

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION**

**WATERSHED MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

JUNE 1999

OVERVIEW OF THE WATERSHED MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

The water resource protection efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards are guided by a five year Strategic Plan (updated in 1997). An essential component of the Strategic Plan is a watershed management approach for water resources protection.

To protect water resources within a watershed context, a mix of point and nonpoint source discharges, ground and surface water interactions, and water quality/water quantity relationships must be considered. These complex relationships present considerable challenges to water resource protection programs. The State and Regional Boards are responding to these challenges with the Watershed Management Initiative (WMI). The WMI is designed to integrate various surface and ground water regulatory programs while promoting cooperative, collaborative efforts within a watershed. It is also designed to focus limited resources on key issues.

Past State and Regional Board programs tended to be directed at site-specific problems. This approach was reasonably effective for controlling pollution from point sources. However, with diffuse nonpoint sources of pollutants, a new regulatory strategy was needed. The WMI uses a strategy to draw solutions from all interested parties within a watershed, and to more effectively coordinate and implement measures to control both point and nonpoint sources.

For initial implementation of the WMI, each Regional Board identified watersheds within their Region, prioritized water quality issues, and developed watershed management strategies. These strategies and the State Board's overall coordinating approach to WMI are contained in the Integrated Plan for Implementation of the WMI.

THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION

The Colorado River Basin Region covers approximately 13,000,000 acres (20,000 square miles) in the southeastern portion of California. It includes all of Imperial County and portions of San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego Counties. It is bounded on the east by the Colorado River; to the south by the Republic of Mexico; to the west by the Laguna, San Jacinto, and San Bernardino



Figure 1. WMI Watersheds in the Colorado River Basin Region

Mountains; and to the north by the New York, Providence, Granite, Old Dad, Bristol, Rodman, and Ord Mountain Ranges. Figure 1, above, shows the Region's main watersheds. However, from a practical perspective, the Region as a whole can be thought of as a "super watershed" that includes the Salton Sea Basin, as much of the water from the other watersheds, in particular water from the Colorado River, makes it back to the Basin in the form of seepage, agricultural runoff, and wastewater.

REGION 7 WMI STRATEGY

Regional water quality goals include protection of drinking water resources and efforts to improve water quality in impaired water bodies to support beneficial uses throughout the Region. This will be accomplished through implementation of both core regulatory programs and basin planning/watershed management activities, as described below.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Core Regulatory Programs

Core regulatory programs include Chapter 15 and Non-Chapter 15 discharges of waste to land, Department of Defense, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Above Ground Storage Tanks, Underground Storage Tanks, Stormwater, and Compliance and Enforcement. These core regulatory programs, with strong compliance and enforcement components, are the backbone of effective water quality protection and pollution prevention throughout the region, and are essential to fulfilling the RWQCB's legislative mandates. These programs are tied to specific fund sources, with explicit state, federal, regulatory and legislative mandates. Activities carried out through these programs are prioritized by individual program commitments.

Basin Planning/Watershed Programs

Several Programs are covered by the Basin Planning/Watershed Unit. These Programs include Basin Planning (e.g., Basin Plan Amendments, Triennial Review), Nonpoint Source (NPS) Management, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development, Border Pollution and the New River Mexicali Sanitation Program, Clean Water Act (CWA) Sections 305(b) (water body assessment) and 303(d) (listing of impaired water bodies), and Surface Water Quality Monitoring.

In this Region, activities related to watershed management, TMDL development and NPS management are interrelated, as the majority of pollutants impairing beneficial uses are of nonpoint source origin within the target watershed. Staff are working within the priority watershed to implement the State Nonpoint Source Management Plan, to develop TMDLs for listed agricultural pollutants, and to work with stakeholders to develop plans and strategies for the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). CWA NPS pass-through grant projects are solicited and managed by this unit to encourage public education and self-determined solutions to NPS pollution. A major component of the strategy to address impairment of water bodies in the priority watershed is the New River/Mexicali Sanitation Program. All of these activities fall outside of the traditional core regulatory framework, and require development of innovative solutions to complex problems.

