

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/13/2011 11:00:00 AM

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Comments: On August 8, 2011, we received the Forest Service public scoping document for the . proposed Klamath National Forest (KNF) Crawford Vegetation Management Project. In a letter to KNF dated November 10, 2010, the Crawford Vegetation Management Project was listed as being eligible as being grandfathered into the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWB) Order No. R1-2010-0029, Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Nonpoint Source Discharges Related to Certain Federal Land Management Activities on National Forest Service Lands in the North Coast Region (2010 Waiver). Projects meeting these conditions were considered under development and expecting to meet 2004 Waiver criteria and conditions, and hence can be grandfathered into the 2010 Waiver.

On August 25, 2011, a letter from the RWB was sent to you regarding the KNF Crawford Vegetation Management Project. This letter was written with the mistaken assumption that since scoping was being initiated for this project, it would be covered under the 2010 Waiver. It was later found that this project qualified as being eligible to be grandfathered into the 2010 Waiver but operate under the criteria and conditions of the 2004 Waiver. This letter clarifies the criteria and conditions of the 2004 Waiver.

KNF is proposing the project in response to years of fire suppression and past management activities, which have led to overly dense stands, conifer encroachment on meadows, and excessively high fuel loadings. The proposed treatments include commercial thinning and fuel treatment within natural stands (268 acres), commercial thinning and fuel treatment within plantations (179 acres), non[shy] commercial and commercial thinning and fuel treatment of approximately 41 acres within 6 meadow/riparian restoration areas, non-commercial thinning and mastication on approximately 108 acres, and non-commercial thinning and fuel treatment of approximately 1,027 acres of underburning.

Staff of the RWB have reviewed the scoping letter for the proposed Crawford Vegetation Management Project. Pursuant to the Management Agency Agreement (MAA) between the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the California State Water Resources Control Board, your agency will facilitate early State involvement in the project planning process for all projects that have a potential to impact water quality. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed Crawford Vegetation Management Project and wish to remain on the project's mailing list.

The scoping letter asked for comments on the proposed project. As background, State law assigns responsibility for protection of water quality within North Coast watersheds to the Regional Water Board. The RWB implements and enforces the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act, California Water Code [sect]13000 et seq.) and the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast (Basin Plan). All forest projects must comply with all substantive and procedural requirements of the Porter-Cologne Act and the Basin Plan. Additionally, the Crawford Vegetation Management Project must comply with the RWB's Categorical Waiver For Discharges Related to Timber Harvest Activities On Federal Lands Managed by the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service in the North Coast Region, Order No.R1-2004-0015. Please review Order No. R1-

2004- 0015 and familiarize yourself with its eligibility criteria and conditions. The full text of Order R1-2004-0015, a guidance document, and pertinent forms may be accessed at the following web address:

[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/northcoast/water issues/programs/limber operations/limber waiver/](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/northcoast/water%20issues/programs/limber%20operations/limber%20waiver/)

Order R1-2004-0015 requires that, prior to commencement of timber harvest activities, the USFS shall, in writing, file with the RWB a Notice of Intent (NOi), in which the USFS certifies they understand and intend to comply with all criteria and conditions of this Order and applicable water quality regulations. The NOi shall be signed by the Forest Supervisor or their duly authorized USFS representative. The waiver can be revoked at any time if the RWB's Executive Officer determines that the criteria and conditions set forth in the Categorical Waiver are not met.

Two of the more important eligibility criteria are B.1. and B.2., which state:

B.1. The USFS has conducted a multi-disciplinary review of the proposed Project, including review by watershed specialists, and has included specific BMPs in conformance with the Water Quality Management Plan for National Forest System Lands in California, and additional measures as needed, in the proposed Project."

B.2. The USFS has conducted a cumulative watershed effects (CWE) analysis of the proposed Project and included specific measures in the proposed Project needed to reduce the potential for CWEs in order to assure compliance with applicable water quality control plans. The scale and intensity of cumulative watershed effects (CWE) analyses will be commensurate with the scale and intensity of the Projects seeking coverage under this waiver. Cumulative watershed effects analyses may range from qualitative reasoning to application and interpretation of quantitative models."

One of the more noteworthy conditions that applies to all projects that are enrolled in the Waiver is Order item C.3, which is listed below.

C.3. The USFS shall submit and comply with a monitoring program prior to commencement of timber harvest activities when: (1) the USFS's cumulative water effects analysis indicates that the project may cause any water watershed or sub-watershed to exceed a threshold of concern as determined by various models (i.e. Equivalent Roaded Acres (ERA),

[middot] Surface Erosion (USLE), Mass Wasting (GEO), etc.); or (2) the cumulative watershed effects analysis indicates that the Project may increase risk values, as determined by various models (i.e. Equivalent Roaded Acres (ERA), Surface Erosion (USLE), Mass Wasting (GEO), etc.), in any watershed or subwatershed that already exceeds a threshold of concern prior to project implementation. The Executive Officer retains the discretion to waive this requirement, or to impose monitoring requirements in other situations, as appropriate.

The environmental documentation must also contain a quantitative analysis of CWEs, including thresholds of concern for the project area, so we may assess the project's potential to impact water quality and Categorical Waiver applicability. The proposed project should address the project's conformance with the Basin Plan and contain project features and mitigation measures that are designed to minimize and/or reduce cumulative impacts. Additional issues that should be addressed in the environmental documentation include: proposed operations in Riparian Reserves, wet weather operations, erosion control on roads and landings, long term road maintenance for both system and non-system roads to be used, and any mitigation measures to offset cumulative watershed effects.

We look forward to working with the Project Team on the proposed Crawford[.] Vegetation Management Project. If you have any questions, please contact me at (707) 576-2030.