

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION**

**STAFF SUMMARY REPORT: Michelle A. Thompson  
MEETING DATE: June 10, 2026**

**ITEM: 6A**

**The Exploratorium, Heating and Cooling System, San Francisco, San Francisco  
County – Reissuance of NPDES Permit**

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT: Michelle A. Thompson  
MEETING DATE: June 10, 2026

**ITEM: 6A**

**The Exploratorium, Heating & Cooling System, San Francisco, San Francisco County**  
– Reissuance of NPDES Permit

**DISCUSSION:**

This Tentative Order (Appendix A) would reissue the NPDES permit for discharges from the Exploratorium's Heating and Cooling System at Pier 15. The system intakes and filters about 0.31 million gallons per day of Bay water to heat and cool the Exploratorium's museum building. Non-contact heating and cooling water and filter backwash are discharged back to the Bay.

The Tentative Order would remove requirements associated with the Exploratorium's Fog Bridge Exhibit, which was decommissioned in April 2024 with no plans for replacement. It also reflects updated federal, state, and regional law, policies, and regulations. It would remove the receiving water limitations contained in the previous order that served as backstops for unanticipated circumstances or changes to discharge quality that could affect water quality. This is consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *City and County of San Francisco, California v. Environmental Protection Agency* (2025) 145 S.Ct. 704, which held that, under the Clean Water Act, NPDES permits issued by the U.S. EPA may not include end-result requirements. The Tentative Order includes a new receiving water limitation for toxicity to implement state law only and a new temperature discharge prohibition in lieu of the temperature receiving water limitation in the previous order.

We did not receive written comments on a draft circulated for public review and expect this item to remain uncontested.

**APPENDICES:**

A. Tentative Order

Appendix A  
Tentative Order