Internal Reorganization

The CRBR Executive Officer and management have restructured the Basin Planning/Watershed Unit for the implementation of the WMI in the following manner:

- Overall responsibility for WMI implementation is assigned to the Unit;
- The Border Pollution Program has been incorporated into the Basin Planning/Watershed Unit;
- A new Senior engineer was appointed to supervise the restructured Unit;

- A Senior Specialist has been appointed as the WMI Coordinator for the Region;
- Overall responsibility for water quality data and development and implementation of a GIS program has been assigned to the Unit;
- Two new engineers have been hired to focus on TMDLs, public education/outreach, nonpoint source management, basin planning, data synthesis/evaluation, and grant oversight.

Core regulatory programs will remain intact to carry out their program commitments. Additional resources will be requested and required to address water quality problems which are presently either not addressed or addressed inadequately. These problems primarily include agricultural source pollution, pollution from Mexico, pollution from septic tanks, and nitrate pollution of groundwater emanating from fertilization of golf courses/greenbelts. Although spread over different watersheds, it is our intention to rank and prioritize all Regional water quality problems by severity, importance of beneficial uses, and the Regional Board's ability to implement corrective actions. It is thus recognized that rather than focusing all attention on a single designated watershed, the Regional Board will more likely be addressing problems by priority, regardless of the watershed in which the problem is occurring.

Protection of High Quality Groundwater

The Coachella Valley aquifer supplies high quality drinking water to virtually all of the valley's rapidly growing population. Likewise, the availability of good quality groundwater has been important in the development of other areas including Borrego Springs, Morongo Valley, Twentynine Palms, Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley, Lucerne Valley, and Desert Center. Nitrate impairment of this groundwater exceeds drinking water standards in some areas, and has caused a number of municipal supply wells to be shut down. Protection of this drinking water source is of equal priority to restoration of impaired surface waters, however, this task remains unfunded.

WATERSHEDS

Watershed Delineation

The Region can be divided into essentially three watersheds, as shown in Figure 1. These watersheds are the Salton Sea Transboundary Watershed, the Colorado River Watershed, and the Desert Aquifers Watershed. The Salton Sea Transboundary Watershed and the Colorado River Watershed are geologically defined with major surface water bodies, while the Desert Aquifers portion of the Region contains little surface water and hundreds of aquifers.

Salton Sea Watershed (Priority Watershed)

The Salton Sea Transboundary Watershed is located in the Sonoran desert region in the southeastern corner of California. A significant feature of the region is the Salton Trough, which contains the Salton Sea. The Trough is a structural extension of the Gulf of California. In its present form, the Salton Sea is on the site of a prehistoric lake and the result of a break in a temporary levee along the Colorado River in late 1905. For about 16 months after the breach, the Colorado River flowed into the below-sea-level depression then known as the Salton Sink and filled the depression with fresh water to a depth of 80 feet above the depression's lowest elevation.

Today, water from the Colorado River is imported via the All-American Canal to provide water for irrigated agriculture, industrial uses, and to domestic drinking water purveyors. The Salton Sea receives drainage from the Coachella Valley to the north, and the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys to the south. Agriculture is the predominant industry in this watershed, and agricultural NPS pollutants from Imperial Valley are a major source of pollution in the Region. Water imported from the Colorado River has

