North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Notice of Preparation

TO: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

FROM LEAD AGENCY: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board 5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A Santa Rosa, CA 95403

SUBJECT: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges Related to Sediment Reduction and Road Maintenance and Construction Activities in the Gualala River Watershed

Notice Date: July 14, 2025

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

AND

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT SCOPING MEETINGS

FOR

General Waste Discharge Requirements and General Water Quality Certification for Discharges Related to Sediment Reduction and Road Maintenance and Construction Activities in the Gualala River Watershed

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board) as the Lead Agency, is planning to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 and State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines[1].

[1] California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Div. 6, Chap. 3.

Purpose of the Notice of Preparation
This Notice of Preparation (NOP) serves to 1) solicit information on the scope of the environmental analysis for the Proposed Project and 2) notify the public and regulatory agencies that the North Coast Water Board will prepare a draft EIR to assess potential adverse environmental impacts that may result from implementing the Proposed Project.

I. Project Overview

Title
General Waste Discharge Requirements and General Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification (Water Quality Certification) for Discharges Related to Sediment Reduction and Road Maintenance and Construction Activities in the Gualala River Watershed (Gualala Roads Permit).

Location
The Gualala Roads Permit will apply to rural roads managed by private landowners in the Gualala River Watershed. The Gualala River Watershed is located within Sonoma and Mendocino counties (Figure 1). The Gualala Roads Permit will focus on activities conducted to minimize sediment discharges from rural roads on private lands within the Gualala River Watershed.

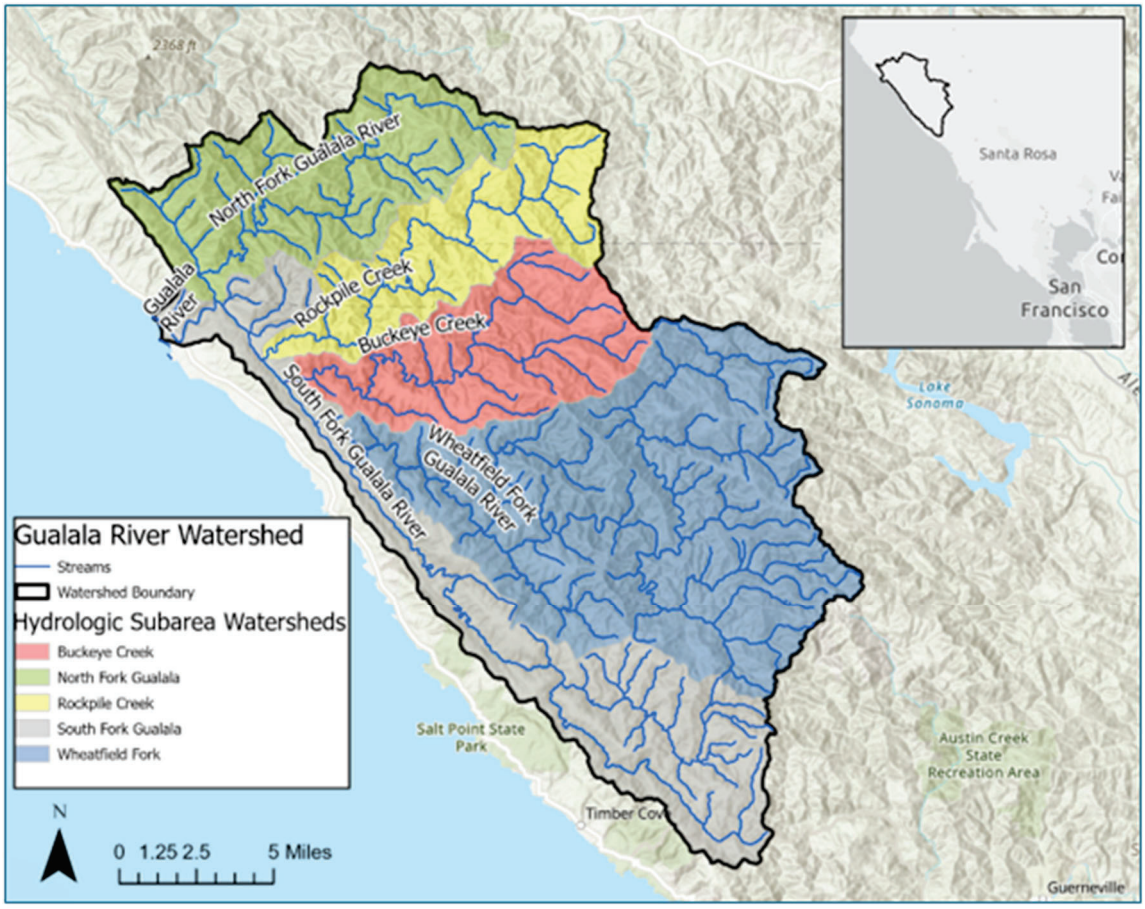

Figure 1. Proposed Project area map depicting Gualala River Watershed in the North Coast Region.

Summary

The Gualala Roads Permit proposes to reduce and regulate sediment discharges from private, rural roads in the Gualala River Watershed to implement the Clean Water Act, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, Statewide Nonpoint Source Enforcement and Implementation Policy, and Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region. Roads constitute the largest anthropogenic source of chronic and episodic sediment delivery to waterbodies in the watershed. The purpose of the Gualala Roads Permit is to implement the Sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Gualala River Watershed by requiring treatment of sediment sources on private, rural roads and ensure that sediment reduction activities are conducted in a manner that prevent and minimize water quality impacts. The Gualala Roads Permit would include a Water Quality Certification in conjunction with Waste Discharge Requirements to provide comprehensive coverage for those activities proposed for regulation under the Gualala Roads Permit.

