

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

**STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 16-17, 2011**

Prepared on February 15, 2011

**ITEM NUMBER: 11**

**SUBJECT: Executive Officer's Report to the Board**

This item presents a brief discussion of issues that may interest the Board. Upon request, staff can provide more detailed information about any particular item.

**WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS**

[Kim Sanders 805/542-4721]

In general, staff recommends "Standard Certification" when the applicant proposes adequate mitigation. Measures included in the application must ensure that beneficial uses will be protected, and water quality standards will be met.

Conditional Certification is appropriate when a project may adversely impact surface water quality. Conditions allow the project to proceed under an Army Corps permit, while upholding water quality standards.

Staff will recommend "No Action" when no discharge or adverse impacts are expected. Generally, a project must provide beneficial use and habitat enhancement for no action to be taken by the Regional Board. A chart on the following pages lists applications received from December 22, 2010 – February 9, 2011.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM DECEMBER 22, 2010 THROUGH FEBRUARY 9, 2011

| Applicant   | Date Received | Project Title  | Project Purpose  | Location          | County          | Receiving Water       | Total Acreage | Status   |
|---|---------------|--|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|--|
| ACOE - Lawrence Smith                                       | 12/28/10      | Pismo Beach Shoreline Protection Project                 | Provide shoreline protection to six dangerously eroding sites. Water quality certification is only being requested for two sites at this time: St. Andrews Lift Station and Vista del Mar Lift Station | Pismo Beach       | San Luis Obispo | Pacific Ocean         | 0.35          | Incomplete application                               |
| PG&E - Christina Holstine                                   | 1/3/10        | Crazy Horse Canyon Switching Station Project             | Improve electric service reliability and increase operational flexibility for the central and northern areas of Monterey County and northern San Benito County   | East of Prunedale | Monterey        | Gabilan Creek         | 0.025         | Incomplete application                               |
| Goleta West Sanitary District - Mark Nation                 | 1/12/11       | Goleta West Sanitary District Trunk Improvements Project | Design and construct a new 42-inch gravity sewer segment to replace the existing 33-inch gravity sewer running from Los Carneros Road through the Storke Wetlands to the Main Pump Station.            | UCSB Campus       | Santa Barbara   | Storke Wetlands       | 0.152         | Under staff review                                   |
| San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department - Dave Flynn | 1/26/11       | See Canyon Slip-out Repair Project                       | Increase traffic safety by stabilizing the stream bank so that erosion toward the roadway is stopped, restoring the road shoulder, and erecting a guard rail.  | Avila Beach       | San Luis Obispo | See Canyon Creek      | 0.03          | Complete application received, review has not begun. |
| City of Watsonville - Steve Palmisano                       | 2/3/11        | Manabe Property Wetland Restoration - Phase 2            | Complete the Manabe wetland restoration project at Watsonville Slough and provide pedestrian access by including pathways and informational signs.   | Watsonville       | Santa Cruz      | Watsonville Slough    | 4.9           | Complete application received, review has not begun. |
| PXP - Candace Salway  | 2/7/11        | PXP Produced Water Reclamation Facility -WDR             | Enhance the recovery of oil reserves by constructing a water reclamation facility that will treat produced water and discharge it to Pismo Creek   | Arroyo Grande     | San Luis Obispo | Unnamed State wetland | 0.09          | General WDRs being issued.                           |

## ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

### Presentations, Education, and Training [Roger Briggs 805/549-3140]

On February 1, staff engineer Kristina Seley spoke at a Cuesta Junior College, Introduction to Engineering class. Kristina discussed why she entered her field of study, what she enjoys about her employment at the Water Board, how to prepare for the professional civil engineering exam, and the challenges she has faced in school and work.

Karen Worcester gave a presentation on the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program at the Southern California Coastal Water Research Program (SCCWRP). SCCWRP is the largest water quality monitoring and research facility in the State. After a brief program overview, Karen focused on describing our data management approach and web-based delivery, viewing and analysis tools. Steve Steinburg, recently hired through a state contract to SCCWRP to serve as the statewide coordinator for the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN), was in the audience. After the presentation, Karen spent more time describing our tools and ways we can support the CEDEN regional data centers. There are three data centers, at SCCWRP, Moss Landing Laboratories, and San Francisco Estuary Institute, which have been funded to facilitate collection and movement of data from outside sources into CEDEN. Steve will be managing this effort. Our web-based data delivery tool is slated to be developed further for data center use for moving grants data and data from other sources into CEDEN.

