

# Notice of Exemption

Form D

**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**From:** North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
5550 Skylane Boulevard  
Santa Rosa CA, 95403  
Phone 707-576-2220  
Fax 707-523-0135  
Email: [NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov)

**Project Title:** Garcia River Estuary Enhancement Project

**Project Location:** Point Arena, Mendocino County (38.946074° N, 123.726887° W)

**Description of Project:** The Project will restore complex salmonid rearing habitat in the 0.5-mile-long middle estuary zone of the Garcia River. The Project's goal is to create sufficient winter and spring rearing habitat in the middle estuary to support up to 54,000 juvenile coho and provide winter rearing habitat commensurate with the watershed's summer rearing capacity. Currently, the Garcia River is disconnected from the adjacent floodplains except during large storm events, when it is only connected for a few hours during each flooding event. This inundation pattern does not provide the long-duration inundation needed to develop primary and secondary biotic productivity on the floodplains, nor does it provide the floodplain connectivity that juvenile salmon need during winter and spring flows to seek refuge from high velocities and take advantage of the food-rich wetlands. The Project aims to restore complex rearing habitat by 1) re-connecting and re-creating two seasonally flooded accessible wetlands on the floodplains in the National Monument to provide long-duration inundated habitat for high flow refugia and floodplain feeding opportunities, 2) installing ten engineered log jams and six habitat structures to provide complex low-flow shelter elements that juvenile salmon need during their estuary rearing period, and 3) installing two engineered log jams to guide the river and create complex flow paths and connectivity to the floodplain inlets and habitat structures.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** The Nature Conservancy

**Exempt Status:** (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1): (5268):
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)):
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21 080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c)):
- Categorical Exemption:
- Statutory Exemptions: Sec. 23. Section 21080.56 Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects

**Reasons the project is exempt:** As lead agency, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board has determined that the sole purpose of the Project is to enhance habitat for coho salmon in the Garcia River estuary, and has no incidental public benefits nor does it include any construction activities, except for those solely related to habitat restoration. The Project will results in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

**Lead Agency Contact:** Jake Shannon

**Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** 707-576-2673

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** Matthias St. John, Executive Officer **Date:** December 24, 2021

Signed by Lead Agency  Signed by Applicant Date received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_