

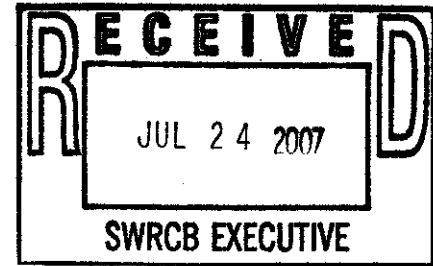
**Association of California Water Agencies**

Leadership Advocacy Information Since 1910

6/26/07 Scoping Mtg.  
CA Ocean Plan Amend.  
Deadline: 7/27/07 Noon

July 24, 2007

State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Quality  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814



Attn: Song Her, Clerk of the Board, Executive Office

Re: Support for Item 10, Alternative 1, No Action, California Ocean Plan Amendment

On behalf of the Association of California Water Agencies, I am writing you regarding the Ocean Plan Amendment, "Issue 10. Desalination Facilities and Brine Disposal." After reviewing the proposed amendment, I request that you select Alternative 1, No Action, in determining the future of the existing Ocean Plan.

ACWA was founded in 1910 to represent, advocate for and provide services to member water agencies throughout California. It is the largest coalition of public water agencies in the country with nearly 450 public agency members which are collectively responsible for 90% of the water delivered to cities, farms and businesses in California. ACWA promotes development, management and reasonable beneficial use of good quality water at the lowest practical cost in an environmentally balanced manner.

Currently, the residents of California are enduring severe drought conditions, long-term climate change, recent court rulings threatening water supplies, and over-appropriated rivers and coastal streams. In search of answers, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, along with experts in the water industry and technical community, has come out in support of ocean water desalination as a means to address these critical issues.

Further, ocean water desalination is a recognized part of California's future water portfolio. Our ability to utilize new water supplies for urban use through desalination will provide much needed security for our drinking water supply, protection for agricultural needs and will safeguard our natural resources. For these reasons, the development of a new source of water is an urgent necessity.

In order to provide the water community an opportunity to research and review the potential of ocean water desalination, we ask that Alternative 1, No Action, be selected by the Board, so as to prevent any artificial standard (percentage of natural background) from impeding the continued design of desalination plants where feasible and appropriate to meet the needs of our current and future generations.

The scoping document, Amendment of The Water Quality Control Plan, Ocean Water of California, June 2007, Issue 10 states that, "Currently, there is no Ocean Plan objective that applies specifically to brine water discharges from desalination plants or groundwater desalination facilities." This conclusion is without merit, as the current Ocean Plan is protective of marine resources with respect to brine discharges without additional limits set at this time.

The Ocean Plan, as drafted, provides safeguards to ensure the protection of marine species and plants through toxicity testing on sensitive life stages of marine species through the inclusion of the following practices:

- Water quality objectives are set for bacteriological, physical, chemical and biological characteristics of receiving water for discharge;
- Such objectives include limits on concentrations of metals and other chemical constituents of a discharge for the protection of marine species as well as human health;
- The salinity level of the desalination plant concentrate discharge is already adequately regulated through the existing acute and chronic toxicity objectives;
- The standards apply to the naturally occurring chemical constituents found in ocean water that are concentrated as part of the reverse osmosis process and discharged back into the ocean as brine; and
- The continued protection of the marine environment through regular testing with the sensitive life stages of species most likely to be impacted by any discharge.

If a desalination plant discharge meets all the water quality objectives defined in the current Ocean Plan, including the acute and chronic toxicity objectives, than the discharge would not present a threat to aquatic life regardless of what the actual salinity level of this discharge is or what increase above ambient salinity the discharge causes.

In conclusion, we are in the early stages of development of ocean water desalination in California. Recognizing that much work lies ahead, the water industry has initiated additional site-specific research on hyper salinity effects and will continue to do so as new sites are proposed. As this process continues, good public policy would suggest we get more data and experience before we begin to amend the Ocean Plan.

For these reasons, we recommend that the Board select Alternative 1, No Action. If we can be of any assistance to you, or provide any addition information regarding this issue, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Paul Shoenberger, Chair  
ACWA Desalination Subcommittee

RS/db/mjw