

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
Thursday, August 13, 2015
Regional Water Board Office
Santa Rosa, California

- ITEM: 8
- SUBJECT: Update on Upper Elk River Sediment TMDL Analysis (*Alydda Mangelsdorf & Dr. Jon Butcher, Tetra Tech*)
- BOARD ACTION: This is an Informational Item. There is no action required.
- BACKGROUND: The Clean Water Act requires that the total maximum daily load (TMDL) of a pollutant causing impairment "shall be established at a level necessary to implement the applicable water quality standards with seasonal variations and a margin of safety which takes into account any lack of knowledge concerning the relationship between effluent limitations and water quality." A draft Upper Elk River Watershed Total Maximum Daily Load for Sediment (TMDL) staff report (draft staff report) was released for scientific peer review in 2013 and made available for informal review by interested stakeholders, as well. Scientific peer reviewers generally supported the scientific methods and conclusions as described in the draft staff report. However, not all stakeholder comments indicated support for the scientific methods and conclusions as described. In the meantime, Humboldt Redwood Company (HRC) has submitted a watershed analysis and a report of waste discharge for their timber operations in the Upper Elk River Watershed.
- DISCUSSION: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has made available to the Regional Water Board, technical assistance through their contract with Tetra Tech to review and assess all the existing Elk River sediment related information, including:
1. Peer review draft staff report,
 2. Scientific peer reviewer and informal public review comments on the peer review draft staff report,
 3. HRC submissions, and
 4. Staff's revised TMDL approach as vetted through Board member briefings and review.

Tetra Tech is tasked with synthesizing all this information and producing a technical report, which in its judgment represents an accurate assessment of sediment conditions and associated beneficial uses in the Elk River Watershed, given the best available science. The

technical report will provide the definitive basis for a proposed Sediment TMDL for the Upper Elk River Watershed, as well as a proposed Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for timberland operations designed to implement the TMDL.

Tetra Tech's technical document will include the following subjects:

1. Description of the watershed setting;
2. Description of the Regulatory Framework, such as land ownership, and requirements under existing WDRs and Cleanup and Abatement Orders (CAOs);
3. Description of desired watershed conditions, including both instream and hillslope conditions;
4. Problem Statement, describing impairments, water quality conditions, altered channel and floodplain morphology, historical management and land use activities, impacts in the watershed, and past watershed studies and restoration activities;
5. Sediment Source Analysis, including factors controlling sediment in the Elk River and a quantitative sediment analysis;
6. Sediment Loading Capacity and Load Allocations, including discussion of dynamic equilibrium, sediment input and sediment output; and,
7. Description of implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management.

Tetra Tech's technical document will be available for public review at a date following the August 13 presentation, in order to incorporate feedback received during this information item. Dr. Jon Butcher, PhD., an expert in modelling and sediment TMDL development, will present Tetra Tech's synthesis of the available information at the August 13, 2015 Board meeting. As above, Tetra Tech's technical document will be a primary source for the TMDL and WDR, to be proposed for adoption prior to the end of the year.

**SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES:**

This item will introduce new information received since release of the peer review draft staff report, as well as provide a new framework for assessing the assimilative capacity of the Elk River Watershed for sediment discharges.

**SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:**

See Elk River TMDL website
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/tmdls/elk_river/