Marine Program Office
P.O. Box 959 | Moss Landing, CA 95039 | tel 831.726.9010 | fax 831.726.9020
www.defenders.org | www.saveseaotters.org

July 25, 2011

Dominic Gregorio & Kim Ward
California State Water Resources Control Board
Ocean Unit
1001 I Street
Sacramento CA, 95814

Robert Ketley
City of Watsonville
320 Harvest Dr.
Watsonville CA 95076

Karen Worcester & Monica Barricarte
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101
San Luis Obispo, CA. 93401

Dr. Raphael Kudela
Ocean Sciences Department
University of California
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Dear Dominic, Kim, Karen, Monica, Robert & Raphael,

Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) would like to applaud the work you are doing to remedy microcystin problems in the Monterey Bay region. For a number of years now Defenders has been involved in various water quality issues, including Areas of Special Biological Significance, advocating for the monitoring of biological pathogens, and educating the public about the land-sea connection, because what we do on land can have serious impacts on our watersheds and, ultimately, the ocean and its wildlife. In 2010, it came to our attention that the freshwater cyanobacterium, *Microcystis aeruginosa* (which produces a toxin known as microcystin), was implicated in the deaths of at least 21 southern sea otters, a species that is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Not only did we come to realize how dangerous this is for sea otters, but *Microcystis* blooms can have harmful impacts on other aquatic species, domestic animals and humans.

We are pleased to see that there is progress being made to examine this problem more closely by using Pinto Lake as a case study. Defenders applauds the State and Regional Waterboard's facilitation of projects that help identify why these blooms occur, evaluate potential routes for bloom mitigation, determine the prevalence of this problem in waterbodies throughout California, and look at treatment technologies to eradicate *Microcystis*. It is our hope that these projects will collectively provide valuable data that can be used to improve Central Coast water quality and hopefully, prevent additional sea otter deaths.

We commend all of you for your efforts to investigate and mitigate this pollutant. Additionally, we suggest that your agencies and institutions reach out to the California Resources Agency, California Ocean Protection Council and the California Coastal Conservancy to see how techniques learned from this work could be applied to state and regional monitoring programs. For example, applying the SPATT technology to other bioaccumulation monitoring programs would be useful. Also, it would be wonderful to see the Ocean Protection Council expand its focus beyond traditional monitoring of marine-origin harmful algal blooms and include monitoring for land-sea transfer of freshwater toxins like microcystin and anatoxin.

Lastly, through our conversations with many of you on this issue, it was suggested that at the appropriate time, after obtaining preliminary project results, a Central Coast summit be organized with many of the key stakeholders and experts on the issue of *Microcystis* blooms and microcystin toxicity. Defenders would be very interested in participating in this summit and we appreciate you keeping us in the loop on the progress of these projects. If we can help in any way, please don't hesitate to contact us.

National Headquarters
1130 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-4604
tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331

Marine Program Office
P.O. Box 959 | Moss Landing, CA 95039 | tel 831.726.9010 | fax 831.726.9020
www.defenders.org | www.saveseaotters.org

Sincerely,

Jim Curland, Marine Program Associate

Kelly Catlett, California Representative

CC: Brian Baird, California Resources Agency
Sam Schuchat, Ocean Protection Council and California Coastal Conservancy
Melissa Miller, California Department of Fish and Game's Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care & Research Center

National Headquarters
1130 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-4604
tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331