

**North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board**

**Laguna de Santa Rosa TMDLs**

**Interest-Based Stakeholder Outreach Work Plan**

**March 31, 2014**

**Introduction**

This document is a work plan for implementing stakeholder engagement Option #3, as described in the “Stakeholder Engagement Scoping Strategy” (Strategy) provided to the North Coast Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) on March 17, 2014. The Strategy laid out a range of options; this work plan is intended to provide specific, step-by-step suggestions for implementing Option #3 of the Strategy, titled “Interest-based Outreach.”

As the name implies, interest-based outreach focuses on reaching out to a broad range of interests affected by the development and implementation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). In addition to the baseline stakeholder activities outlined below, this alternative employs the use of specific, interest-based groups in addition to a larger ad-hoc stakeholder group to gather input from specific stakeholders. These interest-based groups will be convened as needed to provide input on TMDL work products. Outreach to groups will rely largely on calls and emails to pre-established community groups, NGOs, industry groups, etc., and will be conducted by Regional Water Board staff. No formal membership will be required for the groups.

Additionally, individual conversations with key stakeholders will be ongoing throughout the TMDL development process. When possible, and as resources allow, the results of these conversations should be documented and aggregated into reports to be shared with the various groups as warranted to inform their ongoing discussion(s).

**Baseline Stakeholder Activities**

Regardless of the level of interest-based outreach carried out by Regional Water Board staff, certain outreach measures should be employed throughout the TMDL development process. These measures include:

*A Public TMDL Webpage*

An informational webpage should be maintained with staff contact information, updates on the status of the Laguna TMDLs, links to available documents, and notices of public meetings, public comment periods, and other opportunities for stakeholder involvement. The webpage should include a statement in Spanish on how Spanish-speakers can be otherwise informed of the TMDL process.

### *Fact Sheets*

Staff may periodically wish to develop fact sheets and/or newsletters designed to simply and clearly convey key information about the Laguna TMDLs. The fact sheets should be short (about one page) and available in both English and Spanish. If fact sheets are used, staff should work with the State Water Board's Office of Public Affairs to develop them.

### *E-mail & Hard Copy Notifications*

Notices of public meetings, available documents, public comment periods, and other opportunities for stakeholder involvement should be sent via e-mail to interested parties who have provided their e-mail addresses or who have signed up via the web-based Email List Subscription Form (LYRIS). Interested parties who have only provided their mailing addresses should receive hard copy notices via the US Postal Service. A database of interested parties should be maintained by Regional Water Board staff. The LYRIS List is maintained by State Water Board staff.

### *Newspaper Notices*

Announcement of the Regional Water Board Hearing to adopt the Laguna TMDLs and associated action plans will be printed in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, in accordance with California Water Code §13244 and any other applicable State and federal statutes.

### *General Correspondences*

Staff should make every effort to be available to stakeholders in a timely manner whether via phone, e-mail, or traditional written correspondence.

### *Document Review, Public Comment, & Response to Comments*

Drafts of the Laguna TMDLs, including proposed Basin Plan amendment language, staff report, and environmental documents will be made available to the public for review and comment. Staff will make changes to the Laguna TMDLs and attendant documents in response to public comments as appropriate, and as otherwise required by State and federal regulations.

### **Interest-Based Outreach Activities**

This section includes the specific steps that should be taken to implement the interest-based outreach option described in the Strategy (in addition to the baseline activities listed above). As discussed in the Strategy, stakeholder outreach for this option is based on convening small meetings between Regional Water Board staff and stakeholders with similar interests. This approach allows Regional Water Board staff to reach out to private individuals and members of established local organizations regarding the issues associated with the TMDLs that most affect them. In addition to these smaller focused meetings, Regional Board staff should also conduct larger ad hoc meetings aimed at providing informational updates to (and receiving input from) the public at large. Key steps for successful implementation of an interest-based outreach plan include:

### 1. *Convene Staff for Internal Planning Meeting*

As a first step in the stakeholder outreach process, an internal staff meeting should be convened to formally initiate stakeholder outreach activities. Key activities for the internal meeting include discussing this work plan, creating staff assignments, and confirming the TMDL outreach schedule/critical path (a template is included in Attachment A).

### 2. Stakeholder Identification

Because a stakeholder group with formal, defined membership will not be used as part of the general stakeholder outreach strategy for the TMDLs, correctly identifying individuals and organizations affected by the TMDLs and/or located within the TMDL project area for initial outreach is critical. Building off previous stakeholder outreach lists for the TMDLs, Regional Water Board staff should develop a comprehensive list of affected individuals and organizations from the following:

- Local /tribal governments
- Agricultural interests
- Municipal service providers
- Environmental NGOs
- Local community groups
- State/federal agencies
- Local businesses/chambers of commerce

### 3. Solicitation to Affected Individuals and Organizations

Once a comprehensive contact list of potentially affected individuals and organizations is developed, Regional Water Board staff should draft a message explaining the current status of the TMDLs and notifying them of proposed stakeholder outreach activities. In particular, the message should advise interested parties to contact the TMDL project manager for an informational meeting, if desired.

