

## **Attachment C - Compliance with 40 CFR Part 121.7**

The purpose of Attachment C is to comply with Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) sections 121.7(d)(2) and 121.7(e)(2).

Notwithstanding any determinations by the U.S. Army Corps or other federal agency made pursuant to 40 C.F.R. section 121.9, dischargers must comply with the entirety of this General Order because the General Order also serves as waste discharge requirements in accordance with State Water Board Water Quality General Order No. 2003-0017-DWQ.

### **Certification Conditions and Compliance with Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 121.7 (d) (2)**

Attachment C uses the same organizational structure as section VI, and the statements below correspond with the conditions set forth in section VI. Sections I through V, and VII through XII are not "conditions" as used in 40 CFR section 121.7.

Attachment C includes citations to some sources of authority that are applicable to all conditions. These sources are specifically identified where they are most relevant but are also generally applicable to the conditions below. California Code of Regulations, title 23,<sup>1</sup> Chapter 28 sets forth regulations pertaining to water quality certifications. As set forth in section 3861, the State Water Board may issue a general certification for discharges for a class or classes of activities only if those activities will not individually or cumulatively result in significant adverse impacts or violations of water quality objectives. Accordingly, the State Water Board imposes the conditions set forth in this General Order to assure that the discharge complies with water quality objectives adopted or approved under Sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. These conditions are also generally required to comply with the state's Anti-Degradation Policy (State Board Resolution No. 68-16), which requires that for any "activity which produces or may produce a waste or increased volume or concentration of waste and which discharges or proposes to discharge to existing high quality waters will be required to meet waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to assure that (a) a pollution or nuisance will not occur and (b) the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained." All Regional Board Water Quality Control Plans incorporate the state's Anti-Degradation Policy by reference. The state Anti-Degradation Policy incorporates the federal Antidegradation Policy (40 CFR Part 131.12 (a)(1)), which requires "[e]xisting instream water uses and the level of water quality necessary to protect the existing uses shall be maintained and protected." According to U.S. EPA, for dischargers of dredged or fill material comply with the federal Antidegradation Policy by complying with U.S. EPA's section 404(b)(1) Guidelines. The State

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<sup>1</sup> Unless as otherwise noted, all citations are to title 23 of California Code of Regulations.

Water Boards adopted a modified version of U.S. EPA's section 404(b)(1) Guidelines in the Dredge or Fill Procedures (State Supplemental Guidelines).

## **VI. Conditions**

### **A. General Conditions**

#### **1. Standard Condition CCR section 3860(a) "Pursuant to California state regulations governing certifications, this General Order is subject to modification or revocation upon review..."**

This condition was included to comply with section 3860, which sets forth conditions that must be included in water quality certifications. This condition applies only to administrative or judicial review. This condition is also necessary to assure that any discharge authorized under the general license or permit will comply with water quality requirements. Water quality requirements include state regulatory requirements for point source discharges into waters of the United States. California Code of Regulations, title 23, Chapter 28 sets forth regulations pertaining to water quality certification for point source discharges to waters of the United States.

#### **2. Standard Condition CCR section 3860(b) for "FERC..."**

This condition is necessary to assure that any discharge authorized under the general license or permit will comply with water quality requirements. Water quality requirements include state regulatory requirements for point source discharges into waters of the United States. California Code of Regulations, title 23, Chapter 28 sets forth regulations pertaining to water quality certification for point source discharges to waters of the United States. This condition was included to comply with section 3860, which sets forth conditions that must be included in water quality certifications.

#### **3. Standard Condition CCR section 3860(c) for "conditioned upon total payment of any fee..."**

This condition is necessary to assure that any discharge authorized under the general license or permit will comply with water quality requirements. Water quality requirements include state regulatory requirements for point source discharges into waters of the United States. California Code of Regulations, title 23, Chapter 28 sets forth regulations pertaining to water quality certification for point source discharges to waters of the United States. This condition was included to comply with section 3860, which sets forth conditions that must be included in water quality certifications. This fee requirement condition is also required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, sections 3861(c)(4) and 3833(b), which requires payment of fees by project proponents enrolling in this General Order.

#### 4. Cumulative impacts

This condition related to cumulative impacts is required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d), which requires that for a general certification, the category of activities to be certified individually or cumulatively will not have any of the following impacts, taking into account the probable effectiveness of any conditions or certification in avoiding or mitigating such impacts:

- a. Significant adverse impacts on water quality that could feasibly be avoided if individual certification, for the proposed activities seeking individual federal licenses or permits, was issued.
- b. Violation of any water quality objectives adopted or approved under Sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code.
- c. The taking of any candidate, threatened, or endangered species or the violation of the federal Endangered Species Act (16 USC Section 1531 et seq.) or the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code Section 2050 et seq.).
- d. Exposure of people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects – including the risk of loss, injury, or death – from flooding, landslides, or soil erosion.

This General Order also authorizes only projects that meet a CEQA exemption, and for which no exceptions to the exemptions apply. Accordingly, this condition is required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, tit. 14, section 15300.2(b) that "All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant."

#### 5. Avoidance and Minimization

Conditions that require avoidance and minimization measures are consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.B.1.a (Cal. Code of Reg., section 3013),<sup>2</sup> which requires applicants to demonstrate that a "sequence of actions has been taken to first avoid, then to

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<sup>2</sup> The State Policy for Water Quality Control: State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State (Dredge or Fill Procedures) was adopted on April 2, 2019, went into effect on May 28, 2020, and was revised on April 6, 2021. The Dredge or Fill Procedures were adopted pursuant to the State Water Board's authority under Water Code section 13140 (state policy for water quality control) and 13170 (water quality control plan), and accordingly have regulatory effect. Consistent with Government Code, section 11353, a clear and concise summary of the Dredge or Fill Procedures is available in California Code of Regulations, section 3013. A full version of the Dredge or Fill Procedures is available on the State Water Board's website. Although general orders are not directly subject to the procedural requirements set forth for individual orders, the Procedures do not preclude the incorporation of similar requirements in general orders and provide useful guidance that was adopted by the Water Boards for dredge or fill projects.

minimize, and lastly compensate for adverse impacts that cannot be practicably avoided or minimized to waters of the state." A description of avoidance and minimization measures are also required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3856(h)(6), which requires dischargers to provide a "description of any other steps that have been or will be taken to avoid, minimize, or compensate for loss of or significant adverse impacts to beneficial uses of waters of the state." This condition is also consistent with the State Supplemental Guidelines, section 230.10.

#### **6. Permitted actions must not cause violation of applicable water quality standards...**

Conditions related to compliance with water quality objectives and designated beneficial uses are required pursuant to the state's Anti-Degradation Policy (State Board Resolution No. 68-16), which requires that for any "activity which produces or may produce a waste or increased volume or concentration of waste and which discharges or proposes to discharge to existing high quality waters will be required to meet waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to assure that (a) a pollution or nuisance will not occur and (b) the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained." All of the Water Quality Control Plans incorporate the state's Anti-Degradation Policy by reference. The state Anti-Degradation Policy incorporates the federal Antidegradation Policy (40 CFR Part 131.12 (a)(1)), which requires "[e]xisting instream water uses and the level of water quality necessary to protect the existing uses shall be maintained and protected.". According to U.S. EPA, for dischargers of dredged or fill material comply with the federal Antidegradation Policy by complying with U.S. EPA's section 404(b)(1) Guidelines. The State Water Boards adopted a modified version of U.S. EPA's section 404(b)(1) Guidelines in the Dredge or Fill Procedures (State Supplemental Guidelines).

