

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
8:30 A.M., Thursday, June 13, 2013
Santa Rosa

- ITEM: 9
- SUBJECT: Status of the draft Basin Plan Amendment to Update Implementation Plans to address groundwater and surface water protection (*Alydda Mangelsdorf and Jeremiah Puget*)
- BOARD ACTION: Informational item only.
- BACKGROUND: Under direction of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, staff is developing a proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region* (Basin Plan) to update specific water quality objectives (proposed WQO Update Amendment) and implementation plans and polices. The project is divided into two phases. The primary goals of Phase I are to develop a narrative groundwater toxicity objective, to update the chemical constituent objectives for surface waters and ground waters, and to clarify the process the Regional Water Board uses when narrative objectives are translated into numeric limits for use in permits, orders, or other regulatory actions. Phase II incorporates statewide polices for Onsite Waste Treatment Systems, the Recycled Water Policy, and establishes a policy for the discharges of waste to land. It also includes a proposed prohibition against the discharge of waste in violation of standards. Finally, it includes formatting and editorial revisions to the Implementation Plans chapter.
- ISSUES: **Onsite Waste Treatment System (OWTS) Policy:**
- The State Water Board adopted the OWTS Policy on June 19, 2012, to meet the legal mandate¹ that required the State Water Board to develop statewide regulations or standards for the permitting and operation of septic systems. The primary objective of the OWTS Policy is establish consistent statewide standards to ensure that surface waters and groundwaters are not contaminated by septic systems and beneficial uses are protected.
- In accordance with the OWTS Policy, regional water boards are required to incorporate the requirements established in the OWTS

¹ Assembly Bill 885 (Wat. Code § 13290)

Policy into their basin plans by May 2014. At the time of incorporation of the OWTS Policy into the Basin Plan, the regional water boards may also consider whether it is necessary and appropriate to retain or adopt any more stringent standards to protect the environment and public health.

Waste to Land/Recycled Water Policy:

Common waste discharges to land in the North Coast include treated municipal wastewater, industrial wastewater, and food and industrial processing wastes. Wastes are applied to land in a variety of ways, including spreading of solids, common irrigation methods (spray fields, flood irrigation, drip systems, etc.), percolation basins, and subsurface leach fields. Waste constituents can migrate to groundwater aquifers indirectly via infiltration of leachate or applied wastes or from leaking pipelines and unlined treatment and storage ponds. As wastes infiltrate through soil, waste characteristics can change due to physical, biological, and chemical processes that occur on the land surface and in the underlying soil. Many pollutants can be attenuated through these processes while others remain unchanged or are concentrated.

In May 2009, the State Water Board adopted the Recycled Water Policy. The purpose of the Recycled Water Policy is to increase the use of recycled water from municipal wastewater sources and increase the use of storm water, encourage the conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater, and improve and conserve the use of local water supplies. The Policy requires the development of salt and nutrient management plans (SNMPs) for all groundwater basins in the state within the next five years. These plans are intended to provide holistic, watershed-based control of these constituents by managing all sources of salts and nutrients as necessary to protect groundwater.

Prohibition:

As part of the Klamath Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Action Plan, the Regional Water Board adopted a prohibition against the discharge of waste in violation of water quality standards unless otherwise authorized by the Regional Water Board. Staff proposes that the prohibition language be incorporated into Chapter 4 of the Basin Plan with applicability to all waters within the Region. In particular, such a prohibition would support our efforts to reduce and control pollution from nonpoint source discharges.

Revise and Remove:

Many of the action plans and policies contained in Chapter 4, (Implementation Plans) are outdated. Some of these plans and policies require updating and others, such as the Action Plan for Accidental Spills and Contingencies, are recommended for deletion.

Revise the Layout:

Regional Water Board staff plans to reorganize the layout of Chapter 4 to accommodate regional policies, to consolidate watershed management plans and add an introduction. Staff proposes that the introduction section include a definition of waste, best management practices, general control actions and describes how the programs of the Region Water Board function within the context of the laws and regulations which it administers. These changes are editorial in nature and will complement current changes to other recent chapters in the Basin Plan, as well as improve the overall readability.

**SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES:**

OWTS Policy:

Staff are evaluating which elements of the existing “Policy on the Control of Water Quality with respect to Onsite Waste Treatment and Disposal Practices” should be retained when adopting the State Board’s OWTS policy. Some of the issues to consider include, but are not limited to: antidegradation, approach to cesspools, prohibition against the use of holding tanks, a process to identify legally responsibility parties where none exist, prohibition of the use of engineered fill for basal areas, and identification of problematic areas to apply minimum standards.

Waste to Land:

As identified by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) the North Coast Region contains sixty-two groundwater basins, many in sparsely populated and remote areas where the primary land uses are timber production, grazing, and irrigated agriculture. A stakeholder group led by the City of Santa Rosa has developed a Salt and Nutrient Management Plan for the Santa Rosa Plain. This amendment will include a proposed framework for salt and nutrient loading potential, groundwater contamination risk, and the thresholds necessary to ensure appropriate protections are developed and actions are taken to properly manage the identified risks. Staff will also participate with other Regions to develop a consistent framework for low-threat basins.

RECOMMENDATION: This item is informational only and will be scheduled for Board action at a later date.