

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
Wednesday, November 18, 2015
Regional Water Board Office
Santa Rosa, California

- ITEM: 1
- SUBJECT: Upper Elk River Technical Analysis for Sediment and Update on Sediment Total Maximum Daily Load and Stewardship Framework (*Alydda Mangelsdorf and Clayton Creager*)
- BOARD ACTION: This is an Informational Item. There is no action required.
- BACKGROUND: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made available to the Regional Water Board, technical assistance through their contract with Tetra Tech, Inc. to review and assess all the existing Elk River Watershed sediment related information, including:
1. *Peer Review Draft Staff Report to Support the Technical Sediment TMDL for the Upper Elk River*, March 4, 2013 (Peer Review Draft Staff Report);
 2. Scientific peer review and informal public review comments on the Peer Review Draft Staff Report;
 3. Staff responses to scientific peer review comments and informal public review comments;
 4. Humboldt Redwood Company (HRC) submissions; and,
 5. Staff's revised approach for establishing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and program of implementation for the Upper Elk River Watershed ("White Papers").
- Tetra Tech, Inc. has synthesized this information and produced the technical report *Upper Elk River: Technical Analysis for Sediment* (October 2015), which presents a comprehensive assessment of sediment conditions in the Elk River Watershed, and represents the best available and relevant science (see attachment; Tetra Tech 2015). At the August 13, 2015 Board meeting, Dr. Jon Butcher of Tetra Tech presented the key elements of the draft report. Today's information item includes a review of the final report and its constituent elements. The staff presentation also includes a description of the primary elements of an adaptive management program of implementation that includes Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs), a feasibility assessment of instream sediment remediation and restoration actions, and a watershed stewardship framework within which to identify and manage appropriate remediation, restoration, and mitigation projects, including coordinated monitoring and other activities.

DISCUSSION: Tetra Tech (2015) describes the Elk River Watershed setting, the applicable regulatory framework, and desired watershed conditions. It further documents the sediment impairments, identifies and quantifies the sources of excess sediment, and estimates the sediment loading capacity of the system, distinguishing between current and future sediment loading capacity. Finally, the report proposes a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for sediment as supported by the existing data, as well as a framework for implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management.

Tetra Tech (2015) provides the technical analysis necessary to develop Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) to control sediment discharges from the Upper Elk River Watershed (See Item #2 of the Board Agenda). It also provides the scientific basis for the development of a TMDL and Action Plan for the Elk River Watershed that addresses all relevant actions necessary to return the Elk River Watershed to a trajectory of recovery and attain water quality standards. This information item will elaborate on the suite of potential actions that make up a program of implementation to achieve such an outcome, including an amendment to the Basin Plan to include an *Elk River Sediment TMDL Action Plan*. Staff will provide an update on the development of the constituent elements of such Action Plan, including:

- WDRs to control discharges of waste from the Upper Elk River Watershed (see Board Agenda Item #2);
- Elk River Recovery Assessment and Pilot Projects;
- Elk River Sediment Remediation and Stream Restoration;
- Coordinated Monitoring, Special Studies, and Adaptive Management; and,
- Watershed Stewardship.

SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES:

In this item, staff will present an approach to: 1) calculate the TMDL and load allocation; 2) implement the actions necessary to attain the TMDL, load allocation, and water quality standards; and 3) adopt a TMDL and program of implementation that differs from that which was described in the Peer Review Draft Staff Report and subsequent information items.

SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:

Tetra Tech, Inc. *Upper Elk River: Technical Analysis for Sediment*.
October 2015.

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/tmdls/elk_river/