These conditions are also required pursuant to California Code of Regulations section 3861(d), which requires that discharges comply with any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code.

#### **7. Site Access**

Conditions related to site access requirements are authorized pursuant to the Water Boards' authority to investigate the quality of any waters of the state within its region under Water Code section 13267. Water Code section 13267(c) provides that "the regional board may inspect the facilities of any person to ascertain whether the purposes of this division are being met and waste discharge requirements are being complied with."

#### **8. The discharger shall be responsible for work...**

This condition requires site personnel and agencies to be familiar with the content of the General Order and availability of the document at the project site. This condition is required to assure that any authorized discharge will comply with the terms and conditions of the General

Order, which requires compliance with all of the water quality objectives and beneficial uses adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code.

**9. Waiver of NWP conditions or regional conditions**

If conditions are waived, the State Water Board would need to determine the effect of any such waiver on the proposed project's impacts to waters of the state. This condition is necessary to ensure that the activity does not individually or cumulatively violate water quality objectives or result in significant adverse impacts, and are more appropriately regulated under an individual certification action than under a general certification (Cal. Code of Regs., § 3861(d)). Water Code section 13264 prohibits any discharge that is not specifically authorized in this General Order, which was drafted based on the conditions set forth in the proposed NWPs noticed on September 15, 2020 and regional conditions.

**10. More than one NWP has been issued except as provided by NWP 14**

This General Order must comply with the requirements set forth in CEQA, Cal. Code of Regs., section 3861(c)(5), which includes the requirements that the permitting authority consider the project, which means the "whole of the action." (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 14, § 15378.) Projects relying on permitting under more than one NWP are more likely to have significant or cumulative impacts of water quality when considering the whole of the project.

**11. Not applicable to projects requiring compensatory mitigation except as otherwise provided.**

Except as specifically provided in this General Order, compensatory mitigation plans are more appropriate to consider on an individual basis to ensure compliance with Subpart J of the State Supplemental Guidelines. Given the potential for significant water quality impacts from projects authorized under this General Order must meet CEQA exemption criteria, this condition is also required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, tit. 14, section 15300.2(b) that "All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant." This condition is necessary to ensure that the exception set forth in California Code of Regulations, tit. 14, section 15300.2(b) ("All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.") does not apply, and the project does not have a significant effect on the environment and is accordingly exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

**12. Projects impacting histosols, fens, bogs, peatlands, in wetlands contiguous with fens and vernal pools are prohibited.**

Water Code section 13264 prohibits any discharge that is not specifically authorized in this order. This condition is necessary to protect certain aquatic resources that are rare and difficult to replace. (California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d).) For example, vernal pools are small seasonal wetlands that are ecologically diverse and difficult to replace once

lost. They support endemic rare plant and animal species, including many that are designated by federal and state government as rare, threatened, or endangered. In 2005 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized its Recovery Plan for Vernal Pool Ecosystems of California and Southern Oregon that addresses 33 plant and animal species of interest that are endemic to vernal pools, including 15 plants that are listed as threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act.<sup>3</sup> Most of the historical vernal pool habitat in California has been destroyed (estimates are around 90% compared to pre-Spanish exploration), due to agriculture and development, so any loss of vernal pools due to dredge or fill activities would be considered a significant adverse impact, would conflict with or violate Water Quality Control Plans designated uses for RARE, and would not meet CEQA exemption criteria.

### **13. Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement**

Condition 13 is required pursuant to California Code of Regulations section 3856(e), which requires that copies be provided to the Water Boards of “any final and signed federal, state, and local licenses, permits, and agreements (or copies of the draft documents, if not finalized) that will be required for any construction, operation, maintenance, or other actions associated with the activity. If no final or draft document is available, a list of all remaining agency regulatory approvals being sought shall be included.”

### **14. The certifying agency may review and revise or revoke (change) a general certification pursuant to...**

Condition 14 is necessary to assure that any discharge authorized under the general license or permit will comply with water quality requirements because it reserves the authority set forth in California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3861(e). This condition reserves the state's authority to take into account changing water quality requirements or environmental conditions that would result in any of the projects authorized under the general certification, individually or cumulatively, resulting in any of the impacts identified in section 3861(d).

### **15. The State Water Board or Regional Water Quality Control Boards shall determine whether the activity is eligible for enrollment...**

Condition 15 is necessary to assure that any discharge authorized under the general license or permit will comply with water quality standards, and will not result in significant adverse impacts on water quality, violate water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code, or expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects. (California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d).)

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<sup>3</sup> California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Vernal Pools at <<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants/Vernal-Pools>> [as of Nov. 30, 2020].

## **B. Construction Conditions**

### **1. All materials and supplies necessary...**

On-site availability of materials and supplies assures best management practices can be reasonably implemented and that the discharge complies with water quality objectives. This condition and other conditions related to best management practices are consistent with the Water Board's authority to establish, "[w]ater quality conditions that could reasonably be achieved through the coordinated control of all factors which affect water quality in the area" pursuant to Water Code section 13241(c). The activities authorized under this General Order have the potential to result in a discharge that exceed water quality objectives and work in waters of the state must not cause an exceedance of water quality objectives. As required by Water Code section 13369, all Water Quality Control Plans incentivize the use of best management practices to prevent prohibited discharges into waters of the state.

### **2. Construction material, debris, rubbish....**

Water Code section 13264 prohibits any discharge that is not specifically authorized in this General Order. This condition is necessary to prevent violation of state discharge prohibitions that protect water quality objectives. Water Quality Control Plans prohibit the discharge of construction materials and byproducts from being discharged into waters of the state. For example, "The discharge of soil, silt, bark, slash, sawdust, or other organic and earthen material from any logging, construction, or associated activity of whatever nature into any stream or watercourse in the basin in quantities deleterious to fish, wildlife, or other beneficial uses is prohibited" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.2.1).

This condition prohibiting discharge of materials detrimental to water quality or hazardous to aquatic life is also consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, Appendix A, Subpart H, which requires actions to minimize and avoid adverse effects, including actions concerning the location, the material, and controlling the material after the discharge (§ 230.70 et seq.).

### **3. Environmentally sensitive areas and environmentally restricted...**

This condition is necessary to assure that the project discharge will comply with state discharge prohibitions that protect beneficial uses and water quality objectives. A description and delineation of impact sites is necessary to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters (California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3856(h); Dredge or Fill Procedures section IV.A.1(c); Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, section 4.23.2).

