

Lim, Jeong-Hee@Waterboards

From: Roberts, Carol <carol_a_roberts@fws.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 10:49 AM
To: Lim, Jeong-Hee@Waterboards
Subject: Proposed Revisions to the Clean Water Act 303(d) list for the Colorado River Basin Region

In Reply Refer to: FWS-2014-EC-1103

Dear Dr. Lim:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reviewed the proposed changes to the 303(d) list for the Colorado River Basin Region. We have no objections to most of the changes proposed for the list. However, we are concerned about the proposed delisting of the Colorado River and the Salton Sea for selenium. Exclusive use of the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment Fish Contaminant Goal of 7.4 mg/kg is inappropriate for these two water bodies. The Service has done a thorough evaluation of the risks posed by selenium to wildlife, and we have determined that a concentration of 5 mg/kg in whole-body fish is associated with a low risk of impacts to aquatic-dependent species, including federally-listed species and migratory birds. This figure represents low risk for fish-eating birds and represents lower concentrations throughout the food web such that species eating invertebrates are also protected. While we acknowledge that the data provided for fish in these water bodies did not exceed the 5 mg/kg level, it is not clear from the information whether the samples were fillets or whole fish. We recommend that in the future some samples be collected of whole fish for assessment of risks to aquatic-dependent wildlife, and that those results be compared to the 5 mg/kg benchmark.

Service staff is currently drafting a document that will provide the specifics on how the 5 mg/kg benchmark for aquatic-dependent wildlife was determined. We would be happy to provide you with a copy once that is available.

Sincerely,

-Carol

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