

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
ANTIDegradation Policy Focus Group Meetings
Purpose and Background
October 2013**

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) is conducting a review of Resolution 68-16, the "Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California" (Antidegradation Policy) and may revise the policy or issue guidance regarding its implementation. The State Water Board is initiating this project to improve the usefulness of the Antidegradation Policy as a tool for making informed decisions regarding discharges that affect groundwater. As the first step in this project, the State Water Board plans to engage stakeholders in the process. The purpose of focus group meetings is to obtain early stakeholder input on the scope of this project.

The Antidegradation Policy applies to the disposal of waste to high-quality surface water and groundwater. This policy requires that the quality of existing high-quality water be maintained unless the State finds that any change will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the State, will not unreasonably affect present and anticipated beneficial use of such water, and will not result in water quality less than that prescribed in policies as of the date on which such policies became effective. The Antidegradation Policy also requires best practicable treatment or control of discharges to high-quality waters to assure that pollution or nuisance will not occur, and that the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained.

The State Water Board in the past has provided several guidance documents interpreting the federal and state antidegradation policies. These include two memoranda addressing surface water discharges, and a question and answer document addressing both surface and groundwater discharges. Updating or augmenting existing guidance for discharges to groundwater will help water managers, dischargers, the public, and Water Boards protect groundwater while recognizing the social and economic benefits of various land uses associated with waste discharges.

These are some of the specific issues that we would like your input on:

1. How should the baseline for an antidegradation analysis be determined, particularly when no groundwater data is available from the date on which the water quality objectives were adopted?
2. How should antidegradation analyses deal with the complex flow patterns and slow mixing rates within groundwater?
3. Should a lower level of analysis or an exemption be provided for small, low threat discharges?
4. What type of analysis should apply to water recycling and reuse?
5. How should an antidegradation analysis for a general order be conducted?
6. How do we deal with groundwater degradation associated with permitted intensive land uses like agriculture and urbanization?
7. Should additional guidance be provided on how to evaluate "maximum benefit to the people of the state" and "best practicable treatment or control"?
8. How should compliance with the Antidegradation Policy be monitored?

Your ideas are very valuable to us as we consider these issues, and we look forward to our meeting.