### TMDL Stakeholder Outreach Meetings

TMDL program staff have engaged stakeholders in several outreach events spanning several TMDL projects.

On January 13, 2011, TMDL program manager Chris Rose and staff geologist Pete Osmolovsky, lead staff for the approved Salinas Fecal Coliform TMDL, met with leaders of the Cattlemen's Association. The meeting was the first of potentially several aimed at building communication and trust between the Cattlemen and Water Board staff. Cattlemen suggested Water Board staff attend a Cattlemen sponsored forum where researchers share findings regarding the relationship between cattle operations and water quality; staff agreed to attend and look forward to the dialogue. Cattlemen will provide input into the details of staff-generated TMDL implementation strategies, e.g., the paper trail between Water Board staff and implementing parties during the TMDL implementation phase.

On January 20, 2011, Chris Rose and Pete Osmolovsky, lead staff for the five, single-source, fecal indicator bacteria TMDLs project, held a stakeholder outreach meeting in San Luis Obispo with potential implementing parties. The potential implementing parties are owners and operators of livestock operations, e.g., Cattlemen, in five separate watersheds. The watersheds are the lower San Antonio River, Tularcitos Creek, Cholame Creek, San Lorenzo Creek, and Arroyo de la Cruz. Pete gave a short presentation to the group, outlining TMDLs in general, the five watersheds included in the project, and the non-regulatory approach we are proposing for these TMDLs. The non-regulatory approach relies on the existing California Rangeland Water Quality Management Plan (Plan) as the mechanism for implementing the TMDLs; the Plan is endorsed by State Board and the Cattlemen's Association. After the presentation, Chris and Pete answered questions regarding the project. Chris and Pete repeated the workshop on

February 9, 2011, in King City. Most of the participants at the King City workshop were not present at that San Luis Obispo workshop. There were 15 stakeholders at the San Luis Obispo meeting, and 25 at the King City meeting. Official public comment for the project is from February 3, 2011 to March 21, 2011. Chris and Pete alerted workshop participants of the opportunity to formally provide comment.

On January 25, 2011, Chris Rose and staff scientists Larry Harlan and Peter Meertens held a stakeholder outreach meeting for the Santa Maria Watershed TMDL. Chris gave a short presentation about the Santa Maria Watershed TMDL project, the status, and milestone dates ahead. Larry Harlan is the lead staff working on the nutrients portion of the watershed TMDL. Peter Meertens is the lead staff working on the pesticides portion of the watershed TMDL. Larry and Peter gave presentations describing the impairments, strategies for numeric target development, and milestone dates. Chris, Larry, and Peter followed the presentations with a question and discussion session. The workshop was attended by about 30 stakeholders.

Pete Osmolovsky participated in two Livestock and Land Program workshops; the first was held October 20, 2010, in Salinas, the second on February 12, 2011, in Morgan Hill. The workshops were sponsored by the Resource Conservation Districts of Monterey County and San Benito County. Livestock and Land is a program funded by the State Water Resources Control Board and managed by Ecology Action, a non-profit environmental consultancy in partnership with the Resource Conservation Districts. The goal of Livestock and Land is to educate, facilitate, and help land owners implement best management practices for control of nutrients, pathogens, and sediment from rural properties and boarding facilities containing horses, goats, and other domestic animals. Pete presented information on the Water Board's TMDL program, including information regarding the adopted land disturbance and fecal waste discharge prohibitions approved with Pajaro River and Salinas River TMDLs. Staff informed property owners of the prohibition requirements, timelines, and options for compliance. Staff also solicited and obtained information from workshop attendees on local equestrian clubs and owner-breeder associations who may be in a position to assist staff with continuing outreach to the equestrian community. There were approximately 40 attendees for each workshop.