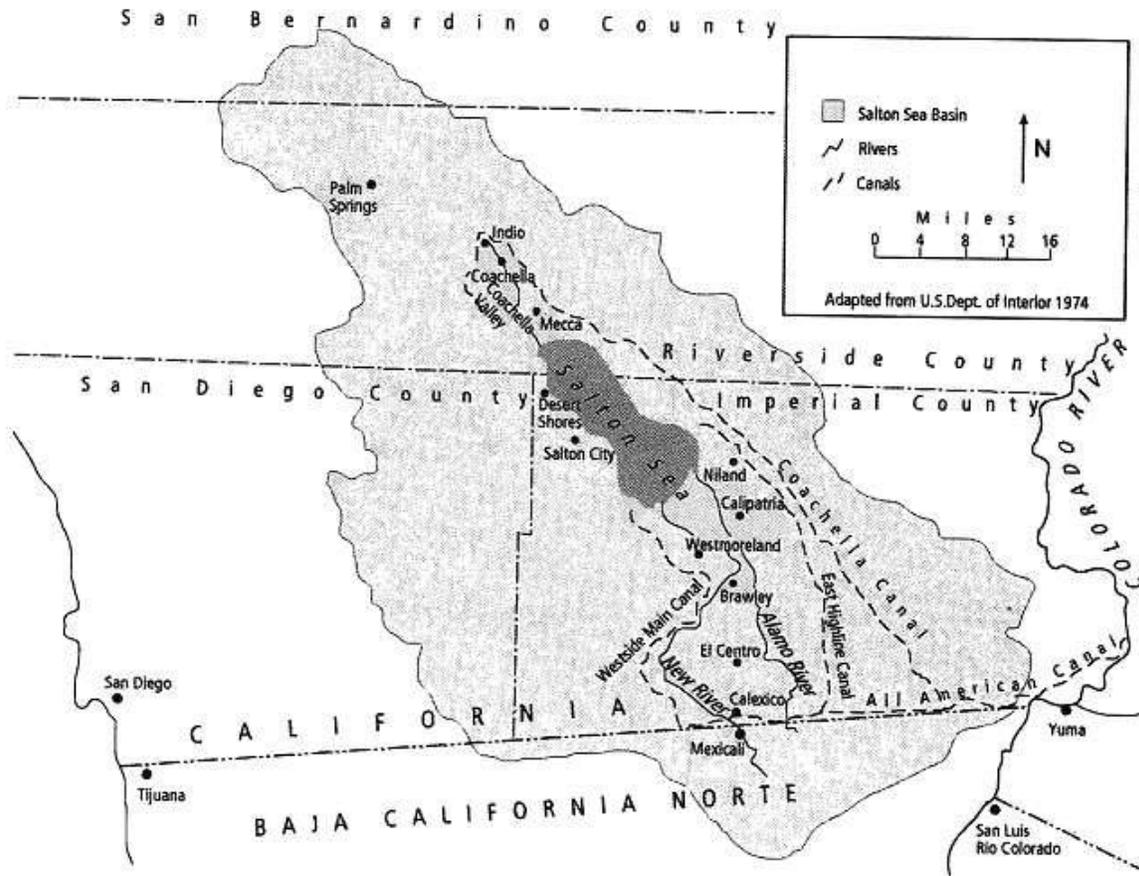


Figure 2. The Salton Sea Transboundary Watershed (Salton Basin)

created an irrigated agricultural ecosystem. Aquatic and wildlife habitat created as a result of water imported into the desert are now designated as existing beneficial uses in the Region’s Basin Plan. The Regional Board is charged with protecting these beneficial uses in all designated surface waters, including the Imperial Valley agricultural drains, the New and Alamo Rivers, and the Salton Sea. Agricultural runoff from the Imperial Valley provides over 70% of the freshwater inflow to the Sea. Because the Sea is a closed basin (with no outlet) over 280 feet below sea level, evaporation causes salinity to continually increase. Currently Salton Sea salinity is 25 percent greater than ocean water. Effects of increasing salinity and other pollutants are placing great stress on the Sea’s fish and wildlife resources. Since 1992, there have been massive die-offs of fish and birds, including some endangered species. The Sony Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge is located in the southeastern portion of the Sea. The Salton Sea serves as a major stopover for Pacific Flyway migration of millions of birds and provides habitat for several endangered species. A list of state- and federally-listed threatened and endangered species in the priority watershed is shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1. State and Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species in the Priority Watershed

