



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
San Francisco District

SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT

Regulatory Division  
450 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3404

# PUBLIC NOTICE

PROJECT: US Coast Guard Station Noyo River Maintenance Dredging

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COMMENTS DUE DATE: 08-28-2019

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1. **INTRODUCTION:** United States Coast Guard (USCG), 1301 Clay Street, Suite 700N, Oakland, California 94612, has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), San Francisco District, for a 10-year Department of the Army Permit to perform maintenance dredging in the area immediately adjacent to the dock at USCG Station Noyo River. The purpose of the proposed dredging is to return the USCG Station Noyo River berth to its originally permitted depth to allow safe navigational depths for USCG boats. This Department of the Army Permit application is being processed pursuant to the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 1344 *et seq.*) and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 403 *et seq.*), and Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 1413 *et seq.*).

## 2. PROPOSED PROJECT:

**Project Site Location:** As shown on Figure 1 of the attached drawings, the USCG Station Noyo River is located approximately 0.5 mile upstream from the mouth of the Noyo River leading into Noyo Bay, in Fort Bragg, Mendocino County, California. (lat: 39.4239°N, long: -123.8027° W).

**Project Site Description:** The Coast Guard homeports several vessels at USCG Station Noyo River which patrol the waters of northern California providing a variety of safety and law enforcement series. The 0.76 acre dredge footprint encompasses the area adjacent to the dock at USCG Station Noyo River.

**Project Description:** As shown in the attached drawings, the applicant plans to remove approximately 126 cubic yards (cys) of sediment from the 0.76-acre (approximately) dredge footprint in an initial episode and a total of 10,000 cys over the life of the permit. Existing depths range from -4 to -14 feet mean lower low water (MLLW). The design depth for the USCG Station Noyo River is -10 feet MLLW plus an additional 2-foot overdredge allowance. The material would be removed using a clamshell or hydraulic dredge and removed by truck or pumped through pipes to an upland disposal site.

Prior to each dredging episode, representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Coastal Commission (CCC), North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and the Corps will evaluate the sampling and analysis plans in conformity with testing manuals, and from the test results determine if the sediment to be dredged is suitable for upland placement.

**Basic Project Purpose:** The basic project purpose comprises the fundamental, essential, or irreducible purpose of the project, and is used by the Corps to determine whether the project is water dependent. The basic purpose of the project is navigation.

**Overall Project Purpose:** The overall project purpose serves as the basis for the Section 404(b)(1) alternatives analysis, and is determined by further defining the basic project purpose in a manner that more specifically describes the applicant's goals for the project, while allowing a reasonable range of

alternatives to be analyzed. The overall project purpose is maintaining safe navigational depths for USCG vessels to access the USCG Station Noyo River berths.

**Project Impacts:** The detrimental effects on erosion/sedimentation rates, substrate, water quality, fish habitat, air quality, and noise are all expected to be minor and short term. No permanent negative effects such as undesired substrate alteration, decreased water quality, loss of fish habitat, decrease air quality, and noise pollution are anticipated. The beneficial effects on economics, employment, safety and navigation, and of the removal of contaminants, are major and long term.

**Proposed Mitigation:** The proposed maintenance dredging would not result in a permanent loss of waters of the United States. Temporary impacts to aquatic resources would be mitigated by proposed minimization and avoidance measures, including the use of silt curtains and conducting work only within the permitted environmental work windows. Therefore, no compensatory mitigation is proposed or required.

### 3. STATE AND LOCAL APPROVALS:

**Water Quality Certification:** 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 of 1972, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 1341 *et seq.*). The applicant has recently submitted an application to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) to obtain water quality certification for the project. No Department of the Army Permit will be issued until the applicant obtains the required certification or a waiver of certification. A waiver can be explicit, or it may be presumed if the RWQCB fails or refuses to act on a complete application for water quality certification within 60 days of 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, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California 95403, by the close of the comment period.

**Coastal Zone Management:** Section 307(c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1456(c) *et seq.*), requires a federal applicant seeking a federal license or permit to conduct any activity occurring in or affecting the coastal zone to obtain a Consistency Certification that indicates the activity conforms with the state's coastal zone management program. Generally, no federal license or permit will be granted until the appropriate state agency has issued a Consistency Certification or has waived its right to do so.

Coastal zone management issues should be directed to the District Manager, California Coastal Commission, North Coast District Office, 710 E Street, Suite 200, Eureka, California 95501, by the close of the comment period.

### 4. COMPLIANCE WITH VARIOUS FEDERAL LAWS:

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** Upon review of the Department of the Army Permit application and other supporting documentation, the Corps has made a *preliminary* determination that the project neither qualifies for a Categorical Exclusion nor requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the purposes of NEPA. At the conclusion of the public comment period, the Corps will assess the environmental impacts of the project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347), the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, and the Corps Regulations at 33 C.F.R. Part 325. The final NEPA analysis will normally address the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that result from regulated activities within the jurisdiction of the Corps and other non-regulated activities the Corps

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. The final NEPA analysis and supporting documentation will be on file with the San Francisco District, Regulatory Division.

