

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

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 5, 2009

Prepared on January 15, 2009

ITEM NUMBER: 14

SUBJECT: Outreach Options: Accomplishing our Vision of Healthy Watersheds

This Action: Board Direction for Outreach Actions

DISCUSSION

Our Vision of Healthy Watersheds, through attainment of our goals of Sustainable Land Management, Healthy Aquatic Habitat, and Clean Groundwater, requires coordinated actions of the many stakeholders in each watershed. We realize that the Water Board and staff do not make direct physical changes in our watersheds. Our role is to encourage and require other stakeholders to make the changes that will help meet our goals. Our efforts are about leveraging other stakeholders.

Our leveraging will be more effective if our water quality stakeholders have a better understanding of the why and how of our Vision and our Goals. Why should they do anything different to help accomplish these goals? How do healthy watersheds affect their quality of life? How can their changes in behavior or actions help? They need to understand the value of these goals in their watershed and the value to themselves and their own organizations. Even those who are directly regulated by the Regional Water Board frequently have the opportunity to do more for their watersheds than the bare minimum necessary to meet waste discharge requirements.

All of these stakeholders will typically be more open to working together towards these goals that we have outlined for their watersheds if the stakeholders actually know who we are as individuals, staff and Board Members, and if they know about our commitment to these goals. For example, as we have heard at our own Board meetings, some people assume Regional Board members are highly paid for their service. If stakeholders understood that Board members give of their own time, typically reducing their time and income from their own livelihoods in order to perform a public service for the region, most people would view our goals with a different perspective. We have also seen recent examples of local elected representatives who receive small slivers of information from various sources about the Regional Board and our actions, and those slivers are not accurate or representative of the true situation.

Although County Supervisors are full time paid employees, they have such a broad range of responsibilities and demands that many of them do not have a very good understanding of the Regional Water Board, its members, its authority, responsibilities, Vision, etc. City council members are very part time and consequently typically have an even lesser understanding of the Regional Water Board. We will have a difficult time optimizing cooperative actions on our goals and communicating effectively with the cities and counties if we have a large gulf in understanding of the Regional Water Board by the council members and supervisors.

We can accomplish this needed communication and cooperation through various means of outreach. The Regional Board Chair directed the Executive Officer to put this item on the agenda to have the opportunity to discuss our outreach activities and opportunities, which are listed below.

Outreach Activities:

1. Individual meetings with councils and supervisors
 - a. With the council as a whole or the Board of Supervisors as a whole (similar to the study session the Chair and Vice Chair and staff participated in with the Salinas Council on January 20).
 - b. With individual council members and supervisors
2. Workshops at various locations in the region with invitations to local council members and supervisors (e.g., a workshop in Santa Barbara, with invitations to representatives from not only the City and County of Santa Barbara, but Carpinteria, Summerland, Montecito, and Goleta).
3. Presentations at gatherings that these people are already attending (e.g. the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments meetings).

The Executive Officer and staff are already doing all of the above activities to some degree by meeting with many city and county representatives and presenting at some Council, Board of Supervisor meetings, and Chamber of Commerce meetings, as well as meeting with legislators on occasion. However, these are frequently prompted by specific issues as opposed to being focused on the bigger picture and overall understanding and cooperation we are talking about with this item. Chair Young would like to explore the idea of a subcommittee of the Board, or individual Board members going to various local government sessions, with support from staff. Such endeavors are usually very time consuming for both Board members and staff, so we need to be reasonably assured we are accomplishing results that warrant the expenditure of time. If not, we should adjust our outreach method.

RECOMMENDATION

Line up option 2. with any two Board members willing and able to volunteer and treat it as a pilot venture. Evaluate effectiveness and then adjust as appropriate.