Species	Federal Status	State Status
Aleutian Canada Goose	threatened	not listed
California Brown Pelican	endangered	endangered
California Black Rail	not listed	threatened
Desert Pupfish	endangered	endangered
Peregrine Falcon	endangered	not listed
Bald Eagle	threatened	endangered
Yuma Clapper Rail	endangered	threatened

PROGRAMS COVERED UNDER WMI

Nonpoint Source Management Program

Nonpoint sources of water pollution are usually defined as sources which are diffuse and/or not subject to regulation under the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (for surface water discharges). Regional Board staff work to implement the State Water Resources Control Board Nonpoint Source Management Plan and to develop and implement Total Maximum Daily Loads for the control of NPS pollution.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program

Currently, the focus of the WMI implementation in Region 7 is the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process--a process that addresses pollution from point and nonpoint sources. Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires the Regional Board to identify the Region's waters that do not comply with water quality standards applicable to such waters. Further, the Regional Board must rank the impaired waterbodies, taking into account the severity of the pollution and the uses made of such waters. Regional Boards are further required to establish TMDLs for those pollutants causing the impairments to ensure that impaired waters attain their beneficial uses. In January 1998, the Regional Board adopted Resolution 98-006, which approved and updated the list of impaired waterbodies for Region 7 pursuant to Section 303(d). The updated list contains a total of six impaired surface water bodies, five of which are in the Salton Sea Watershed. The Region's impaired waterbodies, extent of impairment, pollutants causing impairment, and the Regional Board's time schedule for TMDL development are shown in Table 2, located on the following page. The Regional Board schedule for TMDL development is currently being revised and updated to reflect the status of staff activities and other major projects within the Region.

Regional Board staff has committed to complete at least two TMDLs for the Salton Sea Watershed between July 1998 and June 2000. Specifically, Regional Board staff has committed to concurrent development of a TMDL for silt in the Alamo River and a TMDL for bacteria in the New River at the International Boundary. These TMDLs are scheduled for Regional Board consideration by May 2000.

New River/International Boundary

The New River originates in Mexico. It flows approximately 20 miles through the City of Mexicali, Mexico, crosses the International Boundary, continues through the City of Calexico in the United States, and travels northward about 60 miles until it empties into the Salton Sea. Its flow at the International Boundary is about 150 to 200 cubic feet per second (cfs) [108,400 to 145,000 acre-feet per year (AFY)]. The New River carries urban runoff, untreated and partially treated municipal wastes, untreated and partially treated industrial wastes, and agricultural runoff from the Mexicali Valley. In addition, the River carries urban runoff, agricultural runoff, treated industrial wastes, and treated, disinfected and non-disinfected domestic wastes from the Imperial Valley. It carries approximately 6 to 11 cfs (4,350 to 7,970 AFY) of treated wastewater from point sources in Imperial Valley. These point sources discharges are permitted by the Regional Board under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. The New River flow at the Salton Sea is about 600 cfs (430,000 AFY).

Regional Board staff also implements the New River/Mexicali Sanitation Program, which includes monthly observation tours of discharge locations and wastewater facilities in the City of Mexicali, Mexico; monthly 8-hour monitoring and quarterly 24-hour monitoring of the New River at the International Boundary; coordination with the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission; technical reviews of documents, plans and reports; and participation on the binational

Table 2. Timeline for Development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)¹

