

ITEM: 4

SUBJECT: Discussion of a draft Basin Plan Amendment that would set salinity water quality objectives in a reach of the Lower San Joaquin River (LSJR) and that would add to, or modify, an existing implementation program related to the Control Program for Salt and Boron Discharges into the LSJR

BOARD ACTION: *Informational Item only.* Staff presentation and oral comments for consideration in development of proposed Basin Plan Amendment.

BACKGROUND: In 2004, the Board adopted a Control Program for salt and boron discharges to the Lower San Joaquin River (LSJR). Phase 1 of the Control Program is focused on meeting the salinity objectives at Vernalis. The current draft Basin Plan amendment would address Phase 2 of this Control Program by setting salinity objectives for Reach 83 of the LSJR (Merced River to Vernalis).

Phase 1 of the Control Program imposes salt load allocations on discharges from seven geographic sub-areas of the LSJR basin and on imported salt from the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC), which is owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). As an alternative to complying with these load allocations, Phase 1 of the Control Program allows the dischargers and USBR to participate in a Board approved real-time management program (RTMP).

Phase 2 of the Control Program would establish salinity objectives for Reach 83 of the LSJR. The draft Basin Plan Amendment incorporates the results of work performed by Board staff from 2005 through 2010 and continued by the LSJR Committee between May 2010 and the end of 2015. The LSJR Committee, a subcommittee of the CV-SALTS initiative, includes stakeholders that deliver water to, divert water from, or discharge to the LSJR as well as other interested parties. The LSJR Committee developed recommendations for salinity objectives that would be protective of beneficial uses, and for a performance goal that would apply during certain months and water year types and that is based on modeling results of expected water quality. The LSJR Committee also recommended an implementation plan and a monitoring and surveillance program for the Board's consideration.

The draft Basin Plan Amendments would establish an electrical conductivity (EC) objective of 1,550 micro Siemens per centimeter ($\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$) as a maximum 30-day running average in the LSJR, except during Extended Dry Periods, when the objective will be 2,470 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ as a maximum 30-day running average and 2,200 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ as the average of the previous four consecutive quarterly samples at a minimum. An implementation program to achieve proposed salinity objectives and a performance goal of 1,350 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$, during certain months and water year types are also incorporated into the draft Basin Plan Amendments.

The draft Basin Plan Amendments provide protection of beneficial uses in

this section of the LSJR, including the two most sensitive to salinity impacts: Agricultural Supply (AGR) and Municipal and Domestic Supply (MUN). Furthermore, the EC performance goal would promote achievement of the best possible water quality under variable conditions. A monitoring plan is recommended to verify compliance with the proposed EC and existing boron objectives and to gauge success in meeting the EC performance goal. The draft Basin Plan Amendments also propose that the Board reevaluate the EC objectives in ten years.

ISSUES:

The key issue identified by Board staff based on stakeholder discussions is a concern expressed by NPDES permittees that they will need to implement costly facility upgrades if they are required to meet the EC objectives at the end-of-pipe.

RECOMMENDATION:

Informational item only.

Mgmt. Review JEC/_____
Legal Review PEP_____
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