

State Water Resources Control Board

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HISTORIC JOINT MEETING OF TWO CAL/EPA BOARDS FOCUSES ON AIR POLLUTANTS THAT ARE TRANSFERRED TO WATER

SACRAMENTO—Pollutants as varied as brake pad particles from traffic jams to dust from dirt roads were the focus of an historic joint meeting of California's Water and Air Boards Thursday. The two boards previously have successfully specialized in dealing with pollution in air and water, their own respective areas (or "media") of responsibility. In recent decades their efforts have paid off in measurably purer air and water.

Thursday's meeting, in Cal/EPA's Byron Sher Auditorium, was an example of cross-"media" coordination in the investigation of the "aerial deposition" of toxic contaminants from the air to land. The contaminants fall from the air to land, where they are swept up in runoff and end up as water pollutants. The meeting addressed such issues as air and water impacts of mercury in the San Francisco Bay area and metals in the Los Angeles River. Board members heard from the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board that mercury (a potent contaminant and legacy source of pollution) enters the Bay via both direct transfer from the air and water runoff from urban streets, lots and other sites. The contaminant flows in the other direction as well with some mercury volatilizing directly from the Bay's waters into the air.

Cal/EPA Secretary Alan Lloyd, Ph.D. observed, "I am delighted to see parts of the Cal/EPA family collaborating to address these very important issues. This is a fine example of the type of leadership Governor Schwarzenegger is requesting of all state agencies to make them more effective in dealing with the public's concerns."

State Water Board Chair Tam Doduc said Thursday's meeting was just the first of many. "I expect these two boards to work together at the staff level and the board member level in the future. The environmental challenges of the state are all linked. The people solving those problems need to be linked as well."

Chair of the Air Resources Board, Dr. Robert F. Sawyer said, "I am glad the ARB and the State Water Board are working together on this issue. The better we understand the interaction between air and water pollution the more we can determine what can be done to control these phenomena. If more work is needed, we will do what's necessary to make that happen."

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2-2-2 Air Pollutants

Water Board Chair Doduc announced at the meeting that Vice Chair Jerry Secundy will take the lead in future efforts to coordinate State Water Resources Control Board activities with the Air Resources Board. Working groups that will bring together other environmental regulators and stakeholders will meet in the next few weeks. Their priorities will include:

- Identifying an inventory of the original sources of various pollutants; and
- Developing and action plan to deal with those pollutants at the source.

Among the specific findings heard at Thursday's meeting:

- From a joint study of the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) and UCLA, the area faces water pollution (that begin as air pollution) from jet and diesel fuels, dust from paved and unpaved roads, tire wear and construction projects.
- From the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, 27 kilograms of mercury are deposited in the Bay every year directly from the air. Another 160 kg. (much of which begins as air pollution) enters as urban runoff. This is balanced by 190 kg. that is transferred from the Bay into the air. (The numbers are relatively small compared to a total estimate of 1,220 kg of mercury going into the Bay annually, mostly from legacy pollution, some dating back to the Gold Rush.)
- From the Air Resources Board, in the Lake Tahoe area traffic-generated air pollution varies according to time of day. The morning and evening commutes may have equally heavy traffic, but the time of day affects air currents and the transfer of pollution from air to the lake waters. Also, some of the fine dust affecting the lake blows from as far away as Asia.

All of these challenges and more will be dealt with in future Water Board-Air Board meetings.

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