In addition, Water Quality Control Plans prohibit the discharge of construction materials and byproducts from being discharged into waters of the state, including areas that may be environmentally sensitive, such as vernal pools or eel grass beds. For example, "The discharge of soil, silt, bark, slash, sawdust, or other organic and earthen material from any logging, construction, or associated activity of whatever nature into any stream or watercourse

in the basin in quantities deleterious to fish, wildlife, or other beneficial uses is prohibited" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.2.1). Identification and visible demarcation of areas of avoidance must be obvious to all on-site personnel, to ensure that impacts only occur within the permitted boundaries of project disturbance and to prevent unauthorized discharges to other waters of the state, including environmentally sensitive areas. Furthermore, waters that are not quantified and mapped as either a temporary or permanent impact site in a water quality certification must be fully avoided throughout the duration of the construction activity. This condition is necessary to ensure protection of aquatic resources where no discharge is authorized to occur. Furthermore, excavated material that is improperly exposed can produce or contribute to runoff that results in an unintentional discharge to waters of the state, which is prohibited (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.2.1).

- 4. The number of access routes, number and size of staging areas...**
- 5. Bridges, culverts, dip crossings, or other structures...**
- 6. Temporary materials places in any water of the state...**
- 7. A method of containment must be used below any temporary bridge, trestle...**

Conditions 4, 5, 6, and 7 limit activities such as construction or maintenance of access roads, staging areas, water crossings, and temporary structures to assure that the activities are minimally impacting and comply with water quality objectives. These types of activities commonly require grading, construction, excavation, and vegetation removal, and may result in erosion and increased sediment loads, turbidity, etc., that adversely affect water quality. These conditions are required to assure that the discharges from such activities do not exceed water quality objectives established in Water Quality Control Plans, including water quality objectives for oil and grease, pH, sediment, settleable materials, temperature, and turbidity. For example, the sediment water quality objective requires that, "the suspended sediment load and suspended sediment discharge rate to surface waters shall not be altered in such a manner as to cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 3.3.11). Additionally, improperly designed and/or installed roads and bridges may also create physical barriers to fish passage and impair the beneficial use of fish spawning (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Basin, section 7.8.4.1).

- 8. Unless authorized for restoration, material excavated to prepare a site...**

Condition 8 is required pursuant to the Water Quality Control Plans, and the water quality objectives therein prohibiting excavated material erosion or disposal into waters of the state. For example, the North Coast Water Quality Control Plan prohibits waters from containing settleable material in concentrations that result in the deposition of material that causes



nuisance or adversely affects beneficial uses (Section 3.3.12), and prohibits waters from containing suspended material in concentrations that cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses (Section 3.3.13).

### **9. Topsoil**

This condition is consistent with the requirements set forth in Nationwide Permits 12, C, and D which require that the top 6 to 12 inches of a dig to be backfilled with native topsoil in order to ensure that temporary impacts can be considered as such. The top 6 to 12 inches of topsoil tend to be richer in organic matter than other soil horizons below this depth. Therefore, it is essential to stockpile the topsoil layer separately from the rest of the soil in order to ensure survivorship of riparian vegetation populations upon completion of the project.

Backfilling of native topsoil is necessary to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters. "Operations and activities should be planned and conducted in a manner that will not disturb extensive areas of soil or that will disrupt local drainage. Areas where soil is disturbed should be promptly reseeded or stabilized to prevent erosion." (Water Quality Control Plan for the Tulare Lake Basin, section 4.1.7.) Backfilling of native topsoil also assures that the pre-project hydrologic regime is not altered or adversely impacted by introduction of new backfill materials. "The stream flow regimen should be stabilized and maintained, and soil control measures should be applied in a timely manner." (Water Quality Control Plan for the Tulare Lake Basin, section 4.1.7.) "Limit disturbance of natural drainage features and vegetation." (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast, Appendix D, page 4-104, Urban and Suburban Runoff Management Measures.)

### **10. Any structure, including but not limited to culverts, pipes, piers, and coffer dams, placed within a stream...**

Conditions related to placement of structures within waters are required to assure that they do not create physical barriers to fish passage and spawning activities. "Any barrier to migration or free movement of migratory fish is harmful. Natural tidal movement in estuaries and unimpeded river flows are necessary to sustain migratory fish and their offspring. A water quality barrier, whether thermal, physical, or chemical, can destroy the integrity of the migration route and lead to the rapid decline of dependent fisheries" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 2.1.10). Furthermore, barriers to migration or free movement may result in an impairment of state water quality objectives, including but not limited to Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species (RARE), Spawning, Reproduction, and/or Early Development (SPWN), Cold Fresh Water Habitat (COLD), or Warm Fresh Water Habitat (WARM), which occur in all regions of the state.

The Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region sets a numeric target of "zero human-caused barriers" for migration barriers on Class I watercourses (Section 4.2.8). Barriers would also impair beneficial uses designated in the Water Quality Control Plans including "migration of aquatic organisms," "spawning, reproduction, and/or early

development," "fish migration," and "fish spawning" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 2.2; Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, sections 2.1.10 and 2.1.18).

"Hydromodification is a general term that encompasses effects of projects on the natural hydrologic, geochemical and physical functions of streams and wetlands that maintain or enhance water quality." (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 4.26.7.) Conditions related to placement of structures within waters of the state are required to assure that they do not result in adverse impacts related to hydromodification. Failure to comply with these conditions may trigger bank failure, channel incision, or headcutting along the channel thalweg, creating excess sediment and barriers to fish passage. These impacts can impair beneficial uses including fish migration, fish spawning, wildlife habitat, cold freshwater habitat, preservation of rare and endangered species, and warm freshwater habitat (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 2.1). "The discharge of sand, silt, clay, or other earthen materials from any activity, including land grading and construction, in quantities which cause deleterious bottom deposits, turbidity or discoloration in waters of the state or which unreasonably affect, or threaten to affect, beneficial uses of such waters is prohibited" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Region, section 4.18).

### **11. Dust Abatement**

This dust abatement condition is required to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters. Chemicals used in dust abatement activities can result in a discharge of chemical additives and treated waters to surface waters of the state. Therefore, dust abatement activities shall be conducted so that sediment or dust abatement chemicals are not discharged into waters of the state. The Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 3.3.8, requires that all waters should be free of toxic substances in concentrations that are lethal to or that produce significant alterations in population or community ecology or receiving water biota. In addition, the health and life history characteristics of aquatic organisms in waters affected by controllable water quality factors should not differ significantly from areas unaffected by controllable water quality factors, such as toxicity. This condition will ensure that the discharge will not adversely affect beneficial uses of the receiving water or cause a condition of nuisance. (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.1.8; Water Code section 13267; Dredge or Fill Procedures section IV. A.2(c)).

### **12. Use of Mechanized Equipment**

This condition is necessary to prevent violation of state discharge prohibitions that protect water quality objectives. By altering an aquatic resource's surface topography and reducing hydrologic connectivity and capacity, the use of mechanized equipment can cause a direct loss of aquatic resource area and degrade beneficial uses of waters of the state, including designations that protect listed species habitat. These impacts would result in violations of water quality objectives that have been set in Water Quality Control Plans. For example, the

Water Quality Control Plan for the Santa Ana Regional Board, section 4.6, requires that, "Inland surface water communities and populations, including vertebrate, invertebrate, and plant species, shall not be degraded as a result of the discharge of waste." Additionally, fuels and lubricants associated with the use of mechanized equipment have the potential to result in toxic discharges to waters of the state. The North Coast Regional Water Board's toxicity water quality objective prohibits waters from containing toxic substances in concentrations that are toxic to, or that, "produce detrimental physiological responses in human, plant, animal, or aquatic life" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 3.3.16).

