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State Water Resources Control Board

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Arnold Schwarzenegger
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**NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT
ON A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN
FOR THE CENTRAL COAST REGION TO ESTABLISH A WATSONVILLE SLOUGH
TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD (TMDL) FOR PATHOGENS,
ESTABLISH A WATSONVILLE SLOUGH WATERSHED LIVESTOCK WASTE DISCHARGE
PROHIBITION, AND TO REMOVE THE SHELLFISH HARVESTING BENEFICIAL USE FROM
WATSONVILLE SLOUGH AND TRIBUTARIES**

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will now accept comments on a proposed amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the Central Coast Region. The proposed amendment would establish a TMDL for pathogens, including a livestock waste discharge prohibition, and remove the shellfish harvesting (SHELL) beneficial use, for the Watsonville Slough Watershed. The Watsonville Slough Watershed includes Watsonville, Harkins, Gallighan, Struve, and Hanson Sloughs (Sloughs). The proposed amendment and the State Water Board item language and draft resolution are available on the State Water Board's Web site at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/tmdl/tmdl.html> or can be received by mail by contacting Michael Buckman at (916) 341-5479. The proposed amendment was adopted by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) on March 24, 2006. The State Water Board expects to consider the proposed amendment at a future meeting. Notice of that meeting will be published separately.

The Sloughs are not meeting water quality standards due to elevated levels of fecal coliform. The water quality criteria in the Basin Plan established levels of indicator bacteria, in this case fecal coliform, that demonstrate the presence of fecal pollution. Indicator organisms such as these have long been used to protect bathers from illnesses that may be contracted from recreational activities in surface waters contaminated by fecal pollution. These organisms often do not cause illnesses directly but are good indicators of harmful pathogens. The beneficial uses impaired by fecal coliform levels are: (1) Water Contact Recreation, (2) Non-Contact Water Recreation, and (3) SHELL. This proposed amendment will remove the SHELL beneficial use from the Sloughs. This proposed amendment addresses the impairment of the other beneficial uses by establishing a TMDL for fecal coliform and a livestock waste discharge prohibition within the Sloughs' Watershed. Controllable sources of fecal coliform bacteria in the Sloughs include humans, pets, livestock, and land-applied non-sterile manure on irrigated agriculture.

The proposed amendment establishes numeric targets in the TMDL consistent with the Basin Plan water quality objectives. Designated responsible parties will be required to achieve their numeric targets. Responsible parties assigned wasteload allocations include the County of Santa Cruz and the City of Watsonville. Responsible parties assigned a load allocation include owners or operators of livestock facilities and animals, as well as owners and operators of irrigated lands who land-apply non-sterile manure. Each responsible party will also be required to implement the actions specified in this proposed amendment. These actions include educational outreach, preventative measures, and corrective management.

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Livestock sources and irrigated lands sources will be subject to the livestock waste discharge prohibition. The prohibition will apply to the direct or indirect discharge of the following: livestock animal waste from any grazing operations; non-sterile manure application; farm animal and livestock facilities including paddocks, pens, corrals, barns, sheds; or other activity of any nature into waters of the State within the Sloughs unless otherwise regulated by another regulatory action. The prohibition takes effect two years following approval of the TMDL by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Responsible parties will be required to conduct specific monitoring. Central Coast Water Board staff plans to monitor TMDL progress by conducting triennial reviews beginning three years after approval by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) until the TMDL is achieved. The target date to achieve the TMDL is ten years after implementation commences.

The proposed amendment will also remove the SHELL beneficial use from the Sloughs. Central Coast Water Board staff completed a Use Attainability Analysis in which it was determined that the SHELL beneficial use designation for the Sloughs is not attainable. Factors cited that preclude the attainment of the use include hydrological modifications, natural flow conditions, and physical conditions related to the natural features of the water body.

Comment letters to the State Water Board **must be received by 5 p.m. on September 15, 2006**. After the September deadline, State Water Board staff will not accept additional written comments unless the State Water Board determines that such comments should be accepted or unless changes are made to the proposed resolution before the State Water Board meeting. Please send comments on the proposed amendment to: Song Her, Clerk to the Board, by email at (commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov), (916) 341-5620 (fax), or addressed to State Water Resources Control Board, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Please also indicate in the subject line, "Comment Letter - Pathogen TMDL in Watsonville Slough."

Please direct questions about this notice to Michael Buckman, Division of Water Quality, at (916) 341-5479 or (mbuckman@waterboards.ca.gov) or Senior Staff Counsel Steven H. Blum at (916) 341-5177 or (sblum@waterboards.ca.gov).

August 24, 2006
Date



Song Her
Clerk to the Board