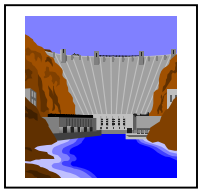
NPS/CZARA FACT SHEET No. 5
Hydromodification Management Measures



The SWRCB, CCC, and other State agencies have identified eight management measures (MMs) to address hydromodification sources of nonpoint pollution affecting State waters. Hydromodification includes modification of stream and river channels, dams and water impoundments, and streambank/shoreline erosion.

California's management measures to address sources of nonpoint pollution related to hydromodification activities:

5.1 Channelization/Channel Modification
- A. Physical & Chemical Characteristics of Surface Waters
- B. Instream & Riparian Habitat Restoration

5.2 Dams
- A. Erosion & Sediment Control
- B. Chemical & Pollutant Control
- C. Protection of Surface Water Quality & Instream and Riparian Habitat

5.3 Streambank & Shoreline Erosion
- A. Eroding Streambanks & Shorelines

5.4 Education/Outreach
- A. Pollution Prevention/Education
- B. Education/Assistance

Channel modification activities are undertaken in rivers or streams to straighten, enlarge, deepen or relocate the channel. These activities can affect water temperature, change the natural supply of fresh water to a waterbody, and alter rates and paths of sediment erosion, transport, and deposition. Hardening the banks of water-ways with shoreline protection or armor also accelerates the movement of surface water and pollutants from the upper reaches of watersheds into coastal waters. Channelization can also reduce the suitability of instream and streamside habitat for fish and wildlife by depriving wetlands and estuarine shorelines of enriching sediments, affecting the ability of natural systems to filter pollutants, and interrupting the life stages of aquatic organisms (USEPA, 1993).

Dams can adversely impact hydrology and the quality of surface waters and riparian habitat in the waterways where the dams are located. A variety of impacts can result from the siting, construction, and operation of these facilities. For example, improper siting of dams can inundate both upstream and downstream areas of a waterway. Dams reduce downstream flows, thus depriving wetlands and riparian areas of water. During dam construction, removal of vegetation and disturbance of underlying sediments can increase turbidity and cause excessive sedimentation in the waterway.

The erosion of shorelines and streambanks is a natural process that can have either beneficial or adverse impacts on riparian habitat. Excessively high sediment loads resulting from erosion can smother submerged aquatic vegetation, cover shellfish beds and tidal flats, fill in riffle pools, and contribute to increased levels of turbidity and nutrients.

Management Measures:

Channelization/Channel Modification. California's management measures for channelization and channel modification promote the evaluation of channelization and channel modification projects. Channels should be evaluated as a part of the watershed planning and design processes, including watershed changes from new development in urban areas, agricultural drainage, or forest clearing. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine whether resulting NPS changes to surface water quality or instream and riparian habitat can be expected and whether these changes will be good or bad. Existing channelization and channel modification projects can be evaluated to determine the NPS impacts and benefits associated with the projects. Modifications to existing projects, including operation and maintenance or management, can also be evaluated to determine the possibility of improving some or all of the impacts without changing the existing benefits or creating additional problems. In both new and existing channelization and channel modification projects, evaluation of benefits and/or problems will be site-specific.

Dams. The second category of management measures address NPS pollution associated with dams. Dams are defined as constructed impoundments that are either (1) 25 feet or more in height *and* greater than 15 acre-feet in capacity, or (2) 6 feet or more in height *and* greater than 50 acre-feet in capacity. MMs 5.2A and 5.2B address two problems associated with dam construction: (1) increases in sediment delivery downstream resulting from construction and operation activities and (2) spillage of chemicals and other pollutants to the waterway during construction and operation. MM 5.2C addresses the impacts of reservoir releases on the quality of surface waters and instream and riparian habitat in downstream.

Streambank and Shoreline Erosion. The third category of hydromodification measures addresses the stabilization of eroding streambanks and shorelines in areas where streambank and shoreline erosion creates a polluted runoff problem. Bioengineering methods such as marsh creation and vegetative bank stabilization are preferred. Streambank and shoreline features that have the potential to reduce polluted runoff shall be protected from impacts, including erosion and sedimentation resulting from uses of uplands or adjacent surface waters. This MM does not imply that all shoreline and streambank erosion must be controlled; the measure applies to eroding shorelines and streambanks that constitute an NPS problem in surface waters.

Education/Outreach. MMs 5.4A and 5.4B focus on the development and implementation of pollution prevention and education programs for agency staffs and the public, as well as the promotion of assistance tools that emphasize restoration and low-impact development. Education, technical assistance, incentives, and other means can be used to promote projects that reduce NPS pollutants, which retain or re-establish natural hydrologic functions (e.g., channel restoration projects and low-impact development projects), and/or which prevent and restore adverse effects of hydromodification activities.