

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
SEPTEMBER 9, 2014**

ITEM 8

SUBJECT

CALIFORNIA TRIBES FISH-USE STUDY

DISCUSSION

Tribes have expressed concern that water quality and other water-related decisions tend to lack consideration of tribes' use of water and aquatic resources. In 2012 - 2014, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided funding to UC Davis researchers to collaborate with tribes in discovering the historical and current patterns of fish use. UC Davis researchers worked with partner tribes to establish an appropriate approach to interviewing tribe members about fish use.

Members of 40 California tribes and tribe groups were surveyed directly at 24 locations, and staff from 10 tribes was surveyed online using standard questionnaires. Traditional uses of fish were assessed using literature review and surveying of tribe members and staff. Contemporary uses were assessed using tribe member interviews. UC Davis researchers found that tribes use fish in similar patterns (fish types and source-waters) as they did traditionally, but not in similar amounts. Tribes used 26 freshwater/anadromous fin-fish species, 23 marine fin-fish species, and 18 other invertebrate, and plant species and groups of species. The single most commonly caught and/or eaten fish species group among all tribes was "salmon", which could include chinook or coho salmon. The 95th percentile rates of consumption of caught-fish varied by tribe and ranged between 102 grams per day (g/day) (Pomo) and 484 g/day (Pit River). The rate of fish use (frequency and consumption rate) was suppressed for many tribes, compared to traditional rates, which most tribes attributed primarily to water quantity and quality issues.

POLICY ISSUE

Staff from the State Water Board will consider the information from this study during the development of the water quality objectives for methylmercury, which aim to protect people and wildlife from exposure to harmful levels of methylmercury in fish that are consumed. Information from this study could be used in other State Water Board projects that affect tribes.

FISCAL IMPACT

The study itself does not have a direct fiscal impact. If information from this study is used to develop State Water Board policy, it could have a fiscal impact. This information could be used to set water quality objectives for methylmercury. Such water quality objectives may be more stringent than objectives derived to protect sport fishers since this study shows that tribes eat more fish than the average sport fisher. Therefore, the water quality objectives derived to protect tribes could require more implementation actions or more monitoring of different species of fish.

REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT

No direct impact. If information from this study is used to develop Water Board policy, it could impact all Regional Water Boards.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

No action will be taken on this item. This is information only.

State Water Board action on this item will assist the Water Boards in reaching Goals 1, and 7 of the Strategic Plan Update: 2008-2012 to narrative of goals. Goal 1 "Implement strategies to fully support the beneficial uses for all 2006-listed water bodies by 2030." This study provides information on the beneficial uses of California tribes. Goal 7 "Ensure that the Water Boards have access to information and expertise...needed to effectively and efficiently carry out the Water Boards' mission." This study provides information related to the preservation and restoration of the state's water bodies.