along engineered and modified channels, through limbing, selective removal, and plantings. Over time, implementation of the Program will increase the riparian canopy cover over the stream bed. Increased channel shading is anticipated to reduce the density of undergrowth (such as cattails) and thereby reduce the need and frequency of future maintenance.

#### *Other Activities*

Other maintenance activities proposed under the Program include: maintaining channel access roads for accessibility; maintaining proper drainage along channel access roads (usually provided by a small V-ditch that runs parallel with the access roads); maintaining proper functioning of drop-inlet culverts which direct flow from V-ditches toward the flood control channels; maintaining culverts free of sediment and vegetative blockages; sediment removal around reservoir inlet structures; repairing fences along the channels, and removing or covering graffiti on Agency facilities. The majority of these activities are considered to be minor and small in scale. An important aspect of the Program is the monitoring and removal of trash and refuse from the Program's channels. Throughout the Program Area, SCWA removes furniture, mattresses, household appliances, various electronics including computers, tires and other vehicle parts, paint, and a host of other disposed household solvents and materials. SCWA routinely removes such trash and debris from the Program's channels as these materials represent a threat to water quality.

#### *Sediment Disposal*

SCWA anticipates that on average, the Program will remove between 10,000 and 25,000 cubic yards of sediment per year. Sediment removed from SCWA facilities will be hauled off-site using 10- or 20-cubic-yard dump trucks. Under the Program, disposal sites will be identified and permitted for use in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations, and appropriate landowner permits or agreements.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:** The proposed program is anticipated to result in potentially significant impacts in the following environmental recourse categories: Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology, Soils, and Seismicity; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology, Geomorphology, and Water Quality; Noise; Public Services and Facilities; Recreation; and Transportation and Traffic. In addition, the Draft EIR analyzes growth-related and cumulative impacts anticipated to result from the proposed program. Wherever feasible, mitigation measures are proposed. Per CEQA Section 15087(c)(6), sites identified under Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code have been found within 500 feet from various program components.

**DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY:**

**The Stream Maintenance Program Draft EIR is available for review, and download online at the Agency's website:**

<[www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org)>

**The Stream Maintenance Program Draft EIR is available for public review at the following locations during normal business hours:**

Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Sonoma County Library  
Central Library  
3<sup>rd</sup> and E St.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Sonoma County Library  
Petaluma Regional  
100 Fairgrounds Dr.  
Petaluma, CA 94952

Sonoma County Library  
Rohnert Park Regional  
6250 Lynne Conde Way  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

Sonoma County Library  
Windsor Regional  
9291 Old Redwood Highway  
Windsor, CA 95492

Sonoma County Library  
Sonoma Valley Regional  
755 West Napa  
Sonoma, CA 95476

**Where to obtain a copy of the Draft EIR:** Copies of the Draft EIR may be purchased at the Agency's Administrative Office, located at 404 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa, CA, or mailed upon request, as outlined on the attached order form. If you have any questions about obtaining the Stream Maintenance Program Draft EIR, please call (707) 526-5370.

**Where to review environmental documents incorporated by reference in the Draft EIR:** All environmental documents incorporated by reference in the Draft EIR are available for public review at the Agency's Administrative Office (see address above).

**AGENCY MEETINGS:** The SCWA Board of Directors is scheduled to hold one meeting during which they will receive comments from the public on the Draft EIR. The meeting will be held at the following location, date, and time:

Supervisors Chambers  
Sonoma County Administration Building  
575 Administration Dr., Room 102A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403-2887

Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2009  
2:10 PM

For a copy of the meeting agenda, or for more information on how to attend, please visit the Board of Director's website at: <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/board/index.htm>> or call 707- 565-2241.

**DEADLINE:** Comments must be received by the end of the 45-day public review period, which is from **January 30, 2009** through **March 16, 2009** at 5:00 pm. Please submit your comments in writing to:

**Keenan Foster, Senior Environmental Specialist**  
**Sonoma County Water Agency**  
**P.O. Box 11628**  
**Santa Rosa, CA 95406-1628**

**You may also submit comments electronically at the Agency's website:**  
<[www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org)>

If you have any questions regarding the Stream Maintenance Program Draft EIR, you may contact Keenan Foster, Senior Environmental Specialist at 707-547-1941 or at [keenan.foster@scwa.ca.gov](mailto:keenan.foster@scwa.ca.gov).