Waterbody	Hydrologic Unit #	Size Affected	Problem Description	Specific Pollutants	Probable Source	TMDL Priority	Target Dates
New River	723.10	60 miles	Public health hazard, objectives violated, fish kills	Pesticides, silt, bacteria, nutrients, VOCs	Agricultural return flows and Mexico	high	<i>Silt</i> : Start 1998, complete 2002 <i>Bacteria</i> : Start 1998, complete 2005 ² <i>Nutrients</i> : Start 2002, complete 2010 <i>Pesticides</i> : Start 2002, complete 2013 <i>VOCs</i> : Start 2007, complete 2013
Alamo River	723.10	52 miles	Elevated fish tissue levels (pesticides and selenium), toxic bioassay results (pesticides), recreational impacts	Pesticides, selenium, silt	Agricultural return flows ³	high	<i>Silt</i> : Start 1998, complete 2000 <i>Selenium</i> : Start 2000, complete 2010 <i>Pesticide</i> : Start 2002, complete 2011
Imperial Valley Drains	723.10	1,305 miles	Elevated fish tissue levels (pesticides and selenium), toxic bioassay results (pesticides), recreational impacts	Pesticides, selenium, silt	Agricultural return flows ³	high	<i>Silt</i> : Start 1998, complete 2000 <i>Selenium</i> : Start 2000, complete 2010 <i>Pesticide</i> : Start 2005, complete 2011
Salton Sea	728.00	220,000 acres	Salinity objectives violated, elevated fish tissue levels (selenium), recreational impacts	Selenium, salt, nutrients	Agricultural return flows ³	medium	<i>Salt</i> : Start 1998, complete 2001 <i>Selenium</i> : Start 2002, complete 2007 <i>Nutrients</i> : Start 2002, complete 2010
Palo Verde Outfall Drain	715.40	16 miles	Bacteria objective violated, threat of toxic bioassay results, threat of sedimentation	Bacteria	Unknown	medium	<i>Bacteria</i> : Start 2005, complete 2011
Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel	719.47	20 miles	Bacteria objective violated, threat of toxic bioassay results	Bacteria	Unknown	low	<i>Bacteria</i> : Start 2004, complete 2009

¹ This is not a commitment to complete work. The commitments are made in fund source specific workplans.

² Regional Board proposes to establish TMDL in cooperation with US EPA/Mexico.

³ Selenium originates from upper portion of the Colorado River and is delivered to the Imperial Valley via irrigation water.

committee to address New River border pollution issues. Regional Board staff is developing a TMDL for bacteria for the New River. Significantly high levels of fecal coliform bacteria (> 100,000 MPN/100 ml) are continuously measured in the New River at the International Boundary. The measured concentrations exceed the 60,000 MPN/100 ml water quality objective (WQO) established in the Basin Plan for the New River at the International Boundary. In addition to developing the TMDL, Regional Board staff plans to continue with its binational activities and make them a part of the overall strategy to address bacterial pollution from Mexico. The current Basin Plan WQO for bacteria in the New River upstream of the International Drain (in the City of Mexicali, Mexico) is based on Minute Treaty Agreement No. 264, a U.S.-Mexico Treaty, which sets water quality standards for the New River. Mexico is currently in violation of said Treaty. This notwithstanding, the Regional Board recognizes that the existing bacteria standards of Minute Treaty Agreement No. 264 are not adequate to ensure compliance with water quality objectives for the New River, even if there were no U.S. sources discharging wastes into the New River. Therefore, and as stated in the Basin Plan, it is the intent of Regional Board staff to pursue long-range quantitative water quality standards for the New River at the International Boundary beyond those contained in Minute Treaty Agreement No. 264. Such standards are anticipated to include further reduction of fecal coliform organisms.

Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

A GIS is an organized collection of computer hardware, software, geographic data, and personnel designed to efficiently and effectively capture, store, update, manipulate, analyze, and display all forms of geographically referenced information. Regional Board staff is in the final stages of establishing the system, which will provide support to basin planning activities, watershed management, development and implementation of TMDLs, and underground tanks.