**Endangered Species Act (ESA):** Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*), requires federal agencies to consult with either the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to insure actions authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any federally-listed species or result in the adverse modification of designated critical habitat. Based on this review, the Corps has made a preliminary determination that the following federally-listed species and designated critical habitat are present at the project location or in its vicinity, and may be affected by project implementation: California coastal ESU Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), northern California ESU steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Central California coast ESU coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and North American green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*) may be affected, but are not likely to be adversely affected by the proposed dredging. As lead federal agency, the USCG has initiated consultation with NMFS on impacts to ESA listed species.

If a permit is issued for this proposed project it will contain a condition that dredging is allowed only from July 15 through October 15 to minimize and avoid impacts to ESA listed species. Dredging outside this environmental work window would require consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act) and approval from the NMFS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA):** Section 305(b)(2) of the MSFCMA of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1801 *et seq.*), requires federal agencies to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on all proposed actions authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency that may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH). EFH is defined as those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity. EFH is designated only for those species managed under a Federal Fisheries Management Plan (FMP), such as the *Pacific Groundfish FMP*, the *Coastal Pelagics FMP*, and the *Pacific Coast Salmon FMP*. The Corps has conducted a review of digital maps prepared by NMFS depicting EFH to determine the presence or absence of EFH in the project area. Based on this review, the Corps has made a preliminary determination that EFH is present at the project location or in its vicinity, and that the critical elements of EFH may be adversely affected by project implementation, but would not have a substantial adverse impact on EFH or federally managed fisheries in California. The proposed project is located within an area managed under the Pacific Groundfish, the Coastal Pelagic and/or the Pacific Coast Salmon FMPs.

The determination is based on the fact that the area immediately surrounding the dock at USCG Station Noyo River has been dredged in the past and, therefore, the site is considered to be previously disturbed and the proposed activity would result in no new impacts to EFH. The recently-deposited bottom sediments to be dredged during maintenance dredge activities are composed mainly (approximately 70%) of sand. It is presumed that fish species utilizing the area would be using it for feeding during a period of growth. When dredging occurs, the fish should be able to find ample and suitable foraging areas in and along the Noyo River. As the infaunal community recovers in the dredged area, fish species will return to feed. Therefore, the proposed dredging is expected to have only short-term, minor adverse effects on EFH.

**Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA):** Section 302 of the MPRSA of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1432 *et seq.*), authorizes the Secretary of Commerce, in part, to designate areas of ocean waters, such as the Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay, as National Marine Sanctuaries for the purpose of preserving or restoring such areas for their conservation, recreational, ecological, or aesthetic values. After such designation, activities in sanctuary waters authorized under other authorities are valid only if the Secretary of Commerce certifies that the activities are consistent with Title III of the MPRSA. No Department of the Army Permit will be issued until the applicant obtains the required certification or permit. The project does not occur in sanctuary waters, and a *preliminary* review by the Corps indicates the project would not likely affect sanctuary resources. This presumption of effect, however, remains subject to a final determination by the Secretary of Commerce, or his designee, by the close of the comment period.

**National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA):** Section 106 of the NHPA of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 470 *et seq.*), requires federal agencies to consult with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the *National Register of Historic Places*. Section 106 of the NHPA further requires federal agencies to consult with the appropriate Tribal Historic Preservation Officer or any Indian tribe to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, including traditional cultural properties, trust resources, and sacred sites, to which Indian tribes attach historic, religious, and cultural significance.

Because the dock area has been previously dredged, historic or archeological resources are not expected to occur in the project vicinity. If unrecorded archaeological resources are discovered during project implementation, those operations affecting such resources will be temporarily suspended until the Corps concludes Section 106 consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer or the Tribal

Historic Preservation Officer to take into account any project related impacts to those resources.

**5. COMPLIANCE WITH THE SECTION 404(b)(1) GUIDELINES:** Projects resulting in discharges of dredged or fill material 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 disposal of dredged material is not dependent on location in or proximity to waters of the United States to achieve the basic project purpose. This conclusion raises the (rebuttable) presumption of the availability of a less environmentally damaging practicable alternative to the project that does not require the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S.

The applicant has submitted an analysis of project alternatives which is being reviewed by the Corps for compliance with the Guidelines to determine if the project is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative.

**6. 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.

**7. CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS:** The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; Native American Nations or other tribal governments; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the project. All comments received by the Corps 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 or public interest 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.

**8. SUBMITTING COMMENTS:** During the specified comment period, interested parties may submit written comments to Jessica Vargas, San Francisco District, Operations and Readiness Division, 450 Golden Gate Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1111, San Francisco, California 94102-3404; comment letters should cite the project name, applicant name, and public notice number to facilitate review by the Permit Manager. Comments may include a request for a public hearing on the project prior to a determination on the Department of the Army permit application; such requests shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. All substantive comments will be forwarded to the applicant for resolution or rebuttal. Additional project information or details on any subsequent project modifications of a minor nature may be obtained from the applicant and/or agent, or by contacting the Permit Manager by telephone or e-mail cited in the public notice letterhead. An electronic version of this public notice may be viewed under the *Current Public Notices* tab on the US Army Corps of Engineers, S. F. District website: <http://www.spn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory>.