

June 24, 2010



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION  
OF INITIAL STUDY**

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

**FROM:** Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Boulevard  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**DRY CREEK HABITAT ENHANCEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) is preparing an Initial Study for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Demonstration Project. An Initial Study is a preliminary analysis of a project's potential environmental impacts used to determine whether a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report will be prepared. It is a public document that analyzes the potential environmental effects related to construction, operation, and maintenance of a project and describes ways to reduce or avoid possible environmental damage.

The Initial Study for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Demonstration Project will be prepared in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Agency's Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA. The Agency will act as the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA, and will consider all comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), including comments from responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and interested parties regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the Initial Study. Agencies and interested members of the public are invited to provide input on the scope and content of the environmental information that should be included in the Initial Study.

**PROJECT BACKGROUND AND NEED:** The Agency was created in 1949 by the California Legislature as a special district to provide flood protection and water supply services. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors acts as the Agency's Board of Directors. The Agency's powers and duties, as authorized by the California Legislature, include the production and supply of surface water and groundwater for beneficial uses, control of flood waters, generation of electricity, providing recreational facilities (in connection with the Agency's facilities), and the treatment and disposal of wastewater.

From its outlet in Warm Springs Dam, Dry Creek meanders 14 miles to the Russian River. The creek is home to endangered coho salmon and threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead (including steelhead raised at the Don Clausen Fish Hatchery). The creek also serves as a conduit for water that is released from Lake Sonoma by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the winter for flood control purposes and by the Agency in the summer for water supply.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued the *Biological Opinion for Water Supply, Flood Control Operations, and Channel Maintenance conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and the Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control and Water Conservation District in the Russian River Watershed* (Russian River BO) on September 24, 2008.<sup>1</sup> NMFS' Russian River BO is a culmination of more than a decade of consultation between the Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and the NMFS regarding the impact of the Agency's and Corps' water supply and flood control activities on three fish species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act: Central California Coast steelhead, Central California Coast coho salmon, and California Coastal Chinook salmon. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) issued a consistency determination on November 9, 2009, finding that the Russian River BO was consistent with the requirements of the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and adopted the measures identified in the BO.

NMFS concluded in the Russian River BO that the continued operations of Coyote Valley Dam and Warm Springs Dam by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and SCWA in a manner similar to recent historic practices, together with the Agency's stream channel maintenance activities and estuary management, are likely to jeopardize and adversely modify critical habitat for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead.

NMFS' Russian River BO found that summer flows in the upper Russian River and Dry Creek are too high for optimal juvenile coho salmon and steelhead habitat. Current summer flows in the creek range from 110 to 175 cubic feet per second (cfs), which makes it difficult for the juvenile fish to thrive. NMFS' Russian River BO recognizes that large reductions in the summertime flows in Dry Creek would impair the Agency's ability to deliver water to its customers. Therefore, the Russian River BO requires habitat enhancement of six miles of Dry Creek to improve summer rearing conditions for coho salmon and steelhead while allowing the Agency to maintain the existing flow range in Dry Creek of 110 to 175 cfs for water supply purposes. The six miles of habitat enhancement are to be distributed over the entire length of Dry Creek below Warm Springs Dam, implemented at a minimum of eight locations on the creek. It is intended that the enhancements for summer rearing will also provide winter rearing and refugia habitat. The habitat enhancements are to be implemented in phases to allow for evaluation of their effectiveness as the effort progresses.

One of the Agency's first steps toward meeting the requirements of NMFS' Russian River BO is to conduct a habitat enhancement feasibility study on Dry Creek. This study, being conducted for the Agency by Inter-Fluve, an environmental engineering firm specializing in the sustainable design and construction of river habitat restoration projects, will determine which areas of Dry Creek are candidates for habitat enhancement and will evaluate the feasibility of designing projects that provide habitat enhancement while also accommodating high summertime flows. Inter-Fluve has prepared a draft Dry Creek Current Conditions Inventory Report<sup>2</sup> in which they identify numerous promising areas for habitat enhancement along Dry Creek.