### **13. Piers or Piles**

### **14. Culvert Replacement and Maintenance**

Conditions related to structures within waters (such as conditions 13 and 14), including placement of instream piers or piles, and culvert replacement and maintenance activities, are required to assure that they do not create physical barriers to fish passage and spawning activities. "Any barrier to migration or free movement of migratory fish is harmful. Natural tidal movement in estuaries and unimpeded river flows are necessary to sustain migratory fish and their offspring. A water quality barrier, whether thermal, physical, or chemical, can destroy the integrity of the migration route and lead to the rapid decline of dependent fisheries" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 2.1.10).

The Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region sets a numeric target of "zero human-caused barriers" for migration barriers on Class I watercourses (Section 4.2.8). Barriers would also impair beneficial uses designated in the Water Quality Control Plans including "migration of aquatic organisms," "spawning, reproduction, and/or early development," "fish migration," and "fish spawning" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 2.2; Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, sections 2.1.10 and 2.1.18).

"Hydromodification is a general term that encompasses effects of projects on the natural hydrologic, geochemical and physical functions of streams and wetlands that maintain or enhance water quality." (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 4.26.7.) Conditions related to culverts and other instream structures are required to assure that they do not result in adverse impacts related to hydromodification. Failure to comply with these conditions may trigger bank failure, channel incision, or headcutting along the channel thalweg, creating excess sediment and barriers to fish passage. These impacts can impair beneficial uses including fish migration, fish spawning, wildlife habitat, cold freshwater habitat, preservation of rare and endangered species, and warm freshwater habitat (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, sections 2.1). "The discharge of sand, silt, clay, or other earthen materials from any activity, including land grading and construction, in quantities which cause deleterious bottom deposits, turbidity or discoloration in waters of the state or which unreasonably affect, or threaten to affect, beneficial uses of such waters is prohibited" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Region, section 4.18).

## 15. Toxic and Hazardous Materials

These conditions are required pursuant to the Water Quality Control Plans, and the Policy for Implementation of Toxics Standards for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California (SIP)<sup>4</sup>, which prohibit the discharge of substances in concentrations toxic to human, plant, animal, or aquatic life. For example, the North Coast Water Quality Control Plan prohibits waters from containing toxic substances in concentrations that are toxic to, or that produce detrimental physiological responses in human, plant, animal, or aquatic life. The concentrations of toxic substances in the water column, sediments or biota shall not adversely affect beneficial uses (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 3.3.16). All waters should be free of toxic substances in concentrations that are lethal to or that produce significant alterations in population or community ecology or receiving water biota. In addition, the health and life history characteristics of aquatic organisms in waters affected by controllable water quality factors should not differ significantly from areas unaffected by controllable water quality factors, such as toxicity (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, section 3.3.8).

Toxic compounds impair the beneficial uses of cold fresh water habitat, estuarine habitat, marine habitat, preservation of rare and endangered species, fish migration, fish spawning, warm fresh water habitat, and wildlife habitat (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, sections 2.1.3; 2.1.5; 2.1.9; 2.1.14; 2.1.10; 2.1.18; 2.1.19; & 2.1.20).

Conditions related to concrete/cement are required pursuant to the Water Quality Control Plans, which prohibit discharges to waters that adversely raise or lower pH levels. For example, the North Coast Water Quality Control Plan prohibits discharges from lowering pH levels below 6.5 or raising them above 8.5, or raising/lowering the pH to a level that causes a nuisance or impairs beneficial uses. Concrete/cement is an alkaline component that has the potential to raise the pH of water resources to levels that would negatively affect beneficial uses (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 3.3.16).

Conditions related to toxic and hazardous materials are necessary to assure that discharges comply with any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code.

Many waters in California are high in mercury either naturally or due to historic mining activities. This mercury, when discharged to waters of the state can become bioavailable and impair beneficial uses including Subsistence Fishing (SUB) and Tribal Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB). Effective sediment control is required under the Tribal and Subsistence Fishing Beneficial Uses and Mercury Provisions (Cal. Code of Reg., section 3010).

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<sup>4</sup> The SIP implements criteria for priority toxic pollutants contained in the California Toxics Rule promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA).

## 16. Invasive Species and Soil Borne Pathogens

Soil borne pathogens cause disease and death to native plants, agricultural crops, and ornamental plants. Non-native invasive plant species can alter ecosystem processes such as nutrient cycling, hydrological cycles, and frequencies of wildfires, erosion, and sediment deposition. They interfere in ecosystem functions by outcompeting and displacing native plants and animals, by providing refuge for non-native animals, and by hybridizing with native species.<sup>5</sup>

Conditions related to invasive species and soil borne pathogens are required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3861 (d) (2) that prohibits discharges that violate any water quality objectives adopted or approved under Section 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code, including the Water Quality Control Plans in California. Invasive species and soil borne pathogens adversely affect beneficial uses designated in the Water Quality Control Plans, such as RARE, WILD, and BIOL. RARE (rare, threatened, or endangered species) is a designated beneficial use for “waters that support habitat necessary, at least in part, for the survival and successful maintenance of plant or animal species established under state or federal law as rare, threatened, or endangered” (Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Region, section 2.2.20; Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 2.1.14). WILD (wildlife habitat) is a designated beneficial use of water that supports “terrestrial ecosystems including, but not limit to, preservation and enhancement of terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife (e.g., mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates), or wildlife water and food supplies.” (Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Region, section 2.2.18). BIOL (preservation of biological habitats of special significance) is a designated beneficial use of water that supports “designated areas or habitats, such as established refuges, parks, sanctuaries, ecological reserves, or Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS), where the preservation or enhancement of natural resources requires special protection” (Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Region, section 2.2.19).

Invasive species and soil borne pathogen control practices prevent their uncontrolled spread to waters of the state and are necessary to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters. The spread of soil borne pathogens devastates host species populations in riparian ecosystems, such as *Phytophthora lateralis*, the cause of Port Orford cedar root disease, and threatens the stability of native and commercial cedar populations worldwide. Invasive weeds degrade physical and chemical water quality characteristics, and overgrown vegetation reduces special species habitat and reduces aquatic resource capacity.

Furthermore, in State Water Board Resolution No. 2017-0012, the State Water Board resolved that the state shall update plans, permits, and policies to improve “ecosystem resilience to the impacts of climate change, including but not limited to actions that protect headwaters,

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<sup>5</sup> Bossard et al. (2000) *Invasive Plants of California's Wildlands*. University of California Press.

facilitate restoration, enhance carbon sequestration, build and enhance healthy soils, and reduce vulnerability to and impacts from fires.”

