



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is prepared in support of the North Coast Railroad Authority Russian River Division Freight Rail Project, located in Napa, Marin, Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, California. The FEIR includes the revised and recirculated Draft EIR (DEIR), public comments on the DEIR, responses to the comments, and revisions.

1.2 SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

The proposed project involves resumption of freight rail service on a section of an existing railroad line from Willits to Lombard, California. The railroad has been operating since the early 1900's, but operations were discontinued in September 2001 when storm damage and the lack of capital prevented safe and profitable operations. Repairs to the line to bring the rail line into conformance with FRA Class 2/3 Standards have been completed for most of the line, and it is now ready to resume service to Windsor.

The rail line extends approximately 142 miles from Willits in Mendocino County, California southward to Lombard in Napa County. From Willits the line runs southward generally following Highway 101 through Redwood Valley, Calpella, Ukiah, Hopland, Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg, Windsor, Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Petaluma, and Novato. South of Novato, at Highway 37, the line runs eastward near the shore of San Pablo Bay, over the Petaluma River, past Black Point, past the old station at Schellville, over the Napa River, and terminates in Lombard north of the city of American Canyon. At Lombard, the rail line joins the national rail system.

The proposed project includes general railroad freight service to and from customers along the line. Anticipated freight includes aggregate materials, lumber, grain, and potentially solid waste in enclosed containers. In addition, the project includes the following four repair and construction projects: electrical repairs to an existing bridge, repair of two storm damaged portions of track, and construction of one siding at Lombard.

The start up phase of reestablishing freight service operation is anticipated to begin in late 2010, and will consist of three round trips per week from Windsor south (three north bound and three south bound). The number of cars per train is estimated to be fifteen cars.

Reestablishing freight service in the region may also involve the addition of a train providing solid waste hauling services for the area. The solid waste services could involve one round trip per day (one north bound and one south bound) six days a week. The number of cars per train is estimated to be 60 cars.

As the freight service becomes established, it is anticipated that the economics of the region could support an increase in the number of trains to two round trips per day (two north bound and two south bound), six days a week. The number of cars per train is estimated to be 25 cars for one round trip and 60 cars for the other round trip. The



60-car train would go from Willits to Lombard. The other trains would initiate with 10 cars in Willits and increase to up to 25 cars from Redwood Valley to Lombard.

1.3 CEQA COMPLIANCE/PROCESS

In accordance with Sections 15063 and 15082 of CEQA Guidelines, the NCRA, as lead agency, prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR. The NOP was circulated to local, state, and federal agencies, and to other stakeholders in July 2007. The Initial Study (IS) was prepared, which determined that the proposed project would have either no or less than significant impacts on Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Mineral Resources, Utilities and Service Systems and Recreational Resources. Potential significant impacts were identified for Air Quality, Biology, Cultural Resources, Geology, Soils and Seismicity, Growth Inducement, Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Public Facilities and Safety, Transportation, and Water. Impacts to these resource areas are analyzed in this EIR.

After the NOP and IS were issued in June 2007, public and agency consultation and scoping meetings were conducted. The scoping period was from July 10, 2007 to August 31, 2007. The following scoping and informational meetings were held:

- July 19, 2007 – Community meeting conducted by Novato City Council.
- July 31, 2007 – Public scoping meeting held at Novato Unified School District Education Center.
- August 29, 2007 – Public scoping meeting held at City of Santa Rosa City Hall.
- August 30, 2007 – Agency (NCRWQB, DFG, Caltrans, and Attorney General's office) consultation meeting held at NCRWQB.
- August 31, 2007 – Agency scoping meeting held at City of Petaluma City Hall.

The comments received during this period were reviewed, evaluated, and incorporated into the DEIR as appropriate.



The following agencies and groups were notified during the scoping and public review periods:

Attorney General's Office, California Department of Justice	Mendocino County AQMD
Bay Area AQMD	National Marine Fisheries Service, Long Beach
CDFG, Bay-Delta Region	National Marine Fisheries Service, Sonoma
CDFG, Northern Region	North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
California Department of Transportation	Northern Sonoma County APCD
California Public Utilities Commission	Office of Historic Preservation, California Department of Parks and Recreation
California State Lands Commission	Pinoleville Pomo Nation
City of Cloverdale	Potter Valley Tribe
City of Cotati	Redwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo
City of Healdsburg	San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
City of Novato	San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
City of Petaluma	San Rafael Public Library
City of Rohnert Park	Santa Rosa Public Library
City of Santa Rosa	She Bel Na Band of Pomo Indians
City of Ukiah	Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo
City of Willits	Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger
Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians	Sonoma County Recorder
County of Humboldt	Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District (SMART)
County of Marin	St. Helena Public Library
County of Mendocino	State Clearinghouse
County of Napa	Stewarts Point Rancheria
County of Sonoma	The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Novato
County of Trinity	The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Santa Rosa
Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians	Town of Windsor
Department of Toxic Substances Control	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch
Dry Creek Rancheria of Pomo Indians	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arcata
Eureka Public Library	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento
Friends of the Eel River, Petaluma	Ukiah Public Library
Friends of the Eel River, Redway	Ulrike Giessel
Guidiville Band of Pomo Indians	Weaverville Public Library
Hopland Band of Pomo Indians	Yokayo Tribe
Lytton Rancheria of Pomo Indians	

The DEIR was circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals to review and comment on the report. The public comment period was 45 days, initiating on March 9, 2009. During the public comment period, written comments were submitted to NCRA.



The public hearings were held on April 14, 2009 at 6:30 pm at the Petaluma City Hall and on April 16, 2009 at the Willits Community Center. Verbal comments from the two public hearings were transcribed for consideration by NCRA.

After the March 9, 2009 DEIR was circulated, new information that was considered significant was made available. In accordance with CEQA 15088.5, the March 9, 2009 DEIR was revised and recirculated on November 9, 2009 to provide the public with the opportunity to comment on the revised document. A new 45 day public comment period was opened, and all of the individuals, agencies, and local jurisdictions that were previously notified were notified of circulation of the revised document. All those who commented on the DEIR were notified that a new set of comments should be submitted for the recirculated DEIR. The earlier comments were considered but not responded to in this FEIR unless specifically requested by those who submitted.

This FEIR will be used by NCRA to support the approval to resume freight rail service. In addition, NCRA has prepared a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) required by AB 3180 that summarizes impacts and mitigations analyzed in the FEIR. NCRA will consider FEIR certification, and upon certification, NCRA may proceed to take action on project approval by NCRA Board of Directors.

1.4 DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

Copies of this FEIR have been mailed to agencies that commented on the recirculated DEIR and others who requested the FEIR. The document may be accessed at the NCRA offices located at the North Coast Railroad Authority, 419 Talmage Road, Suite M, Ukiah, California 95482. In addition, the FEIR may be accessed on NCRA's web site: <http://www.northcoastrailroad.org>.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF FEIR

The FEIR consists of the following:

- The November 5, 2009 revised Draft EIR, bound separately.
- Section 1: Introduction.
- Section 2: List of individuals, agencies, and organizations who commented on the RDEIR; master responses to issues and concerns that were common to several commenters or required additional context; and responses to significant environmental points raised in the comments.
- Section 3: Revisions to the RDEIR, presented in strikeout / underline format.
- Section 4: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan.
- Section 5: References and report preparers.