

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: Delta Mercury Control Program, December 2013 Update

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item.

BACKGROUND: The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Delta) is impaired due to elevated levels of mercury in fish tissue. In April 2010, the Central Valley Water Board adopted the Delta Mercury Control Program to address the impairment and in October 2011, the US EPA approved the control program.

The Delta Mercury Control Program addresses mercury and methylmercury sources in the Delta including wastewater, urban runoff, wetlands, open channels, and agricultural return flows. The implementation strategy is divided into two phases. Phase 1, which spans from 2011 to approximately 2020, is primarily a study period during which dischargers will develop and evaluate methylmercury control measures. At the end of Phase 1, the Central Valley Water Board will review the study results and consider revising the program as necessary before the start of Phase 2, when dischargers implement the methylmercury controls.

Rather than a multitude of individual methylmercury studies, dischargers and others are allowed to work together and submit coordinated studies. Coordinated study groups have formed and are examining methylmercury management for wastewater treatment, urban runoff, non-point sources (wetland and irrigated agriculture), and open water (state agencies). A technical advisory committee (TAC) of independent mercury experts was convened to review study work plans and results. In spring 2013, study groups submitted draft work plans and by the end of summer the TAC reviewed the work plans and provided detailed comments and recommendations for work plan revisions. Implementation of control study work plans will begin by early 2014.

Another component of Phase 1 is the development of an exposure reduction program to reduce human exposure to mercury-contaminated fish. In October 2012 the Executive Officer approved a strategy that outlined and approach to form and fund the program. Staff then worked with stakeholders to develop a work plan, which was approved by the Executive Officer in October 2013. Thus far, 34 entities have agreed to be part of a collaborative effort to implement the exposure reduction program and submitted letters of intent to fund or provide in-kind services for their share of the program. In addition, the State Water Board is funding a portion of the program on behalf of the state agencies required to participate in the program. Staff will work with stakeholders, including community-based organizations and Tribes, to develop and implement exposure reduction activities next summer.

RECOMMENDATION: This is an informational item.

Mgmt. Review_____

Legal Review_____

5/6 December 2013
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