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<sup>1</sup> NMFS' Russian River BO may be accessed online at [www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org) and may be reviewed at SCWA's office at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA.

<sup>2</sup> Inter-Fluve. *Draft Current Conditions Inventory Report – Dry Creek: Warm Springs Dam to Russian River, Sonoma County, CA*. March 2010.

The Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Demonstration Project would implement habitat enhancement projects at two to three of the areas of interest identified by Inter-Fluve. The purpose of the project is to demonstrate to regulators, landowners, and local decision makers the feasibility of Dry Creek habitat enhancements on a smaller scale and, in particular, to determine how they could be constructed, what they may ultimately look like, and how effective they are before implementing the full six miles of habitat enhancements on Dry Creek.

**PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:** The project site is within the Dry Creek channel and on private properties in an unincorporated area of Sonoma County, California (see attached figure). The project sites are located in and along Dry Creek from approximately ½ mile upstream of Lambert Bridge to ½ mile downstream of Lambert Bridge.

The type and extent of habitat modifications is still being determined; however, NMFS' Russian River BO stresses the availability of off-channel habitats in low velocity areas with substantial cover and features such as log or rock weirs, deflectors, log jams, constructed alcoves, side channels, backwaters, and dam pools that have successfully increased the quantity and quality of summer and winter rearing habitat for coho and steelhead.<sup>3</sup>. Inter-Fluve will identify feasible and sustainable enhancement techniques that will likely be implemented at the project scale.

The proposed enhancements are likely to include combinations of pool and riffle enhancement, off-channel backwater and alcove enhancement and/or creation, side-channel enhancement and/or creation, and enhancement and stabilization of streambanks. For example, pools may be enhanced with large woody debris to improve pool quality in terms of cover and shelter rating. Enhancements of riffles may include expanding existing riffles or constructing new riffles in appropriate locations, which may also enhance pools by slowing pool velocities. Streambank enhancements may address chronic erosion in critical locations and provide additional cover along the channel margins. Construction activities will vary depending upon what structures are installed and where they are located, but typically these types of construction activities can include dewatering the construction area, grading, installation of large boulders as anchor material, installation of large wood logs, planting of vegetation, and installation of erosion control measures (e.g. fabric, straw, seeding). It's not anticipated that the habitat enhancement structures will require regular maintenance work; however, future maintenance activities may include repair to damaged structures or adjustments to structures if they are not functioning as intended.

**JURISDICTIONAL/PERMITTING AGENCIES:** The following are public entities and agencies that may require review of the project or that may have jurisdiction over the project area:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- California Department of Fish and Game
- Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region

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<sup>3</sup> Russian River BO, page 264.

- Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department

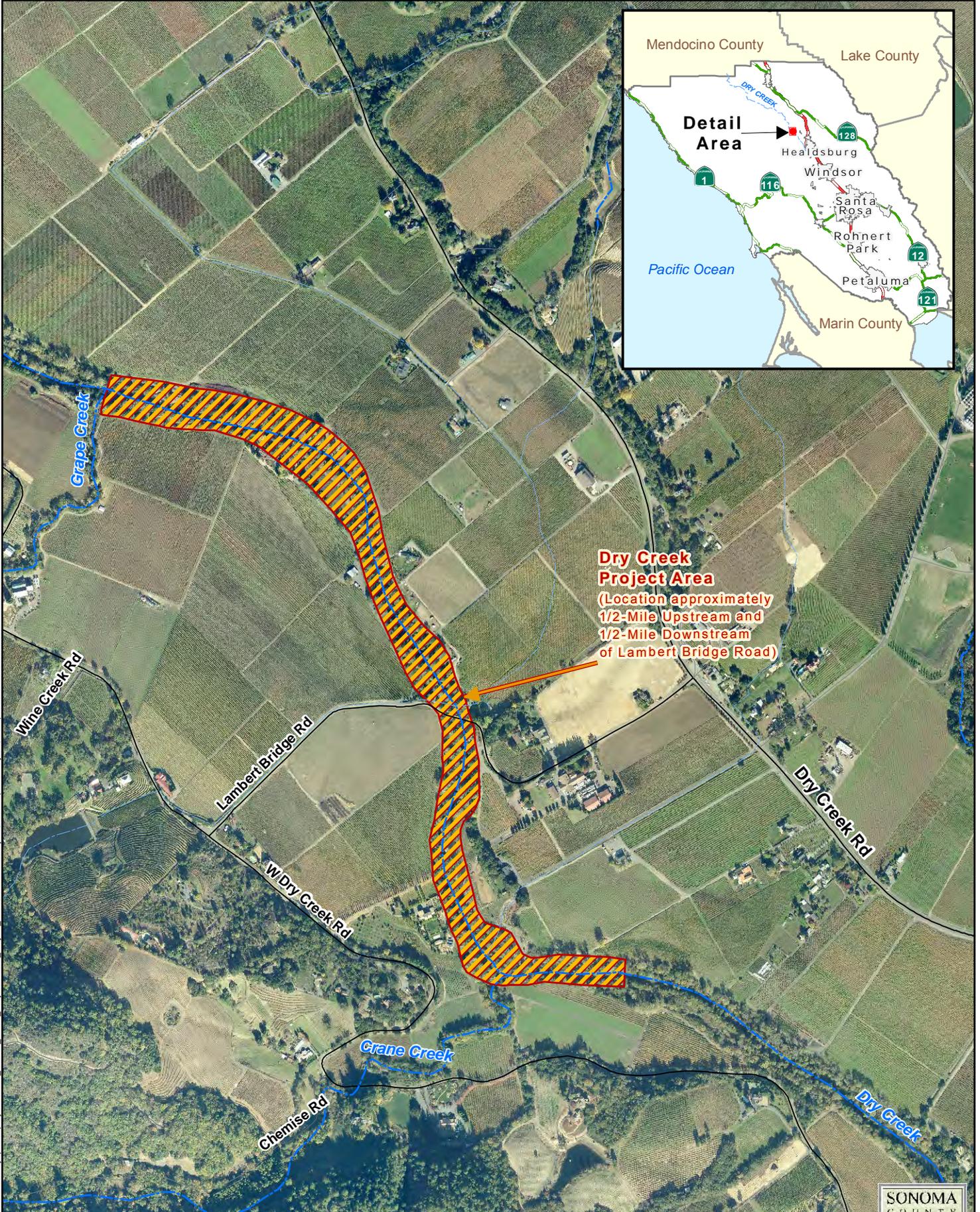
**POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AREAS:** The Initial Study will analyze the environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively, associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed project. Specific areas of analysis in the Initial Study will include: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Biological/ Fisheries Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use, Noise, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation/Circulation, and Utilities and Service System.. Where feasible, mitigation measures will be proposed to reduce or avoid impacts. Other areas of analysis may be added based on input from the public and public agencies during the Notice of Preparation review period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, property owners, and interested persons and parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the Initial Study after it is published and circulated for public review.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION:** The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on July 29, 2010, which is 35 days after the date of publication. Please include a name, address, and telephone number of a contact person in your agency for all future correspondence on this subject. **Please send comments to:**

**David Cuneo  
Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Boulevard  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403.**

Comments may also be submitted electronically to: [david.cuneo@scwa.ca.gov](mailto:david.cuneo@scwa.ca.gov)

Documents or files related to the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Demonstration Project are available for review online at [www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org), or at the Agency's office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403. If you have any questions regarding this Notice of Preparation, or if you wish to update information on our mailing list, please contact David Cuneo, Senior Environmental Specialist, at (707) 547-1935.



**Dry Creek Project Area**  
 (Location approximately  
 1/2-Mile Upstream and  
 1/2-Mile Downstream  
 of Lambert Bridge Road)

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**Dry Creek -  
 Habitat Enhancement  
 Demonstration Project**

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