



California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region

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NOTICE OF CEQA SCOPING MEETING AND PUBLIC WORKSHOP concerning

Development of an Amendment to the Regional Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins to Establish New Salinity and Boron Water Quality Objectives in the Lower San Joaquin River and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) to Implement Salinity and Boron Water Quality Objectives

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Regional Water Board) staff will hold a public workshop and a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) scoping meeting to seek input on the development of an amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins (Basin Plan). The Regional Water Board is the lead state agency charged with the protection of water quality in the Central Valley. The Basin Plan will be revised to include site-specific water quality objectives for salinity and boron, and an updated implementation plan to meet those objectives. It is anticipated that the updated implementation plan will require the establishment of TMDLs to achieve compliance with the new objectives. The Regional Water Board goes through a formal public process to amend its Basin Plan.

BACKGROUND

Salinity has been a long recognized problem in the lower San Joaquin River. The lower San Joaquin River (LSJR) is a major tributary of the Delta, and drains approximately 8.7 million acres in California's Central Valley. The LSJR watershed is located in portions of Stanislaus, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Fresno Counties. The project area for the TMDL encompasses approximately 2.9 million acres where agriculture is the predominant land use.

A previous CEQA scoping meeting for this proposed amendment was held on 11 May 2005. Staff turnover and budgetary constraints have limited progress on this amendment. Furthermore, the geographic the scope of the project is now limited to the San Joaquin River from the confluence of the Stanislaus River to the confluence with the Merced River, therefore an additional CEQA scoping meeting will be held.

A proposed amendment is being prepared for several reasons: 1) The State Water Board has directed the Central Valley Regional Water Board to set numerical objectives for salinity in the SJR upstream of Vernalis; 2) In 2004 the Regional Board adopted, and in 2006 the US EPA approved a Control Program (TMDL) addressing electrical conductivity and boron in the San Joaquin River at Airport Way (Vernalis). The Control Program requires a second phase TMDL to prepare and implement new salinity and boron objectives for the SJR upstream of Airport Way (Vernalis); 3) US EPA did not approve the boron objectives for the LSJR adopted by the Regional Water Board in 1988. US EPA has not promulgated new objectives, and therefore the Regional Water Board must do so.

This proposed amendment will include:

- Salinity and boron water quality objectives in the lower San Joaquin River from the confluence of the Stanislaus River to the confluence with the Merced River.
- TMDL to implement the new salinity and boron water quality objectives
- Program of implementation for the TMDL. It is anticipated that the updated implementation plan will require the establishment of TMDLs to achieve compliance with the new objectives.
- Surveillance and monitoring program
- Compliance schedule

This proposed amendment will proceed concurrently with the State Water Board's comprehensive review, update and implementation, as necessary, of the *2006 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay / Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Bay-Delta Plan)*, including review of the Plan's flow and water quality objectives. A portion of the State Water Board's environmental analysis is anticipated to overlap the geographic area of this proposed amendment (the lower San Joaquin River watershed). Though this proposed amendment may be completed prior to the State Water Board's Plan update, the portion of their efforts which occur concurrently will both inform the Regional Water Board's project and potentially affect the Regional Water Board's review and implementation actions. All evidence used to develop the proposed amendment will be included in the administrative record for the amendment.

PURPOSE OF CEQA SCOPING

The purpose of the scoping meeting is to provide a forum for public consultation on the development of a proposed amendment to establish new salinity and boron water quality objectives in the lower San Joaquin River, a TMDL to implement salinity and boron water quality objectives, and the corresponding environmental documents. This consultation will assist the Regional Water Board in determining what environmental information responsible and trustee agencies, as well as other interested parties may require to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed amendment.

Scoping is helpful to the Regional Water Board in identifying the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, means of compliance and their impacts, and significant environmental effects to be analyzed prior to the decision making process. Scoping has been found to be an effective way to bring together and resolve the concerns of affected federal, State, and local agencies, the proponent of the actions, and other interested persons including those who might not be in accord with the proposed actions on environmental grounds. The meeting will be conducted by Regional Water Board staff, but Regional Water Board members may be present at the scoping meeting; however, no action will be taken by the Regional Water Board at the scoping meeting.

This scoping meeting and workshop will provide participants with: 1) an overview of the current development of the Basin Plan Amendment and staff report; 2) an opportunity to comment on the appropriate scope and content of the Basin Plan Amendment staff report to be prepared pursuant to Section 21080.5 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); 3) an opportunity to comment on the scope of the proposed amendment to the Basin Plan; 4) an opportunity to hear comments from interested parties on the proposed amendment to the Basin Plan.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Groups or individuals interested in the salt and boron impairment in the San Joaquin River are encouraged to attend. This includes, but is not limited to agricultural producers, water district managers, environmental groups, government officials, or others with interest in or responsibility for agricultural drainage, storm water management, wastewater treatment and disposal, water diversions, or routing of flow in the San Joaquin River.

SCOPING MEETING

Date: 30 March 2009
Time: 9:00 AM
Place: Sierra Hearing Room – Second Floor
Joe Serna, Jr. Cal/EPA Headquarters Building
1001 "I" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBMISSION OF CEQA SCOPING COMMENTS

The Regional Water Board will accept both written and oral suggestions on the scope and content of the information including in the scoping documents. Comments should be limited to identifying the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, reasonably foreseeable means of compliance and their impacts, and potential significant environmental effects to be analyzed in-depth in the development of this CEQA project. Written comments must be received **by 12:00 Noon on 15 April 2009** and addressed to:

Joseph Simi
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
11020 Sun Center Drive, Suite 200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Comment letters may be submitted by email to JSimi@waterboards.ca.gov (if less than 15 megabytes in total size) or by fax at 916-464-4800. Please indicate the project you are commenting upon in the subject line, "**Comment Letter – Upstream SJR Salinity Objectives/TMDL.**" Electronic submission via e-mail is preferred.

An audio broadcast of the meeting will be available via the Internet and can be accessed at: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/broadcast/>.

PARKING AND ACCESSIBILITY

For directions and parking information: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/EPABldg/location.htm>. The facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals requiring special accommodations are requested to contact Catherine Foreman at (916) 341-5881 at least five working days prior to the meeting. TTY users may contact the California Relay Service at 1-800-735-2929 or voice line at 1-800-735-2922.

All visitors are required to sign in and receive a badge prior to attending any meeting in the building. The Visitor and Environmental Services Center is located just inside and to the left of the Cal/EPA Building's public entrance. Valid picture identification may be required due to the security level. Please allow up to 15 minutes for receiving clearance, and then proceed to the Sierra Hearing Room.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have further questions, need to access background documents, or wish to make a presentation at the workshop, please call 916-464-4833 or send an e-mail to JSimi@waterboards.ca.gov.



KENNETH D. LANDAU, Assistant Executive Officer
5 February 2009