

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION-DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
AUGUST 4, 2009**

ITEM 3

SUBJECT

CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL FORUM TITLED "2008 REVIEW - WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR SALINITY - COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM," DATED OCTOBER 2008

DISCUSSION

Salinity caused impacts have long been a major concern in the Colorado River Basin (Basin) in the United States and Mexico. In 1973, the seven Basin states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming established the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum). The Forum was tasked with interstate cooperation and providing the states with the necessary information to comply with the federal Clean Water Act. In 1975, the Forum proposed salinity "standards" (in California, referred to as "water quality objectives") for the Colorado River and a plan of implementation designed to achieve the objectives. These standards were then adopted by the states and subsequently approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). Section 303(c) of the federal Clean Water Act requires that water quality standards be reviewed at least once every three years and revised as appropriate.

The standards and plan of implementation were reviewed and updated, as necessary, in 1978 and every three years thereafter. No revisions to the salinity standards have resulted from past Triennial Reviews. In 2008, the Forum again reviewed the numeric salinity standards and plan of implementation for salinity control for the Colorado River System. Changes in hydrologic conditions and water use within the Basin and salinity/flow relationships were evaluated, and the plan of implementation was updated. The plan of implementation includes a number of federal and nonfederal measures to maintain the adopted salinity standards while the Basin states continue to develop their compact-apportioned waters.

The numeric water quality standards for salinity at three locations in the Basin are:

1. Below Hoover Dam, 723 milligrams per liter (mg/l)
2. Below Parker Dam, 747 mg/l
3. At Imperial Dam, 879 mg/l

The plan of implementation includes:

1. Completion of salinity control measures by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Bureau of Land Management to the extent that each unit remains viable and appropriately cost-effective.
2. Completion of activities implemented under the cooperative agreements between the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the states of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming.
3. Implementation of the Forum's recommended and adopted policies for effluent limitations, principally under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit program.

4. Implementation of nonpoint source management plans developed by the states and approved by U.S. EPA.

The plan of implementation is designed to keep salinity concentrations at or below the established standards. With implementation of the plan, computer modeling shows the probability of exceedance of the numeric standards in the next three years at the three stations is one percent or less.

POLICY ISSUE

Should the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) approve the 2008 Triennial Review of the Colorado River salinity objectives and plan of implementation?

FISCAL IMPACT

The Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board and State Water Board staff work associated with or resulting from this action will be addressed with existing and future budgeted resources.

REGIONAL WATER BOARD IMPACT

Yes. Regional Water Boards 4 (Los Angeles Region), 7 (Colorado River Basin Region), 8 (Santa Ana Region), and 9 (San Diego Region).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the State Water Board:

1. Approves the 2008 Triennial Review of the Colorado River salinity objectives and plan of implementation.
2. Directs staff to submit the approved 2008 Triennial Review to U.S. EPA pursuant to section 303(c) of the federal Clean Water Act.

State Water Board action on this item will assist the Water Boards in reaching Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan Update: 2008-2012 to comprehensively address water quality protection and restoration, and the relationship between water supply and water quality, and describe the connections between water quality, water quantity, and climate change, throughout California's water planning processes. In particular, approval of this item will assist in fulfilling Action 4.3.1. to work with external stakeholders to identify and prioritize opportunities to provide resources to address basin planning issues of mutual concern determined through the regular triennial review process to update the Basin Plans.

DRAFT

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2009-

APPROVING THE FINAL REPORT OF THE
COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL FORUM TITLED
"2008 REVIEW - WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR SALINITY –
COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM", DATED OCTOBER 2008

WHEREAS:

1. In 1975, the seven Colorado River Basin states, including California, established water quality standards (objectives) for salinity for the Colorado River.
2. Section 303(c) of the federal Clean Water Act mandates that water quality standards be reviewed and revised, as necessary, at least once every three years.
3. The seven-state Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) reviewed the 1975 state-adopted and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA)-approved standards in 1978 and every three years thereafter and concluded that the existing salinity standards were adequate.
4. The Forum conducted a review in 2008 and adopted a report which updated the plan of implementation and reaffirmed the adequacy of existing numeric standards. No changes are recommended to California's implementation of the salinity water quality standards. The report is titled "2008 Review—Water Quality Standards for Salinity—Colorado River System", dated October 2008.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The State Water Board:

1. Approves the [2008 Triennial Review of the Colorado River salinity objectives and plan of implementation](#).
2. Directs staff to submit the approved 2008 Triennial Review to U.S. EPA pursuant to section 303(c) of the federal Clean Water Act.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned, Clerk to the Board, does hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of a resolution duly and regularly adopted at a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board held on August 4, 2009.

Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board