SAN DIEGO REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

June 10, 2009

PART C
STATEWIDE ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE SAN DIEGO REGION

1. The Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) Report on Contaminants in Fish from Lakes in California (*Benjamin Tobler and Cynthia Gorham-Test*)

The State Water Board has released a report, ***Contaminants in Fish from California Lakes and Reservoirs*** (Lakes Survey), which presents initial results from an extensive statewide survey conducted by SWAMP. A press release, fact sheet and FAQs were part of the release package. The monitoring indicates that concentrations of mercury in indicator species are above human health thresholds across much of the state. Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) were second to mercury in exceeding thresholds, although far fewer lakes reached concentrations that pose potential health risks. Concentrations of other pollutants were generally low and infrequently exceeded thresholds.

The report presents findings from the first year of a two-year study. This Lakes Survey marks the beginning of a new program that will track sport fish contamination in California lakes, rivers, streams, and coastal waters.

The Lakes Survey sampled more than 200 of the most popular fishing lakes in the State and also conducted a random sampling of 50 of California's other 9,000 lakes to provide a statistical statewide assessment. This survey is a preliminary screening of contamination in sport fish from these lakes. The species selected for sampling are known to accumulate high pollutant concentrations and are good indicators of contamination problems. This study is not providing consumption advice - which would require more detailed monitoring (with a broader array of species and larger numbers of fish analyzed) and a much higher level of funding.

The report presents results from monitoring in 2007 in which the study team collected over 6,000 fish from 150 lakes and reservoirs. The team sampled an additional 130 lakes in 2008. Results from this second round of sampling will be available in 2010. Fish tissue concentrations were evaluated using thresholds developed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) for methylmercury, PCBs, dieldrin, DDTs, chlordanes, and selenium.

Lakes were considered clean if all average pollutant concentrations in all species were below all OEHHA thresholds. For this comparison, individual composite samples were used. If any one composite from a lake was above a threshold, it was disqualified from the clean category. Only 15% of the lakes sampled in 2007

were in the clean category. In general, high elevation lakes, where trout were caught, had the lowest levels of contaminants in this statewide study. Low elevation lakes in Northern California had the highest mercury concentrations, while low elevation lakes in Southern California had the highest PCB concentrations. In the southern Regions, all five lakes included in the Lake Study, namely Hodges Reservoir, Loveland Reservoir, Lower Otay Reservoir, San Vicente Reservoir, and Sweetwater Reservoir, were disqualified from the clean category.

This data will be assessed in the next 303(d) listing cycle. The Region 9 SWAMP Team is considering whether additional sampling should be conducted in order to gather sufficient data for fish consumption advisories at lakes that were high in contaminants, but do not currently have advisories in place.