The Gualala Roads Permit proposes to require private landowners to reduce sediment sources and improve and maintain their rural roads and comply with best management practices included in permit requirements and project specific California Environmental

Quality Act (CEQA) analyses. Most of the potential water quality impacts connected to these road improvement activities are associated with ground disturbance, which has the potential to cause erosion and sediment delivery to watercourses and alter riparian systems that may reduce shade and affect water temperatures. Permittees will avoid or mitigate potential water quality impacts by adhering to Gualala Roads Permit requirements and supplemental mitigation and monitoring measures.

The Gualala Roads Permit would also provide regulatory coverage for required sediment reduction activities, including road and watercourse reconstruction (upgrading), road and watercourse removal (decommissioning), road surface hydrologic disconnection treatments, and road maintenance activities. Although it is not a required activity, the Gualala Roads Permit would also cover the construction of new roads, when necessary. The potential impacts of new road construction will be addressed during project specific approvals by local lead agencies (e.g., CalFire, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, County Permits, etc.).

II. Potential Environmental Effects

The environmental analysis that will be conducted after conclusion of the public scoping period may determine that the Proposed Project would not impact or have significant impacts to many of the Proposed Project areas. However, if any potentially significant adverse environmental impacts are identified through the environmental analysis, feasible mitigation measures to avoid and/or minimize the impacts will be identified and will be required as part of the Gualala Roads Permit.

The EIR will focus on impacts that were determined in the Initial Study to be potentially significant or less than significant with mitigation. The following potential environmental effects of the project will be analyzed:

- Agriculture / Forestry Resources
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Wildfire

III. Project Alternatives

A reasonable range of potentially feasible project alternatives, in addition to the no project alternative, will be developed and evaluated in the EIR. The North Coast Water Board will consider comments of responsible and trustee agencies, area Tribes, and the public provided during the scoping period in the development of project alternatives.

IV. Opportunities to Provide Input

There will be a 30-day CEQA scoping period starting July 14, 2025, and ending on August 15, 2025.

The North Coast Water Board is requesting comments from the public and public agencies on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR.

After the scoping period, staff will review written and oral comments in preparation of the draft EIR, which we anticipate will be published in summer 2026. All CEQA Scoping comments received will be included in the final administrative record for the Gualala Roads Permit.

V. Scoping Meetings

There will be two CEQA scoping meetings held during the 30-day scoping period:

Monday, July 21, 2025, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. (*remote participation only*)

Join Zoom Meeting
Launch Meeting - Zoom

Call-in Number: +1 669 900 9128
Meeting ID: 885 2539 3841
Passcode: A6GC7BB3

Thursday, July 24, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. *(in-person meeting only)*

Join Meeting at
Gualala Arts Center
46501 Old Stage Road
Gualala, CA 95445

If you are unable to participate in the above in-person/virtual CEQA scoping meetings, please contact RB1-Gualala@waterboards.ca.gov as soon as possible if you wish to arrange a separate meeting**.**

Agencies and the public will be able to provide oral comments directly through the in-person/online platform or by calling the number listed above.

A recorded video and audio broadcast of the virtual scoping meeting(s) will be available on the Gualala Roads Permit Homepage after the meetings:
Watershed Assessment and Recovery Unit | Northcoast Water.

VI. Accessibility

Please contact RB1-Gualala@waterboards.ca.gov or Devon Rabellino at (707) 576-2701 at least three days before the scheduled engagement event for disability accommodations. Deaf users may contact the California Relay Service at (800) 735-2929 or voice line at (800) 735-2922.

VII. Language Services

This meeting will be offered in English. To request translation of written documents, interpretation services in another language, or sign language services, please use one of the following options at least ten (10) business days before the meeting:

- Submit a Language Access Form (Page 1 of 6) online
- Contact the Office of Public Engagement, Equity, and Tribal Affairs (OPEETA) at: 916-341-5254 or at: opp-languageservices@waterboards.ca.gov.

VIII. Submission of Written Comments

Written comments on the proposed content and scope of the environmental analysis must be received by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 15, 2025**. You can submit comment letters electronically or by mail.

Please send your comments to the North Coast Water Board, as directed below, along with the name of a contact person, if you are a public agency.

Comments can be sent electronically to the following email address: RB1-Gualala@waterboards.ca.gov.

Written comments should be sent to the address below or by fax to (707) 523-0135.

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Attn: Gualala Roads Permit

IX. Future Notices

Any change in the date or time of the scoping meeting will be publicly noticed on the North Coast Water Board website and though the Proposed Project email list. If you would like to receive updates on the Gualala Roads Permit, please sign up for the email list.

To sign up for the Proposed Project email list, access the California Water Boards at the web address listed below, check the box for “Gualala River Watershed - TMDL” (Watershed Assessment and Recovery Unit | Northcoast Water).

X. Contact Information

Please direct questions about the Gualala Roads Permit to the General Inbox at RB1-Gualala@waterboards.ca.gov or Devon Rabellino at 707-576-2701 or via email at Devon.Rabellino@waterboards.ca.gov.

Digitally signed by Valerie Quinto
Date: 2025.07.10 11:10:44 -07'00'

7/10/25

Valerie Quinto
Executive Officer