

ITEM: 22

SUBJECT: Delta Mercury Control Program Update

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item.

BACKGROUND: The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Delta) is impaired due to elevated levels of mercury in fish tissue. In April 2010, the Central Valley Water Board adopted the Delta Mercury Control Program to address the impairment and in October 2011, the US EPA approved the control program.

The Delta Mercury Control Program addresses mercury and methylmercury sources in the Delta including wastewater, urban runoff, wetlands, open channels, and agricultural return flows. The implementation strategy is divided into two phases. Phase 1, which spans from 2011 to approximately 2020, is primarily a study period during which dischargers will develop and evaluate methylmercury control measures. Phase 1 incorporates an adaptive management approach, so that the methylmercury control studies can be adjusted and implemented in the most efficient manner. At the end of Phase 1, the Central Valley Water Board will review the study results generated during Phase 1, and will consider revising the program as necessary before the start of Phase 2, when dischargers implement the methylmercury controls.

Rather than a multitude of individual methylmercury studies, dischargers are allowed to work together and submit coordinated studies. The dischargers have formed coordinated study groups for wastewater treatment, urban runoff, non-point sources (wetland and irrigated agriculture), and open water (state agencies). A technical advisory committee (TAC) of independent mercury experts was convened to review discharger work plans and study results. In August, the dischargers submitted study work plan outlines so that the TAC could provide early feedback before final work plans are due. In September the dischargers and TAC met to discuss the work plan concepts. Full work plans are due April 2013.

Another component of Phase 1 is the development of an exposure reduction program to reduce human exposure to mercury-contaminated fish. The first step is the development of a strategy to determine how to form and fund an exposure reduction program. Staff has been working with the stakeholders over the summer and plans to have a strategy submitted to the Executive Officer by 20 October 2012.

RECOMMENDATION: This is an informational item.

Mgmt. Review _____
Legal Review _____ PEP _____

4/5 October 2012
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