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Agency Secretary

State Water Resources Control Board

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Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will now accept comments on an amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Region (Basin Plan) that would establish a program to control pathogens in Tomales Bay Watershed.

The proposed amendment was adopted by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Francisco Bay Water Board) on September 21, 2005 under Resolution No. R2-2005-0046 and is expected to be considered for approval at a future State Water Board meeting in 2006. Notice of that meeting will be published separately. The meeting agenda item, including the draft resolution and proposed amendment language, is available on the State Water Board's Web site at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/tmdl/tmdl.html>, or by request.

The Basin Plan sets water quality standards (standards) to protect all waters in the San Francisco Bay Region and prescribes programs to implement these standards. The standards consist of the beneficial uses of the waters, narrative and numeric objectives to protect these uses, and the State's Antidegradation Policy. Tomales Bay and portions of its main tributaries (Lagunitas, Walker, and Olema Creeks) have been identified under section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) as not meeting standards due to pathogens.

Elevated levels of coliform bacteria in Tomales Bay and its tributaries indicate the presence of human and animal waste and associated disease-causing pathogens. Pathogens pose a health risk to people who are exposed through incidental ingestion of water (for instance, through recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, boating, tide pooling, etc.) or through the consumption of contaminated shellfish from Tomales Bay.

Studies indicate that the main sources of bacteria and associated pathogens include on-site sewage disposal systems, small wastewater treatment facilities and sewage holding ponds, boat discharges, grazing lands, dairies, equestrian facilities, and municipal runoff.

The proposed Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) sets numeric targets, allocates responsibility among the sources for meeting those targets, and establishes an implementation plan to ensure that all segments of Tomales Bay and its major tributaries attain applicable bacteriological water quality objectives established to protect and support the beneficial uses. Coliform bacteria numeric density targets, in combination with a human waste discharge prohibition and a shellfish harvesting closure target, are the basis for the TMDL and the load allocations.

California Environmental Protection Agency

The amendment also includes a schedule for reviewing progress toward meeting targets, implementing proposed actions, and evaluating appropriateness and effectiveness of proposed actions. The reviews will provide opportunities for stakeholder participation. Any necessary modifications to the targets, allocations, or implementation plan will be incorporated into the Basin Plan.

Comment letters to the State Water Board must be received by 5 p.m. on May 4, 2006. After this deadline, State Water Board staff will not accept additional written comments unless the State Water Board determines that such comments should be accepted or unless changes are made to the proposed resolution before the State Water Board meeting where this amendment will be considered. Please send comments to:

Song Her, Clerk to the Board, by email at commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov, faxed to (916) 341-5620, or addressed to State Water Resources Control Board, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Please also indicate in the subject line, **"Comment Letter – Pathogens in Tomales Bay."**

Please direct questions about this notice to Joanna Jensen, Division of Water Quality, at (916) 341-5557 or JJensen@waterboards.ca.gov or to Steven H. Blum, Senior Staff Counsel, at (916) 341-5177 or SBlum@waterboards.ca.gov.

Date

4/7/06

Song Her
Clerk to the Board

Tom Howard for