



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT

# PUBLIC NOTICE

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Regulatory Branch  
333 Market Street

San Francisco, CA 94105-2197

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1. **INTRODUCTION:** The County of Sonoma, Department of Transportation and Public Works, 2300 County Center Drive, Suite B100, Santa Rosa, California 95403 (POC: Ms. Alynn Woodriff; 707-565-8357), has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for a Department of the Army Permit to continue the installation and removal of three seasonal road crossings on the lower reach of the Russian River, near the Town of Guerneville, in Sonoma County, California. These road crossings include Odd Fellows Road at Korbel, Summer Crossing Road at Guerneville Park, and Vacation Beach Road at Vacation Beach. These road crossings were previously authorized under Department of the Army Permit No. 216440N that expires on November 15, 2002. The proposed river crossings and their associated impacts on the aquatic ecosystem would be similar in scope and magnitude to the previously authorized river crossings, but the authorization period would be extended from five to ten years. This individual permit application is being processed pursuant to the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344).

2. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** As shown in the attached drawings, the seasonal road crossings include bridge platforms and gravel roadbeds that extend across the Russian River during the summer months. At the Odd Fellows Road and Vacation Beach Road crossings, each bridge structure consists of two 30-foot-long removable deck panels and permanent concrete abutments and piers that span the low-flow channel. A crane situated on the adjacent bank would install the deck panels on the abutments and piers. At the Summer Crossing Road crossing, a 80-foot-long permanent timber bridge spans the low-flow channel. Utilizing bulldozers and other heavy construction equipment, gravel roadbeds would be constructed across the remainder of the river channel to the bridge abutments. The constructed roadbeds are typically 14 to 16 feet in width with 2:1 sideslopes and 3 to 10 feet in height above the water surface elevation. Gravel and other fill material discharged in river channel would be the minimum volume necessary to construct the roadbeds but may vary on a seasonal basis due to changes in river morphology caused by high-flow events. In past years, gravel skimmed from nearby bars was used to construct the roadbeds; this material contained substantial fines and sediment that generated turbidity levels in excess of current State water quality standards when discharged into the river. To address the turbidity problem, the County of Sonoma is proposing to import clean river-run gravel to construct the base layer of each roadbed; where the roadbeds extend across flowing water, this

material would be placed a minimum of two feet above the water surface elevation. Local gravel and/or imported compactable fill material would be used to construct the remainder of each roadbed to the elevations of the bridge abutments and banks. In the late fall, the local gravels and imported compactable fill material would be skimmed and excavated from the roadbeds and stockpiled on adjacent County property outside of USACE jurisdiction. Imported, clean river-run gravel would be left in place to be displaced and distributed by subsequent high-flow events. The deck panels would be removed from the bridge piers and abutments and stored on-site.

**Odd Fellow Road at Korbel:** This road crossing provides a connection between River Road and Highway 116. The constructed roadbed would be approximately 145 feet in length from the south bank to the bridge abutment. Depending on the seasonal morphology of the exposed bar, the roadbed would displace 60 to 120 lineal feet of flowing water (0.14 to 0.28 acre) and require the discharge of up to 3,900 cubic yards (cys) of fill material; of this volume, approximately 2,000 cys of fill material would be discharged below the plane of ordinary high water, causing temporary disturbance to 0.35 acre of riverbed. Two 24-inch culverts and one 36-inch culvert would be installed in the roadbed to convey water from secondary low-flow channels that may incise the exposed bar.

**Summer Crossing Road at Guerneville Park:** This road crossing provides a connection between Neeley Road and Highway 116. The constructed roadbed would be approximately 200 feet in length from the north bank to a small island that provides access to the permanent bridge spanning the low-flow channel. Depending on the seasonal morphology of the exposed bar, the roadbed would displace up to 180 lineal feet of flowing water ((0.30 acre) and require the discharge of up to 3,200 cys of fill material; of this volume, approximately 2,400 cys of fill material would be discharged below the plane of ordinary high water, causing temporary disturbance to 0.34 acre of riverbed. Four 24-inch culverts would be installed in the roadbed to convey water from the secondary low-flow channel.

