

ITEM: 21

SUBJECT: Amendments to the Basin Plan for the Control of Mercury in Cache Creek, Bear Creek, Sulphur Creek, and Harley Gulch – *Workshop to Receive Comments*

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational workshop to solicit comments for a future Regional Board hearing.

BACKGROUND: Regional Board staff has developed a total maximum daily load (TMDL) report for mercury in Cache Creek, Bear Creek, Sulphur Creek, and Harley Gulch. The report discusses mercury sources including inactive mercury mines, contaminated streambed sediments, and watersheds with naturally occurring mercury in undisturbed soils. The TMDL report also describes beneficial uses, numeric targets, and mercury and methylmercury load reductions required to protect those uses.

Staff is proposing amendments to the Basin Plan to implement the TMDL for Cache Creek and its tributaries. The Basin Plan staff report provides background information and evaluates several alternatives to reduce mercury and methylmercury loading in the watershed. Staff will solicit Board comments and will be presenting alternatives and recommendations at a future Regional Board hearing. The purpose of this workshop is to initiate discussions on the Basin Plan amendment alternatives.

Alternatives discussed in the staff report include requiring mine owners to reduce the loads of total mercury entering the creeks by controlling erosion and discharge from the mines. Alternatives are also considered that require land managers and owners to evaluate options to reduce erosion of soils with elevated mercury concentrations and to reduce sources of methylmercury.

The proposed Basin Plan amendments also contain methylmercury fish tissue objectives (specific to the watershed), and a plan to monitor mercury and methylmercury load reductions. The staff report contains a proposal to de-designate the MUN beneficial use for Sulphur Creek. This is based on natural geothermal springs that discharge mercury and high total dissolved solids.

The TMDL report and draft Basin Plan staff report are available on the Board's internet site at

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/programs/tmdl/Cache-SulphurCreek/index.html>.

ISSUES:

At the workshop, staff will be discussing alternatives for:

- Water quality objectives to protect beneficial uses,
- Reducing methylmercury discharges, and
- Reducing mercury loads from inactive mines, mercury enriched soils, and contaminated streambed sediments

Mgmt. Review \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Review \_\_\_\_\_

17/18 March 2005 Region 5 Board Meeting  
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
11020 Sun Center Dr. #200  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670