### 4. Agenda/Facilitation Plan Development

The first interest-based meetings should be informational updates on TMDL work products developed to date, expected timelines, etc. Agendas and facilitation plans (as needed) should be developed reflecting this. Agendas for subsequent meetings should be developed to include desired meeting objectives and topic-specific agenda items.

For the small meetings with interest groups, agendas should be developed in conjunction with the contact(s) requesting the meeting. For larger public meetings, agendas should be developed by staff following the same guidelines used for all Regional Water Board public meetings.

### 5. Meeting Noticing/Scheduling

Scheduling is a consistently challenging aspect of stakeholder outreach. To ensure full participation from organizations, Regional Water Board staff should make every effort to allow them to pick the date(s)

that work best for their members. A notice should be sent to the organizations requesting the meeting for distribution to their members at least two weeks before the meeting. Agendas and any supporting materials should be sent to the organizations for distribution to their members at least one week before the meeting.

Noticing for public meetings should follow existing Regional Water Board noticing policies. At a minimum, the notice for public meetings should include:

- A meeting title
- Meeting objectives
- Potential discussion topics
- Meeting time/location
- Directions to the meeting (or a link to a map for notices delivered via email)
- Log in/Call in information (for web meetings only)
- The Regional Water Board staff contact for the meeting

## 6. Convene Meetings

Each meeting or outreach opportunity necessarily involves different levels of planning. Smaller meetings with organizations the Regional Water Board has a close relationship with are likely to involve less internal planning and external coordination than meetings with contentious organizations or large public groups. It is recommended that the Regional Water Board utilize staff with facilitation training or staff from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) facilitation pool for any large public or potentially contentious meetings. Using an outside facilitator can be considered by Regional Water Board staff on an as-needed basis, but staff should be aware that the contracting process (especially if approval from the Department of General Services is required) can be lengthy. If an outside facilitation group is desired, the contracting timeline should be worked into the critical path document provided in Attachment A.

Staffing levels are also expected to vary for each type of meeting. Resources permitting, expected levels and roles for each type of meeting are as follows:

- **Low Conflict, Small Meetings:** 2 staff members are required for these meetings. The TMDL project manager serves as the staff lead, answers questions, provides presentations, etc. A second staff member provides logistical support and takes notes.
- **High Conflict, Small Meetings:** 3 staff members are required for these meetings. The TMDL project manager serves as the subject matter expert on hand to answer questions and provide presentations. A second staff member with facilitation training (or SWRCB facilitation staff/outside contractor) facilitates the meeting. The third staff member provides logistical support and takes notes.
- **Large Public Meetings:** 4-5 staff members and one facilitator are required for large public meetings. The TMDL project manager serves as the primary subject matter expert. The TMDL program manager and at least one member of the Regional Water Board executive team should

attend to provide support and leadership-level response to public questions as needed. At least one additional staff member should be used to provide logistical support and to take detailed notes. A facilitator from the SWRCB facilitation pool with experience in large group dynamics or an outside contractor should be used to facilitate the meeting.

## 7. Record Individual Meeting Outcomes

Because the meetings described above are expected to serve as the primary outreach mechanism for the TMDL development process, carefully recording stakeholder input during meetings forms a critical part of the project record. As discussed above, one staff member should be dedicated for taking notes at each meeting. Key items to record include the following:

- Meeting participants
- Specific, actionable items including any assignments and deadlines for completion
- A detailed summary of each comment/question received, and each response provided

Meeting summaries should be distributed to all meeting participants within 2 weeks of each meeting and ideally, posted to the TMDL website.

## 8. Develop Final Stakeholder Outreach Report

Once outreach activities end and the required public participation process for the TMDLs begins, staff should develop a Final Stakeholder Outreach Report. This report will catalogue all outreach activities to date, thus forming an important part of the public record to be considered by the Regional Water Board during the public TMDL review and approval process.

### **Decision-Making Structure/Use of Stakeholder Input**

No specific decision-making structure is envisioned under this stakeholder outreach work plan. It is recommended that Regional Water Board staff provides assurances to stakeholders that input will be incorporated into future TMDL work products. Since there is no set membership for any of the expected outreach forums, and since no decisions are being made by those participating in them, a charter/operating rules outlining a decision-making structure is not necessary.

As work products are updated and finalized, Regional Water Board staff can highlight specific areas where input was incorporated or, conversely, why specific input could not be used. This information should also be reflected in the Final Stakeholder Outreach Report.

### **Media Guidance**

Engaging local and regional media sources early and often may be beneficial for such a large, complex process as TMDL development. Early engagement allows the Regional Water Board to ensure news sources receive accurate and up-to-date information as it becomes available. Several key points should be considered when reaching out to the media, including:

- Determine key message points before speaking to media sources.
- Keep on point and repeat key messages more than once in all interviews.
- Use quotes from leaders in the community engaged in the TMDL process (apart from Regional Water Board staff).
- Engage stakeholders in support of the TMDL to write op-eds whenever possible.
- Arrange meet-and-greets between key staff, stakeholders, and the press as needed to build rapport.
- Prepare op-eds or press releases (from staff) for all major TMDL milestones.

**ATTACHMENT A: Critical Path Worksheet**

Project Phase Project Segment and Key Activities	Task	Resource allocation	Deliverables and Outcomes	Staff Assigned	Target Due Date	Completion (% Complete)

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