Pass-Through Grants

Regional Board staff works to solicit, develop, and manage pass-through grant projects that will result in measurable water quality improvement, that substantially augment planning efforts, and that aim to provide effective education and outreach to the public. These grant monies include the Federal Clean Water Act Sections 205(j) (planning) and 319(h) (implementation) grants. Additionally, Regional Board staff is working to establish relationships with local, state, and federal agencies to solicit grant money for stakeholder implementation of water quality improvements. These agencies include the Natural Resources Conservation Service, local Resource Conservation Districts, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement is a cornerstone of the Watershed Management approach. This requires a commitment of active participation by Regional Board staff, usually for extended periods of time. Staff participation may facilitate the attainment of water quality goals where direct regulatory authority and/or program resources are not available. Moreover, stakeholder involvement assures local control and public participation, and a water quality management approach that is cognizant of stakeholder issues. The Regional Board has been very successful in efforts to include and activate a wide range of important stakeholders. The following are groups with which Regional Board staff has frequent interaction:

- Silt TMDL TAC—A new stakeholder group was created in 1998 by Regional Board staff to assist in development of silt TMDLs for Imperial Valley impaired water bodies. This Silt TMDL Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consists of representatives from Imperial Irrigation District (IID); federal, state, and local governments; the Farm Bureau; and other agricultural interests in Imperial Valley; in addition to representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Salton Sea Authority, and the Audubon Salton Sea Task Force. The TAC is focused on participating

in the TMDL process with Regional board staff, and providing technical input on TMDL development and implementation.

- Bacteria TMDL TAC—The Binational TAC (US-Section) will serve as the TMDL stakeholder group to assist in development and implementation for the bacteria TMDL for New River at the International Boundary.
- Drain Water Quality Improvement Program TAC—Regional board staff continues to work with IID's DWQIP TAC in Silt Reduction BMP development and implementation, as well as public education and outreach. Staff also participates in IID's Water Conservation Advisory Group TAC.
- Salton Sea Authority—A major stakeholder group in the priority watershed is the Salton Sea Authority. This is a Joint Powers Authority created to address the severe environmental problems facing the Salton Sea. The US Bureau of Reclamation and the Salton Sea Authority have joint lead-agency role for the restoration project.
- Citizen's Congressional Task Force on the New River—This group is coordinating a constructed wetlands project to treat polluted agricultural drainage waters prior to discharge into the New River. The Task Force includes private citizens and representatives from federal (USBR, USGS, and USFWS), state (e.g., DFG and RWQCB), and local governments (e.g., Imperial County and IID); educational institutions (e.g., UC-Riverside and Imperial Valley College), and other non-profit organizations. Imperial County and the Citizens Task Force have partnered and been awarded funding for a Clean Water Act (CWA) 319(h) Grant for 1998 for this project. This project will also receive funding from USEPA. Regional Board staff is a member of the Task Force.
- Tribal Water Consortium—Five Indian tribes holding lands throughout the Coachella Valley have formed a Tribal Water Consortium to address groundwater quality issues on reservation lands. This Consortium has been awarded a CWA 319(h) Grant for 1998-2000.

KEY ISSUES IN THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION

SURFACE WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS

As discussed in detail above, the most significant water quality problems in the targeted watershed are the problems with the Salton Sea, its two major tributaries (the New and Alamo Rivers), and Imperial Valley Agricultural Drains. All of the major surface water bodies in the Imperial Valley portion of the watershed are impaired by several constituents of nonpoint source origin. Excepting for the New River at the International Border, the problems in this watershed are mainly associated with non-point source (NPS) pollution from agricultural practices in Imperial Valley.

The Colorado River supplies drinking water to millions of Southern Californians. A segment of the Lower Colorado River is impaired by bacteria, perhaps seasonally. The source of the of bacteria pollution appears to be from overuse of septic systems by resort parks along the River. Communities along the Colorado River representing three states and two Indian tribes have formed a Coalition to address the problem. Although the Regional Board does not have direct regulatory authority on Indian land to remedy this problem, it will assist this stakeholder group by providing technical assistance and input on regulatory concerns as a solution is developed.