Lastly, species diversity and growth anomalies, which are adversely affected by invasive species and soil borne pathogens, are measures of water quality health as it relates to water quality objectives for toxic substances. “All waters shall be maintained free of toxic substances in concentrations that produce detrimental physiological responses in human, plant, animal, or aquatic life. This objective applies regardless of whether the toxicity is caused by a single substance or the interactive effect of multiple substances. Compliance with this objective will be determined by analyses of indicator organisms, species diversity, population density, growth anomalies, and biotoxicity tests of appropriate duration or other methods as specified by the Regional Water Board” (Central Valley Regional Board Basin Plan, section 3.1.20).

### **17. In-Water Work**

Conditions related to work in delineated waters are required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3861 (d) (2) which prohibits discharges that violate any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. Work in waters must not cause exceedances of water quality objectives; accordingly, these conditions require implementation of best practicable treatments and controls to prevent pollution and nuisance, and to maintain water quality. Consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.A.2.c, water quality monitoring plans are required for any in-water work. These conditions are required to assure that 1) the discharge shall not adversely affect the beneficial uses of the receiving water or cause a condition of nuisance; 2) the discharge shall comply with all applicable water quality objectives; and 3) treatment and control of the discharge shall be implemented to assure that pollution and nuisance will not occur and the highest water quality is maintained (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.1.8; Water Code section 13267).

Conditions related to dewatering and diversions or impoundments of water are required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d)(2) which prohibits discharges that violate any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. Work in waters and temporary diversions must not cause exceedances of water quality objectives; accordingly, these conditions require implementation of best practicable treatments and controls to prevent pollution and nuisance, and to maintain water quality.

These conditions are also required pursuant to the state's Anti-Degradation Policy (State Board Resolution No. 68-16), which requires that for any “activity which produces or may produce a waste or increased volume or concentration of waste and which discharges or proposes to discharge to existing high quality waters will be required to meet waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to assure that (a) a pollution or nuisance will not occur and (b) the highest water

quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained.” All of the Water Quality Control Plans incorporate the state’s Anti-Degradation Policy by reference.

If surface waters or ponded waters are not appropriately diverted from areas undergoing grading, construction, excavation, and/or vegetation removal, the waters will be susceptible to erosion and increased sediment loads, contamination and pollution from construction equipment, temperature fluctuations, etc. Diverting waters away from these areas will ensure that the discharge will not exceed water quality objectives, adversely affect beneficial uses of the receiving waters, or cause a condition of nuisance. Dewatered areas must also be stabilized prior to a rainfall event to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters. For example, the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Region, section 3.3.2, prohibits alteration of the suspended sediment load and suspended sediment discharge rate of surface waters in such a manner as to cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. Similarly, the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, section 4.19, requires stabilization prior to a rainfall event as necessary to prevent sediment contributions to water bodies.

Consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.A.2.c, water quality monitoring plans are required for any in-water work, including temporary dewatering or diversions. These conditions are required to assure that 1) the discharge shall not adversely affect the beneficial uses of the receiving water or cause a condition of nuisance; 2) the discharge shall comply with all applicable water quality objectives; and 3) treatment and control of the discharge shall be implemented to assure that pollution and nuisance will not occur and the highest water quality is maintained (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.1.8; Water Code section 13267).

Conditions related to groundwater permits is required pursuant to the Cal. Code of Regs, title 23, section 3856(e), which requires complete copies of any final and signed federal, state, or local licenses, permits, and agreements (or copies of drafts if not finalized) that will be required for any construction, operation, maintenance, or other actions associated with the activity.

## **18. Stormwater**

### **a. Erosion and Sediment Control**

Discharges that are not covered under the State Water Board’s Stormwater Construction General Permit are required to comply with the conditions in this section (VI.B.18.a through VI.B.18.b) pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d)(2), which prohibits discharges that violate any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. Conditions related to erosion and sediment control design requirements are required to sustain fluvial geomorphic equilibrium. Improperly designed and installed BMPs result in excess sediment, which impairs surface waters, adversely affect beneficial uses, and results in exceedance of water quality objectives in the Water Quality Control Plans in California. Water Quality Control Plans impose design requirements to ensure excess stormwater sediment does not exceed water quality objectives in the plans. For

example, “[t]he discharge of sand, silt, clay, or other earthen materials from any activity, including land grading and construction, in quantities which cause deleterious bottom deposits, turbidity or discoloration in waters of the state or which unreasonably affect, or threaten to affect, beneficial uses of such waters is prohibited” (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Region, section 4.18). “Waters shall be free of changes in turbidity that cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. Increases from normal background light penetration for turbidity relatable to waste discharge shall not be greater than 10 percent in areas where natural turbidity is greater than 50 NTU. (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 3.3.19.)

Conditions on projects that result in a hydromodification to a water of the state are necessary to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters. “Hydromodification is a general term that encompasses effects of projects on the natural hydrologic, geochemical, and physical functions of streams and wetlands that maintain or enhance water quality.” “Protecting beneficial uses within the Region consistent with the federal Clean water Act and Porter-Cologne Act requires careful consideration of projects that result in hydrogeomorphic changes and related adverse impacts to the water quality and beneficial uses of waters of the state.” (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 4.26.7.) Improper project design and installation of any project that results in a hydromodification to a waters of the state may trigger bank failure and channel incision which results in excess sediment impacts to downstream beneficial uses.

Many waters in California are high in mercury either naturally or due to historic mining activities. This mercury, when discharged to waters of the state can become bioavailable and impair beneficial uses including Subsistence Fishing (SUB) and Tribal Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB). Effective sediment control is required under the Tribal and Subsistence Fishing Beneficial Uses and Mercury Provisions (Cal. Code of Reg., section 3010.)

#### **b. Stormwater Management**

In addition, disturbed areas in delineated waters must be stabilized prior to a rainfall event to assure that the discharge from the proposed project will comply with water quality objectives established for surface waters. For example, the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Region, section 3.3.2, prohibits the suspended sediment load and suspended sediment discharge rate of surface waters not to be altered in such a manner as to cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. Similarly, the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, section 4.19, requires stabilization prior to a rainfall event as necessary to prevent sediment contributions to water bodies.

Conditions related to stormwater management are required to comply with the Water Quality Control Plans and to assure that the discharge complies with water quality objectives adopted or approved under Sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. Post-rain erosion and sedimentation problems can contribute to significant degradation of the waters of the state; therefore, it is necessary to take corrective action to eliminate such discharges in order to



avoid or minimize such degradation. Implementation of control measures and best management practices (BMPs) described in the condition will assure compliance with water quality objectives including sediment, turbidity, temperature, suspended material, and settleable material. For example, "[w]aters shall be free of changes in turbidity that cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. Increases from normal background light penetration for turbidity related to waste discharge shall not be greater than 10 percent in areas where natural turbidity is greater than 50 NTU" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 3.3.19). The Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Region, section 3.3.2, prohibits alternation of the suspended sediment load and suspended sediment discharge rate of surface waters in such a manner as to cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses. The Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, section 4.19, requires stabilization prior to a rainfall event as necessary to prevent sediment contributions to water bodies.

