

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
NOVEMBER 9, 2022**

ITEM 7

SUBJECT

Why Sediment Quality Objectives are Important (*Tom Alo*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Informational item only; no recommendation.

KEY ISSUE

Anthropogenic sources of pollutants have impacted sediments in California's enclosed bays and estuaries at concentrations impairing the designated beneficial uses. These pollutants were discharged through improper materials and waste handling and disposal, aerial transport, non-stormwater runoff, and stormwater runoff. The pollutants of concern include, but are not limited to, metals, pesticides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

To protect and restore the health of enclosed bays and estuaries, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopted narrative Sediment Quality Objectives (SQOs) in the [Sediment Quality Provisions of the Water Quality Control Plan for Enclosed Bays and Estuaries of California Sediment Quality Provisions \(Sediment Quality Provisions\)](#). The SQOs are currently used to determine if beneficial uses are impaired at active sediment cleanup sites in San Diego Bay.

PRACTICAL VISION

Continued implementation of the Strategy for a Healthy San Diego Bay is an important component of Chapter 1 (Strategize for Healthy Waters) of the Practical Vision. The Strategy helps the Board focus on the highest priorities and align its work toward achieving the most important goals for San Diego Bay.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this item is to provide an opportunity for the San Diego Water Board members and the public to learn about the narrative SQOs and how the SQOs are implemented at active cases in San Diego Bay.

The State Water Board adopted Resolution No. 2018-0028, *Adoption of Amendments to the Water Quality Control Plan for Enclosed Bays and Estuaries: Sediment Quality Provisions, and the Staff Report Including the Substitute Environmental Documentation*, on June 5, 2018, which approved amendments to the Sediment Quality Plan – Sediment Quality Provisions. The Office of Administrative Law and U.S. EPA approved the Sediment Quality Provisions on November 14, 2018, and March 19, 2019, respectively,

which took immediate effect for the purposes of the Clean Water Act.

The Sediment Quality Provisions integrate chemical and biological measures to determine if sediment-dependent biota are protected or degraded as a result of exposure to toxic pollutants in sediment in order to protect benthic communities in enclosed bays and estuaries, human health, wildlife, and resident finfish. The Sediment Quality Provisions include (1) the narrative SQOs as listed below, (2) identification of the beneficial uses that these SQOs protect, and (3) a program of implementation for each SQO.

The Sediment Quality Provisions contain the narrative SQOs that protect the beneficial uses designated for San Diego Bay. The narrative SQOs consist of the following:

- **Aquatic Life – Benthic Community.** Pollutants shall not be present in sediments in quantities that, alone or in combination, are toxic to benthic communities in bays and estuaries of California.
- **Human Health Protection.** Pollutants shall not be present in sediments at levels that will bioaccumulate in aquatic life to levels that are harmful to human health in bays and estuaries of California.
- **Human Health.** Pollutants shall not be present in sediments at levels that will bioaccumulate in aquatic life to levels that are harmful to human health in bays and estuaries of California.

LEGAL CONCERNS

None.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None.