The Palo Verde Valley is located in the Lower Colorado River Watershed (for the purposes of WMI). This Valley is predominantly agricultural. The Palo Verde Outfall Drain is listed on the 1998 updated §303(d) List for impairment caused by bacterial pollution of unknown origin.

GROUNDWATER QUALITY PROBLEMS

Drinking Water Aquifers

In this desert region, groundwater basins of high quality are a precious commodity and must be given the highest protection. As this region grows in population, water quality impacts are occurring. Three groundwater/drinking water quality issues of significant importance: a nitrate plume in the upper desert groundwater basin of Lucerne Valley; a nitrate plume in the Desert Hot Springs groundwater basin; and nitrate pollution of the Coachella Valley aquifer.

LUCERNE VALLEY

Disposal of domestic wastewater through evaporation/percolation ponds by the Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency (BBRWA), agricultural practices, and septic systems are the suspected sources of the nitrate problem in Lucerne Valley. The full extent of the plume has not been determined, but it spreads several miles and threatens over 15 private supply wells. Regional Board staff lacks the funds to develop a comprehensive groundwater monitoring program to determine the extent of the pollution. However, staff intends to continue working with the BBRWA to address the overall nitrate problem in Lucerne Valley.

DESERT HOT SPRINGS

The cause of the nitrate problem in Desert Hot Springs is a high density of septic tank/leachfield systems. Several domestic wells in Desert Hot Springs show nitrate at concentrations already exceeding the State Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for nitrate, but the extent of this plume has not yet been determined either. Regional Board staff lack the resources to develop a comprehensive monitoring program to do so. As resources allow, Board staff intends to assist stakeholders in Desert Hot Springs in addressing these problems.

COACHELLA VALLEY

Nitrate groundwater contamination is present in the Coachella Valley Groundwater Aquifer, which is the sole source of drinking water supply for virtually all of the Coachella Valley. Several municipal wells belonging to the Desert Water Agency in Palm Springs are already restricted in use because the water in those wells shows nitrate concentrations of up to 70 milligrams per liter, which are above the State Maximum Contaminant Level of 45 mg/l. Discharges of wastes from individual domestic septic tanks/leachfield systems, water recycling, widespread application of fertilizers, and discharges of domestic wastes to evaporation/percolation ponds are the likely source of the nitrate contamination.

Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (USTs) Regionwide

UST leaks contribute significantly to water quality problems within the Region. The two areas impacted most within Region 7 are the Coachella Valley (located within the priority watershed) and the City of Blythe. In both areas the underlying soil type is porous, thus allowing a significant amount of pollutants (e.g., petroleum hydrocarbons) to reach groundwater. Also, the gasoline oxygenate known as MTBE (methyl tertiary-butyl ether) has become a major problem. MTBE leaks have caused water districts within the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin to temporarily shut down, and even abandon, drinking water wells. This is of serious concern, as the groundwater basin is the sole source of drinking water for much of the Coachella Valley.

Because of its location, the City of Blythe has been and still is a fueling station for traffic to and from Los Angeles and Phoenix. As a result, the City of Blythe covers a relatively small area with a large number of UST releases. Most of these contaminant “plumes” are commingled (combined) or in close proximity to one another, rendering independent clean up nearly impossible. To expedite and streamline cleanup of these plumes, the Regional Board’s Executive Officer and the Blythe’s City Manager entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that allowed Blythe to coordinate its cleanup effort. This approach has become a model for commingled plumes throughout the State and consequently inspired the Legislature to enact commingled plume legislation (SB 562).