### **C. Mitigation for Temporary Impacts**

Conditions in this section related to restoration and/or mitigation of temporary impacts are required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d), which requires the inclusion of conditions to avoid and mitigate all project impacts, and to assure that the discharge complies with water quality objectives adopted or approved under Sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. These conditions are also consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, which requires "in all cases where temporary impacts are proposed, a draft restoration plan that outlines design, implementation, assessment, and maintenance for restoring areas of temporary impacts to pre-project conditions." (Dredge or Fill Procedures section IV. A.2(d) & B.4.) Mitigation is also required to ensure compliance with Executive Order W-59-93 that requires no net loss of the structure or function of California's wetland resources.

### **D. Notifications and Reports**

- 1. Accidental Discharges of Hazardous Materials**
- 2. Violation of Compliance with Water Quality Standards**

Conditions 1 and 2, related to the accidental discharge of hazardous materials are necessary to assure that discharges comply with any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. Conditions related to notification and reporting requirements in the event of an accidental discharge of hazardous materials are required pursuant to section 13271 of the Water Code, which requires immediate notification of the Office of Emergency Services of the discharge in accordance with the spill reporting provision of the state toxic disaster contingency plan adopted pursuant to Article 3.7 (commencing with Section 8574.16) of Chapter 7 of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

Conditions related to monitoring and reporting are required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3861(c)(3), which requires the inclusion of “appropriate monitoring and agency-reporting requirements for all activities subject to federal licenses and permits issued in reliance on such certification.” These monitoring and reporting requirements are also consistent with the Water Boards’ authority to investigate the quality of any waters of the state within its region under Water Code section 13267. The burden of preparing these reports, including costs, are reasonable to the need and benefits of obtaining the reports. The reports confirm that the best management practices required under this order are sufficient to protect beneficial uses and water quality objectives. The reports related to accidental discharges also ensure that corrective actions, if any, that are necessary to minimize the impact or clean up such discharges can be taken as soon as possible. The anticipated costs are minimal as the reporting obligations require only visual monitoring and notification reporting.

### **3. In-Water Work**

Conditions related to monitoring and reporting are required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3861(c)(3), which requires the inclusion of “appropriate monitoring and agency-reporting requirements for all activities subject to federal licenses and permits issued in reliance on such certification.” These monitoring and reporting requirements are also consistent with the Water Boards’ authority to investigate the quality of any waters of the state within its region under Water Code section 13267. The burden of preparing these reports, including costs, are reasonable to the need and benefits of obtaining the reports. The reports confirm that the best management practices required under this order are sufficient to protect beneficial uses and water quality objectives. The reports related to accidental discharges also ensure that corrective actions, if any, that are necessary to minimize the impact or clean up such discharges can be taken as soon as possible. The anticipated costs are minimal as the reporting obligations require only visual monitoring and notification reporting.

### **4. Modifications to Project**

Authorization under this General Order is granted based on the application information submitted. This condition is necessary to ensure that if there are modifications to the project, that the project remains eligible for coverage under this General Order. Water Code section 13264 prohibits any discharge that is not specifically authorized in this General Order.

### **5. Water Quality Monitoring**

Conditions in this section related to monitoring and reporting are required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3861(c)(3), which requires the inclusion of “appropriate monitoring and agency-reporting requirements for all activities subject to federal licenses and permits issued in reliance on such certification.” These monitoring and reporting requirements are also consistent with the Water Boards’ authority to investigate the quality of any waters of the state within its region under Water Code section 13267. The burden of preparing these reports, including costs, are reasonable to the need and benefits of obtaining the reports. The reports confirm that the best management practices required under this order are sufficient to

protect beneficial uses and water quality objectives. The reports related to accidental discharges also ensure that corrective actions, if any, that are necessary to minimize the impact or clean up such discharges can be taken as soon as possible. The anticipated costs are minimal as the reporting obligations require only visual monitoring and notification reporting.

Conditions related to the accidental discharge of hazardous materials are necessary to assure that discharges comply with any water quality objectives adopted or approved under sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code. Conditions related to notification and reporting requirements in the event of an accidental discharge of hazardous materials are required pursuant to section 13271 of the Water Code, which requires immediate notification of the Office of Emergency Services of the discharge in accordance with the spill reporting provision of the state toxic disaster contingency plan adopted pursuant to Article 3.7 (commencing with Section 8574.16) of Chapter 7 of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

These conditions are also necessary to assure that 1) the discharge shall not adversely affect the beneficial uses of the receiving water or cause a condition of nuisance; 2) the discharge shall comply with all applicable water quality objectives; and 3) treatment and control of the discharge shall be implemented to assure that pollution and nuisance will not occur and the highest water quality is maintained. (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 4.1.8; Water Code section 13267; Dredge or Fill Procedures section IV. A.2(c).) For example, what needs to be monitored will depend on the project. (E.g., Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay region, section 3.3.12 (sediment).)

## **E. Application for Coverage and Termination**

### **1. Request for Authorization**

These conditions requiring dischargers to identify impacts in a notification are required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3856(h)(4), which requires dischargers identify "for each water body reported...the total estimated quantity of waters of the United States that may be adversely impacted..." This condition is also consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.A.1.c and f, which requires applicants to provide a "description of the waters proposed to be impacted by the dredge or fill activity." (Cal. Code of Reg., section 3013.) (Also see Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region, section 4.23.2.)

These conditions requiring a description of avoidance and minimization measures are also required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3856(h)(6), which requires dischargers to provide a "description of any other steps that have been or will be taken to avoid, minimize, or compensate for loss of or significant adverse impacts to beneficial uses of waters of the state." These conditions are also consistent with the Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.B.1.a, which requires applicants to demonstrate that a "sequence of actions has been taken to first avoid, then to minimize, and lastly compensate for adverse impacts that

cannot be practicably avoided or minimized to waters of the state.” (Cal. Code of Reg., section 3013.)

## **2. Signatory Requirements**

Condition 2 for signatory requirements is required pursuant to Water Code section 13267, which requires any person discharging waste that could affect the quality of waters to provide to the Water Boards, under penalty of perjury, any technical or monitoring program reports as required by the Water Boards. The signatory requirements are consistent with 40 C.F.R. section 122.22.

## **3. Project Status Notifications**

## **4. Project Reporting**

Conditions related to notifications, monitoring, and reporting are required pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3861(c)(3), which requires the inclusion of “appropriate monitoring and agency-reporting requirements for all activities subject to federal licenses and permits issued in reliance on such certification.” These monitoring and reporting requirements are also consistent with the Water Boards’ authority to investigate the quality of any waters of the state within its region under Water Code section 13267. The burden of preparing these reports, including costs, are reasonable to the need and benefits of obtaining the reports. The reports confirm that the best management practices required under this order are sufficient to protect beneficial uses and water quality objectives. The reports related to accidental discharges also ensure that corrective actions, if any, that are necessary to minimize the impact or clean up such discharges can be taken as soon as possible. The anticipated costs are minimal as the reporting obligations require only visual monitoring and notification reporting.

## **5. Transfer of Property Ownership**

Authorization under this General Order is granted based on the application information submitted, including the legally responsible party. Notification is necessary to confirm whether the new owner wishes to assume legal responsibility for compliance with this General Order. If not, the original discharger remains responsible for compliance with this Order. Water Code section 13264 prohibits any discharge that is not specifically authorized in this General Order.

