

COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM:	"C" for 11 January 2011
ACTION NEEDED:	<i>Initial Discussion of Principles or Policy Proposals for Salinity Management in the San Joaquin River Basin and For Maintaining In-Stream Water Quality in the San Joaquin River.</i>
BACKGROUND:	<p>The LSJR Committee will need to consider whether the existing policy statements in the Sacramento – San Joaquin River Basin Plan are adequate for our work in developing water quality objectives. Developing the implantation plan will necessitate the strict adherence to established policy in the Basin Plan or the LSJR Committee will need to suggest changes. Attachment 1 is a broad description of the present policies in the Basin Plan that would direct the LSJR Committee work. We need to begin to discuss whether these policies are adequate to conduct our work or whether the Committee needs to propose changes and why that change is needed.</p> <p>The LSJR Committee will need to be closely involved in the discussions at the Executive Committee on salinity control policies and how these may affect our work and work plan.</p>
ISSUES:	<p>At the present time, does the LSJR Committee feel comfortable with the present policies laid out in the Basin Plan?</p> <p>Are there other ways to pose the present policies that better fit our needs?</p> <p>Are there other policy dilemmas that the LSJR Committee needs to consider?</p> <p>How does the LSJR Committee want to coordinate this issue with the Executive Committee of CV-SALTS?</p> <p>How do the LSJR Committee members want to proceed?</p>

ATTACHMENT 1

This is a generalized summary of the present policy considerations in the present Basin Plan. It is not meant to be exhaustive, rather to give an overview of the present policies.

Throughout the Basin Plan it describes the causes of the salinity problem in the Lower San Joaquin River as multi-faceted. This includes increased urban and agricultural development in the basin, possible over allocation of surface water supplies in the basin (no dilution flows), diversion of high quality flows to outside the basin, salty return flows from agriculture and higher salinity water being imported into the basin.

The cornerstone of the Board's salinity control policy in the San Joaquin River seems to be to promote the maximum export of salt from the basin. To accomplish this:

1. The Board continues to promote the development of a valley-wide drain to carry agricultural salts out of the Basin.
2. The Board promotes the use of BMPs, including water conservation and reuse to minimize the total salt load needing to be exported from the Basin.
3. The Board allows the San Joaquin River to be used to remove salts from the Basin so long as water quality objectives are met.

This latter policy was the basis that the Board used to adopt a TMDL for salt and boron control on the San Joaquin River as they felt water quality objectives at Vernalis were not being consistently met.

In essence, the lack of a valley-wide drain focuses salt export and salt balance on using the San Joaquin River as the salt export mechanism. This is not without consequences.

1. The lack of dilution flows in the River likely limits the total load of salt that can be safely removed from the basin, thus potentially building up salt in the basin similar to the Tulare Lake Basin.
2. The rapidly expanding urban population and industrial development in the basin will increase the need for salt removal.
3. A portion of the salt that is being exported thru the San Joaquin River, at this time, is being recirculated into the federal and State water project pumps and returned to the water users in the San Joaquin River Basin as well as to water users in the Tulare Lake Basin where there is no outlet for salt at the present time.
4. Without a salt export mechanism, salinity will likely build up in the groundwater on both the east and west sides of the river. As these salts will then move more uncontrolled into the River, further limiting the ability of the river to carry salt from the basin.

The Board established a schedule of work products to be prepared under a Basin Planning Effort to establish Upstream Water Quality Objectives for salinity. That schedule is shown in the Basin Plan as follows:

Table IV-4.1: Schedule for developing water quality objectives for salt and boron in the LSJR from Mendota Dam to the Airport Way Bridge near Vernalis¹

Milestone	Date
Staff report on criteria needed to protect beneficial uses	October 2004
Staff report and Regional Water Board workshop on water quality objectives that can reasonably be achieved	June 2005
Draft second phase TMDL with water quality objectives and program of implementation for LSJR from Mendota Dam to Airport Way Bridge near Vernalis	September 2005
Board Hearing for consideration of adoption	June 2006

Other Suggested Principles:

One Committee member has proposed an additional statement that could be considered for the Basin Plan in any Amendment prepared by the LSJR Committee. It is suggested that this statement be considered for inclusion in Section III , perhaps an eighth important point.

Because the establishment of water quality objectives must include the consideration of the criteria listed in Section 13241 of the California Water Code, a water quality objective that is reasonably protective of a beneficial use may not be 100% protective of every potential use within a beneficial use category. As such, a water quality objective to provide for every potential industrial use for a water body designated with a beneficial use of IND may not be reasonable. Similarly, a water quality objective to provide for 100% crop production of every potential crop for a water body designated AGR may not be reasonable.

¹ This Table comes from page IV-32.03 of the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River Basin and the San Joaquin River Basin dated 10 September 2004.