



February 15, 2008

Ms. Tam Doduc, Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 "I" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Strategic Planning

Dear Ms. Doduc:

Thank you once again for the opportunity to be a part of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Strategic Plan update. The roundtable discussions which have been held as part of this planning process and have brought together diverse stakeholders statewide have proven to be a valuable forum for exchange of information and ideas.

Following are comments on the latest version of the strategic plan update:

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES:

While the TMDL program is a very important to the overall success of improving water quality, we feel the broader issue of addressing a statewide comprehensive and consistent urban storm water runoff policy should be identified as the top environmental priority of the board. This policy should be developed taking into account and tackling head-on the many complex and regulatory issues -- above and beyond storm water reuse -- such as a full understanding and consideration of the many technical and scientific factors necessary to make informed decisions about storm water management, whether there is a basis for application of numeric limits for toxicity, the role of atmospheric deposition, effects of storm flow "run-on" from adjacent lands, naturally occurring erosions and storm event variations and diversity in watersheds such as hydrologic conditions and pollutant fate and transport. The goal of this statewide policy should be to then allow regional water boards to establish standards that recognize regional differences (i.e., precipitation, soil types, development, etc.) but at the same time set uniform statewide minimum guidelines on the processes/protocols used to develop those standards. Statewide policy guidance would aid regional boards and enhance their ability to act more quickly and consistently, while still allowing flexibility to meet individual watershed requirements.

PLANNING PRIORITIES:

Numeric Limits: Another issue area we believe that complicates the regional board decision-making process is the establishment of numeric effluent limits (NELs). Addressing the scientific basis for and the feasibility of numeric effluent limits (NELs) should be a planning priority for the SWRCB. A considerable body of excellent work has already been completed by the Blue Ribbon Panel. As a planning priority, the SWRCB should consider how the Blue Ribbon Panel findings can be used as the first step in a continuing process that will enable the SWRCB to set clear guidelines, enhance the state's data base and provide support for decisions based on NELs.

Basin Planning: Basin plans serve as the foundation to implement the state's water quality objectives. However, in Region 9, the basin plan beneficial uses have not been updated since the mid-1970s. Since water body impairments are driven by beneficial uses, more current information would insure that the TMDL program is focused on water bodies that still meet the definition for beneficial use. We would recommend the SWRCB secure the necessary personnel, adequate funding resources and coordination to provide for timely and meaningful basin plan updates, incorporate consistent statewide plans/policies into the plans and provide clear and concise guidance to the regional boards.

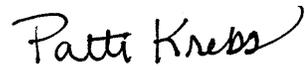
Monitoring: During the SWRCB TMDL Public Advisory Group, a priority identified during the process was the need for a statewide surface water ambient monitoring program (SWAMP). Effective collection, centralization and interpretation of all monitoring data is still lacking and does not integrate the significant body of information that is being collected under EPA protocols in 40 CFR 163 on an ongoing basis from a number of different entities such as POTWs, municipal and watershed programs, industrial dischargers and research institutions to assess water quality. An effective and comprehensive monitoring would greatly aid both the state and regional boards in setting priorities and evaluating effectiveness of programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES:

We are especially pleased to see the board incorporating economic and scientific peer review into the decision-making process, as occurred during the recent consideration of sediment quality objectives. However, it would be helpful, and make the process even more transparent if the public comment period remains open after the peer reviewers have submitted their comments. This would then give the public the opportunity to additional comment on the peer review submittals.

Again, we greatly appreciate the SWRCB undertaking this strategic plan effort and hope our comments will add value to your considerations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patti Krebs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patti Krebs
Executive Director