**Vacation Beach Road at Vacation Beach:** This road crossing provides a connection between Orchard Avenue and Highway 116. The constructed roadbed would be approximately 230 feet in length from the east bank to the bridge abutment. Depending on the seasonal morphology of the exposed bar, the roadbed would displace 15 to 80 lineal feet of

flowing water (0.02 to 0.13 acre) and require the discharge up to 1,960 cys of fill material; of this volume, approximately 600 cys of fill material would be discharged below the plane of ordinary high water, causing temporary disturbance to 0.28 acre of riverbed.

**3. SITE DESCRIPTION:** The lower reach of the Russian River is characterized by a series of low-gradient meander bends and the formation of point bars that tend to accumulate large volumes of sand and gravel originating from the upper watershed. Water flow exhibits extreme seasonal variation, from perennial to episodic in magnitude, even though the daily flows are partially regulated by Coyote and Warm Springs Dams. The quality of riparian habitat ranges from relatively intact to highly disturbed, with extensive areas essentially cleared for agricultural purposes and the adjacent banks armored with riprap. Where native riparian vegetation persists on the banks, it is comprised of Fremont cottonwood, Oregon ash, California black walnut, narrow-leaf willow, and arroyo willow. The exposed bars generally devoid of woody vegetation but are seasonally colonized by various herbaceous plant species, including white sweet clover, cocklebur, Jerusalem oak, birds-foot lotus, and Indian tobacco. Slightly elevated areas of these bars are often characterized by stands of narrow-leaf willow, arroyo willow, Pacific willow, and giant reed.

**4. PURPOSE AND NEED:** The County of Sonoma indicates the purpose and need for the project are to provide vehicular access across the Russian River for emergency services, local residents, recreational users, and tourists. The road crossing would be installed no earlier than May 15 and removed no later than October 15 of each year. During the summer months, the region experiences increased traffic from tourists and summer residents who utilize various recreational resources associated with the Russian River. The seasonal road crossings benefit the region's tourism and recreational economy by providing additional access to the river and reducing travel times and travel distances (from two to six miles) in lieu of alternative routes. When the seasonal road crossings are in place, the average daily traffic count is 1,215 vehicles on Odd Fellows Road, 932 vehicles on Summer Crossing Road, and 930 vehicles on Vacation Beach Road. Seasonal road crossings have been installed at these locations since the late 1800's.

**5. STATE APPROVALS:** State water quality certification or a waiver is a prerequisite for the issuance of a Department of the Army Permit to conduct any activity which may result in a fill or pollutant discharge into waters of the United States, pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1341). The County of Sonoma is hereby notified that, unless the USACE is provided a valid request for water quality certification to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) within 30 days of the date of this Public Notice, the District Engineer may consider the permit application to be withdrawn. No Department of the Army Permit will be issued until the County

of Sonoma obtains the required certification or waiver. A waiver will be explicit, or it may be presumed if the RWQCB fails or refuses to act on a valid request for water quality certification within 60 days after receipt, unless the District Engineer determines a shorter or longer period is a reasonable time for the RWQCB to act. Water quality issues should be directed to the Executive Officer, Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California 95403, by the close of the public notice comment period.

Section 307(c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1456(c)), requires a non-Federal applicant seeking a federal license or permit to conduct any activity occurring in or affecting the coastal zone to furnish a certification that indicates the activity conforms with the State's coastal zone management program. Generally, no federal license or permit will be issued until the appropriate State agency has concurred with the certification statement or has waived its right to do so. The project does not occur in the coastal zone, and a preliminary review by the USACE indicates that the project would not likely affect coastal zone resources. This presumption on effect, however, remains subject to a final determination by the California Coastal Commission.

#### **6. COMPLIANCE WITH VARIOUS FEDERAL LAWS:**

**National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA):** At the conclusion of the public comment period, the USACE will assess the environmental impacts of the project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190), the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508, and USACE Regulations at 33 CFR 325. The final NEPA analysis will normally address the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that result from regulated activities within the jurisdiction of the USACE and other non-regulated activities the USACE determines to be within its purview of Federal control and responsibility to justify an expanded scope of analysis for NEPA purposes. The final NEPA analysis will be incorporated in the decision documentation that provides the rationale for issuing or denying a Department of the Army Permit for the project.

**Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA):** Naturally spawned populations of coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) inhabiting the California Coast Province, including the Russian River Basin, have been federally-listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Critical habitat has been also designated for coho salmon to include all estuarine and river reaches accessible to salmonids below longstanding, naturally impassable barriers. Designated critical habitat consists of the water, streambed, and adjacent riparian zone. The lower reach of the Russian River principally serves as a migratory corridor for adult and juvenile salmonids.

Adult coho salmon generally enter the Russian River Basin and migrate upstream to spawn from late October to mid-February and die within two weeks after spawning. Yearling juvenile coho salmon tend to migrate downstream to the ocean from March to mid-June. Steelhead are capable of repeat spawning episodes. Adult steelhead enter the Russian River Basin from late fall through April and begin spawning in December. Juvenile steelhead will remain in fresh water from one to three years and tend to migrate downstream to the ocean during the spring and early summer months. Chinook salmon begin their upstream migration in the late fall, with the advent of heavy rains, and spawn shortly after returning to their natal streams; this migratory period may continue into March and generally peaks in December and January. Juvenile chinook salmon begin their downstream migration in late March or early April, with out migration peaking in mid-May. No other federally-listed threatened or endangered species are known to occur within the immediate project area or in the project vicinity.

The USACE has made a preliminary determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect threatened salmonids or critical habitat. To address project-related impacts to salmonid fish species and designated critical habitat for coho salmon, the USACE will initiate informal consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, pursuant to Section 7(a) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). The consultation process must be concluded prior to the issuance of any Department of the Army Permit for the project.

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996 (MSFCMA):** The Russian River Basin occurs within essential fish habitat for the Pacific Salmon Fishery that includes both coho and chinook salmon. Essential fish habitat for these species essentially corresponds to the constituent habitat elements of designated critical habitat for coho salmon. The USACE has made a preliminary determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect essential fish habitat or federally managed fisheries in California waters. The aforementioned Section 7 consultation process will also address project-related impacts to essential fish habitat.

**National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA):** Based on a review of survey data on file with various City, State, and Federal agencies, no historic or archaeological resources are known to occur on-site or in the project vicinity. Since the exposed bars are comprised of sediments recently deposited by high water-flow events, the proposed bar skimming work would not likely encounter intact archaeological resources. If unrecorded historic or archaeological resources were discovered during excavation work, such operations would be suspended until the USACE concluded Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer to take into account any project-related impacts to these resources.

**7. COMPLIANCE WITH THE 404(b)(1) GUIDELINES:**

Projects resulting in dredged or fill material discharges into waters of the United States must comply with the Guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency under Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344(b)). An evaluation pursuant to the Guidelines indicates the project is dependent on location in or proximity to waters of the United States to achieve the basic project purpose of providing vehicular access across the Russian River. This conclusion raises the (rebuttable) presumption of the availability of a practicable alternative to the project-related discharges into waters of the United States that would result in less adverse impact to the aquatic ecosystem, while not causing other major adverse environmental consequences. The County of Sonoma has been informed to submit an analysis of project alternatives to be reviewed for compliance with the Guidelines.

**8. PUBLIC INTEREST EVALUTION:** The decision on whether to issue a Department of the Army Permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the project and its intended use on the public interest. Evaluation of the probable impacts requires a careful weighing of the public interest factors relevant in each particular case. The benefits that may accrue from the project must be balanced against any reasonably foreseeable detriments of project implementation. The decision on permit issuance will, therefore, reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. Public interest factors which may be relevant to the decision process include conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

**9. CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS:** The USACE is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the project. All comments received by the USACE will be considered in the decision on whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a Department of the Army Permit for the project. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, and other environmental factors addressed in a final Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the project.

**10. SUBMITTING COMMENTS:** During the specified comment period, interested parties may submit written comments to the San Francisco District, Regulatory Branch, North Section, citing the applicant's name and Public Notice Number in the letter. Comments may include a request for a

public hearing on the project prior to a determination on the permit application; such requests shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. All comments will be forwarded to the County of Sonoma for resolution or rebuttal. Additional information may be obtained from the County of Sonoma or by contacting Mr. Peter Straub of the Regulatory Branch at telephone 415-977-8443.