## **6. Transfer of Long-Term Best Management Practices Maintenance**

Authorization under this General Order is granted based on the application information submitted, including the legally responsible party. Notification is necessary to confirm whether liability for long-term best management practices maintenance is accepted by another entity. If not, the original discharger remains responsible for compliance with this Order. Water Code section 13264 prohibits any discharge that is not specifically authorized in this General Order.

## **F. Nationwide Specific Impact Size Limits**

### **1. NWP 3(a) – Maintenance; NWP 14 – Linear Transportation Projects**

Because of the number, geographic scale, and variety of potential environmental impacts that are possible under NWPs 3(a) and 14, temporary and permanent impacts to waters of the state are subject to the project impact size limits and restrictions as described in the General Order, Section VI.F. Project impacts greater than the General Order allows for these NWPs would be more appropriately regulated under an individual certification because they would require additional information and analysis to ensure that they are minimally impacting. The State Water Board would need additional project-specific information, including but not limited to, the location of activities, the receiving water bodies affected, the BMPs proposed, avoidance and minimization measures taken, proposed compensatory mitigation, and a restoration plan for temporary impacts before taking a certification action. For example, projects best management practices may depend on their proximity to waters of the state and whether they are in a floodplain.

These conditions related to project impact size limits are also required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d), which requires that for a general certification, the category of activities to be certified individually or cumulatively will not have any of the following impacts, taking into account the probable effectiveness of any conditions or certification in avoiding or mitigating such impacts:

- a. Significant adverse impacts on water quality that could feasibly be avoided if individual certification, for the proposed activities seeking individual federal licenses or permits, was issued.
- b. Violation of any water quality objectives adopted or approved under Sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code.
- c. The taking of any candidate, threatened, or endangered species or the violation of the federal Endangered Species Act (16 USC Section 1531 et seq.) or the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code Section 2050 et seq.).
- d. Exposure of people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects – including the risk of loss, injury, or death – from flooding, landslides, or soil erosion.

## **G. Nationwide Specific Compliance**

### **1. NWP 3(a) – Maintenance**

#### **a. NWP 3(a) Prohibitions**

##### **i. Lahontan Water Board**

This condition is required pursuant to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region, sections 4.1 and 5.2, which prohibit discharges of waste or deleterious material to surface waters in certain Hydrologic Units. Section 13243 of the Water Code gives Regional Boards, in Basin Plans (i.e., Water Quality Control Plans) or waste discharge requirements, authority to “specify certain conditions or areas where the discharge of waste, or certain types of waste, will not be permitted.”

##### **ii. Riparian Vegetation**

##### **iii. Riparian Tree Removal**

Conditions G.1.a.ii and G.1.a.iii above are required to assure that riparian vegetation removal does not significantly affect water quality and its designated uses, and to assure that the activity complies with state water quality objectives or federal water quality standards. Riparian vegetation removal frequently results in increased erosion potential, temperature fluctuations, creating space for invasive species, etc. All Water Quality Control Plans require protection of beneficial uses. For example, in the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Basin, section 2.1.3, riparian vegetation is an essential component of sustaining cold freshwater habitat (beneficial use of COLD). In addition to providing shade to moderate stream temperature, riparian vegetation provides allochthonous inputs of nutrients to the stream channel in the form of both vegetation and invertebrates.

##### **iv. Roads**

##### **v. Armoring Facilities**

##### **vi. Gabions**

##### **vii. Riprap Installation**

##### **viii. Grouted Riprap**

Conditions G.1.a.iv through G.1.a.viii above are required to assure that discharges will comply with state water quality requirements. Specifically, activities associated with road maintenance have the potential to exceed water quality objectives established in all the Water Quality Control Plans, including objectives for oil and grease, pH, sediment, settleable materials, temperature, and turbidity. For example, the sediment water quality objective requires that, “the suspended sediment load and suspended sediment discharge rate to surface waters shall not be altered in such a manner as to cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses” (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 3.3.11).

Conditions related to roads and bridges, and other facilities such as riprap, gabions, and armoring facilities that are within or cross waters of the state, are required to assure that they do not create physical barriers to fish passage and spawning activities. "Any barrier to migration or free movement of migratory fish is harmful. Natural tidal movement in estuaries and unimpeded river flows are necessary to sustain migratory fish and their offspring. A water quality barrier, whether thermal, physical, or chemical, can destroy the integrity of the migration route and lead to the rapid decline of dependent fisheries" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 2.1.10).

The Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region sets a numeric target of "zero human-caused barriers" for migration barriers on Class I watercourses. (Section 4.2.8). Barriers would also impair beneficial uses designated in the Water Quality Control Plans including "migration of aquatic organisms," "spawning, reproduction, and/or early development," "fish migration," and "fish spawning" (Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 2.2; Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, sections 2.1.10 and 2.1.18).

"Hydromodification is a general term that encompasses effects of projects on the natural hydrologic, geochemical and physical functions of streams and wetlands that maintain or enhance water quality." (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 4.26.7.) Conditions related to roads and bridges, and other facilities such as riprap, gabions, and armoring facilities that are within or cross waters of the state, are required to assure that they do not result in adverse impacts related to hydromodification. Failure to comply with these conditions may trigger bank failure, channel incision, or headcutting along the channel thalweg, creating excess sediment and barriers to fish passage. These impacts can impair beneficial uses including fish migration, fish spawning, wildlife habitat, cold freshwater habitat, preservation of rare and endangered species, and warm freshwater habitat (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 2.1). "The discharge of sand, silt, clay, or other earthen materials from any activity, including land grading and construction, in quantities which cause deleterious bottom deposits, turbidity or discoloration in waters of the state or which unreasonably affect, or threaten to affect, beneficial uses of such waters is prohibited" (Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Region, section 4.18).

**ix. Construction, replacement, or expansion of facilities in any ocean, bay, tidal waters, or shores thereof are prohibited**

This condition prohibiting impacts to oceans, bays, tidal waters, and shores thereof, is required pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d)(1), which requires that activities authorized under this General Order not result in significant adverse impacts on water quality that could feasibly be avoided if individual certification was issued. This condition applies only to this General Order's authorization of projects under NWP 3(a) and 14. This prohibition does not apply to NWPs 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 20, 22, 28, 32, 36, and 54, which include activities that are largely dependent on occurring in marine waters. For example, NWP

9 authorizes placement of structures to facilitate mooring of vessels within anchorage areas established by the U.S. Coast Guard, and NWP 10 allows non-commercial, single-boat mooring buoys. Discharges resulting from these types of activities, as long as they meet all conditions of this General Order, will be minimally impacting and not result in adverse impacts to water quality, either individually or cumulatively. Unlike NWPs 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 20, 22, 28, 32, 36, and 54, which do allow discharges to ocean, bay, tidal waters, or shores thereof, projects authorized under NWPs 3(a) and 14 are generally not marine-water dependent. They include classes of activities that individually or cumulatively may result in significant environmental effects if they were to occur within ocean, bay, or tidal waters, or the shores thereof; therefore it is more appropriate to regulate these activities pursuant an individual water quality certification. Furthermore, the state's Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California (revised 2019) states that "protection of the quality of the ocean waters for use and enjoyment by the people of the state requires control of the discharge of waste to ocean waters," and discharges associated with activities related to NWP 3(a) and 14 may individually or cumulatively impact designated beneficial uses of ocean waters of the state (beneficial uses of ocean water are designated as: industrial water supply; water contact and non-contact recreation, including aesthetic enjoyment; navigation; commercial and sport fishing; mariculture; preservation and enhancement of designated Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS); rare and endangered species; marine habitat; fish migration; fish spawning and shellfish harvesting).