RESOURCES

FUNDED ACTIVITIES (WMI RELATED)

Funded activities are set forth in the Region's State Fiscal Year (SFY) 1999-2000 TMDL Development Workplan and Nonpoint Source Implementation Workplan. These activities include continued development of the silt TMDL for the Alamo River and of the bacteria TMDL for the New River, development of a silt TMDL for the New River, water quality monitoring for assessment of priority TMDL implementation, public education and stakeholder support activities, tracking/survey of implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for target pollutant reduction. Some money is also allocated to the Region for basin planning issues (e.g., amendments, review) In addition, some State funding may be allocated to the Region for development of implementation plans for TMDLs being developed this SFY.

USEPA provides all of the funding for the New River/Mexicali Sanitation Program. This funding supports the activities described above.

UNFUNDED ACTIVITIES

Water Quality Monitoring

A current unfunded activity that is of critical importance for this Regional Board to fulfill its legislative and regulatory mandates is surface water quality monitoring. Water quality monitoring has been recognized as a key activity in the State Water Resources Control Board Strategic Plan and in the SWRCB Nonpoint Source Management Program. Trend monitoring funding was withdrawn in 1994, and since that time, there has been only minimal funding. These data are necessary to fulfill the federal Clean Water Act 305(b) water body assessment requirements, to establish scientifically defensible and statistically significant baseline data for development of TMDLs, and to assess the success of efforts implemented to address water quality pollution. In particular, funds are necessary to monitor pesticide levels in this agricultural region. There is severely limited data available on waterbodies in this region for the organochlorine, organophosphate, carbamate, and pyrethroid pesticides - many of which are known to cause acute and chronic toxicity to aquatic and avian species. With pesticide TMDLs on the horizon, lack of data will serve as a serious disability. Moreover, it is impossible to assess waterbody health without current water quality data.

Groundwater Protection

Groundwater protection funds are essentially nonexistent in this region. The Regional Board, in its 1999 Triennial Review of the Basin Plan, directed staff to review the available data to refine beneficial use designations for groundwater. This work is unfunded. Refinement of the beneficial uses of groundwater will assist the Regional Board in developing efficient protection and abatement strategies for groundwater resources.

Development of Groundwater Standards

The Regional Board identified development of a water quality objectives for nitrates and total dissolved solids in groundwater as a priority issue during its 1999 Triennial Review of the Basin Plan. This work is essential in the Regional Board's efforts to address ground water pollution, as it lays the foundation for development of waste discharge requirements and provides a numerical benchmark for assessment of ground water resources.

MTBE

The Governor, through an Executive Order, has ordered that the SWRCB "shall expeditiously prioritize groundwater recharge areas and aquifers that are most vulnerable to contamination by MTBE and prioritize resources towards protection and cleanup." There are no funds currently available for this work in the Colorado River Basin Region.

Septic and Implementation of SB 1852

The Regional Board identified development of a new policy for septic tank/leachfields as a priority issue during its 1999 Triennial Review of the Basin Plan. This work is unfunded. In addition, Senate Bill 1852 requires the Regional Board to prohibit the discharge of wastewater from existing or new septic systems on parcels of less than 1/2 acre that overlie the Mission Creek and Desert Hot Springs aquifers, provided the availability of sewers within 200 feet of the property. Enforcement of this wholly unfunded mandate will impose a serious financial burden on this Region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

INTERNET INFORMATION

The Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board has a website dedicated to current Watershed Management Initiative activities. This site is located at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/~rwqcb7/wmi>

The 1999 WMI Chapter for Region 7 is available on the internet at: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/~rwqcb7/documents/r7-wmi99.htm>

BASIN PLANS

The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the Colorado River Basin Region is available as an Adobe Acrobat document on the internet at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/~rwqcb7/documents/r7bplan.pdf>. Hard copies of the Basin Plan can be purchased for \$25, payable to "RWQCB – Region 7", at the address below. The Basin Plan can also be viewed at the Regional Board office, during normal business hours and excluding government holidays, at the address below.

STAFF ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION

For more information about the Watershed Management Initiative in Region 7, contact Summer Bundy at (760) 776-8937 or Liann Chávez at (760) 776-8946.

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