#### Budget Status [Roger Briggs 805/549-3140]

One part of our existing budget cuts is our "salary savings," which stems from the reality that the water boards as a statewide organization (and most other agencies) never achieve a zero percent vacancy rate. Consequently, state agencies have institutionalized a salary target that is less than 100% expenditure. The traditional figure was a 5% salary savings, and the budget administrators and the Governor's Office counted on that savings every year. Our water boards organization as a whole was therefore limited in years past to 95% of the stated budget. Now we have an additional salary savings requirement (it's doubled to 10%). Our water boards statewide are currently meeting that figure (10.6% as of February), but our region is not. We are being carried by higher vacancies at the State Board and some other regions. With all recent budget reductions now in place (subject to change as Governor Brown's proposed budget will be subject to changes in the next few months), we do have the distinction of being the only organization within the water boards that has a 0% vacancy rate. The next lowest rate is 2.5% (the North Coast Region and the Office of Information Management). However, dollar-wise, there are four other organizations that are further in the hole than we are. Overall, the State Board projects that we will all be able to end the year within our dollar budget, as more staff leave the organization this fiscal year and are not replaced due to the hiring freeze.

As we have discussed before, continued budget cuts emphasize our need for on-going priority evaluations. We periodically reconsider our priorities and we continue to make decisions based on that evolving priority framework every day.

### Groundwater Nitrate Contamination

Over the last couple of years, we have gathered more data on groundwater quality in our region, and realize that nitrate concentrations in many of our basins are very high. For example, approximately 9.4 percent of all public water supply wells (multiple connections) in the Region had concentrations of nitrate in excess of the drinking water standard between 1994 and 2000, and 18 percent of public supply wells within the Salinas Valley groundwater basin (excluding the Paso Robles subbasin), contained nitrate in excess of the drinking water standard during the period between 1979 and 2009. Excluding the Seaside, Langlely and Corral de Tierra subbasins of the Salinas Valley groundwater basin, the number of wells containing nitrate in excess of the drinking water standard increased to 23 percent. Public supply wells are those with multiple connections and they are regulated by public health agencies, with required testing and actions to ensure delivered water meets standards. No such regulatory safety net exists for wells for individual residences or even for multiple residence wells up to four connections (we'll call them small system wells).

Water quality problems that are public health threats are our highest priority issues. We are taking a cross organizational team approach to tackling this major problem. Our three main goals are to:

- Find the Exposures
- Stop the Exposures
- Achieve Groundwater Cleanup

Goal 1 & 2 are interim steps necessary to prevent people from drinking contaminated water while we are taking action to meet Goal 3. However, the interim period will be a very long one as source reduction and groundwater cleanup are very long term propositions. We are taking many actions now on all three Goals. For Goals 1 & 2, we are identifying with more precision the known and suspected contaminated groundwater areas as well as likely addresses within those areas that have small system wells. We will coordinate with each County Environmental and Public Health Department, as well as each Board of Supervisors, to notify each residence of the situation. The notification will provide information on the nature of the risk, how to get their water tested, and where to obtain more information. We are starting with Monterey County, as the county with the likely greatest number of affected residents. We are also doing leg work in our other counties in preparation for similar notifications.

On a region wide scale, recall that we sent a letter to all eight County Public Health Officers in our region alerting them to the problem of lack of protective regulation of small system wells. That letter (attached; same letter also sent to San Mateo and Ventura Counties) recommended that the counties require:

1. nitrate sampling for all new [individual] domestic water supply wells with follow-up sampling as warranted based on the initial sampling results

2. sampling of existing domestic wells during property transfers and lot/parcel changes or building improvements requiring a county permit, including septic system repairs and upgrades, and
3. require annual nitrate sampling for all water systems/wells with two to fourteen connections. We also suggest you consider implementing a voluntary domestic well nitrate sampling and public education program for existing domestic wells within your county.

We received no formal responses to this letter, although as our staff followed up with various county staff, they did indicate they have discussed the matter internally and generally agree it's a serious problem. Chair Young and Executive Officer Briggs recently met with Santa Barbara County management and discussed this situation and our letter. The County representatives committed to answering our letter and cooperating on groundwater data sharing to assist in this effort.

For our third goal of achieving groundwater cleanup, the Board is of course aware of our efforts to address agriculture sources and septic system sources. We are also examining municipal and other sources as we revise waste discharge requirements. We will keep the Board informed of our progress on this important issue.

**ATTACHMENT**

1. June 23, 2010 Letter

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