#### **b. NWP 3(a) Compensatory Mitigation Requirements**

Conditions regarding compensatory mitigation are necessary to ensure compliance with state and federal anti-degradation policies. Compensatory mitigation requirements are consistent with State Supplemental Guidelines, section 230.10, restrictions on discharge and the Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.B.1.a (Cal. Code of Regs., section 3013), which requires that the Water Boards will approve a project only after it has been determined that a sequence of actions has been taken to first avoid, then to minimize, and lastly compensate for adverse impacts that cannot be practicably avoided or minimized. (See also Cal. Code of Regs., section 3856(h) (requiring submittal of proposed mitigation and description of steps taken to avoid, minimize, or compensate). Compensatory mitigation conditions are consistent with Executive Order W-59-93 commonly referred to as California's "no net loss" policy for wetlands. Compensatory mitigation requirements are also authorized by Water Code, section 13263, which requires the imposition of requirements that implement water quality control plans, takes into consideration the beneficial uses to be protected, and the need to prevent nuisance.

These conditions related to mitigation requirements are consistent with the Dredged or Fill Procedures, section IV.B.1.a, which requires that the Water Boards will approve a project only after it has been determined that a sequence of actions has been taken to first avoid, then to minimize, and lastly compensate for adverse impacts that cannot be practicably avoided or



minimized. Accordingly, compensatory mitigation is required for projects that would result in permanent impacts.

## **2. NWP 14 – Linear Transportation Projects**

### **a. NWP 14 Prohibitions**

#### **i. Lahontan Water Board**

For condition G.2.a.i, see justification for NWP 3(a) (condition G.1.a.i), above.

#### **ii. Riparian Vegetation**

#### **iii. Riparian Tree Removal**

For conditions G.2.a.ii and G.2.a.iii, see justification for NWP 3(a) (conditions G.1.a.ii and G.1.a.iii), above.

#### **iv. Roads**

#### **v. Armoring Facilities**

#### **vi. Gabions**

#### **vii. Riprap Installation**

#### **viii. Grouted Riprap**

For conditions G.2.a.iv through G.2.a.viii, see justification for NWP 3(a) (conditions G.1.a.iv through G.1.a.viii), above.

#### **ix. Construction, replacement, or expansion of facilities in any ocean, bay, tidal waters, or shores thereof are prohibited**

For condition G.2.a.ix, see justification for NWP 3(a) (condition G.1.a.ix), above.

### **b. NWP 14 Compensatory Mitigation Requirements**

For condition G.2.b, see justification for NWP 3(a) (condition G.1.b), above.

## **3. NWP 36 – Boat Ramps**

### **a. Lahontan Water Board Prohibition**

For condition G.3.a, see justification for NWP 3(a) (condition G.1.a.i), above.

#### **b. Uncured cement**

Concrete/cement is an alkaline component that has the potential to raise the pH of water resources to levels that would negatively affect beneficial uses. This condition is required pursuant to the Water Quality Control Plans in California, which require compliance with water

quality objectives for pH. For example, the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, section 3.3.9, requires that the "pH shall conform to those limits listed in Table 3-1. For waters not listed in Table 3-1 and where pH objectives are not prescribed, the pH shall not be depressed below 6.5 nor raised above 8.5. Changes in normal ambient pH levels shall not exceed 0.2 units in waters with MAR or SAL beneficial uses nor 0.5 units within the range specified above in fresh waters with COLD or WARM beneficial uses." The Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Region, section 3.3.9 requires the "pH shall not be depressed below 6.5 nor raised above 8.5. This encompasses the pH range usually found in waters within the basin. Controllable water quality factors shall not cause changes greater than 0.5 units in normal ambient pH levels."

### **XI. Denial and Compliance with 40 CFR Part 121.7(e)(2)**

The following NWP's are denied: 2, 3(b), 3(c), 7, 8, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 41, 45, 46, 49, 53 and 59. These NWP's are denied because the State Water Board does not have reasonable assurance that the denied NWP's will comply with the applicable provisions of sections 301, 302, 303, 306 and 307 of the Clean Water Act and appropriate requirements of state law. (See 33 USC § 1341.) Any future Clean Water Act section 401 certification action on projects authorized by these denied NWP's will be considered on an individual, project-specific basis, or if eligible, may enroll under another applicable general certification.

The State Water Board is able to certify the NWP's specified in Attachment E because they are similar activities that will cause similar impacts, have very small, mostly temporary impacts to waters of the state, and more predictable impacts to waters. In contrast, it is not possible to determine whether all the activities authorized by the denied NWP's will comply with California Code of Regulations, section 3861(d), which prohibits the issuance of a general certification unless the activities to be certified will not have any of the following impacts:

- (1) Significant adverse impacts on water quality that could feasibly be avoided if individual certification, for the proposed activities seeking individual federal licenses or permits, was issued.
- (2) Violation of any water quality objectives adopted or approved under Sections 13170 or 13245 of the Water Code.
- (3) The taking of any candidate, threatened, or endangered species or the violation of the federal Endangered Species Act (16 USC Section 1531 et seq.) or the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code Section 2050 et seq.).
- (4) Exposure of people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects – including the risk of loss, injury, or death – from flooding, landslides, or soil erosion.

The denied NWP's may individually or cumulatively have the above impacts. NWP projects may occur anywhere within California and include a broad range of activities. NWP's authorize

impacts of up to 0.5 acres of waters. Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3837, a certification request may be denied when compliance with water quality standards and other appropriate requirements is not yet determined. The State Water Board would need additional project-specific information, including but not limited to, the location of activities, the receiving water bodies affected, the BMPs proposed, avoidance and minimization measures taken, proposed compensatory mitigation, and a restoration plan for temporary impacts before taking a certification action. For example, projects best management practices may depend on their proximity to waters of the state and whether they are in a floodplain. In another example, the Corps does not require compensatory mitigation for impacts of 0.10 acres or less. The Water Boards routinely required compensatory mitigation for impacts smaller than that threshold pursuant to their authority under Water Code, section 13263 and as is consistent with Dredge or Fill Procedures, section IV.B.5 and subpart J of the State Supplemental Guidelines. Without this information, the State Water Board cannot determine potential impacts on beneficial uses. Specifically, the State Water Board would need additional information regarding significant adverse impacts on water quality to determine what environmental documentation would be necessary, if any, to comply with CEQA. (See, e.g., Pub. Res. Code §§ 21081; 21082.3, 21092.) Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, section 3856(f), “the certification agency shall be provided with and have ample time to properly review a final copy of valid CEQA documentation before taking a certification action.” Accordingly, certification action for these NWP is more appropriate on an individual basis. California Code of Regulations, section 3861(c)(5) requires that general certifications meet all applicable requirements of CEQA.