

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 14, 2011**

ITEM: **8**

SUBJECT: **Enforcement Policy Penalty Methodology - Overview of the Methodology**

DISCUSSION: This item provides the Board with an overview of the penalty methodology included in the State Board's Water Quality Enforcement Policy and some insights from the Board's advisory staff about the methodology. The Enforcement Policy requires a prescriptive methodology for calculating the amount of penalties to assess in Administrative Civil Liabilities (ACL) actions. Since the Policy's approval in 2010, there has not been a hearing on an ACL action before the Board. The purpose of this item is to prepare the Board for hearings on ACL actions that may occur in the near future, both to ensure that the Board understands how a penalty was calculated, but also so that if the Board decides to change a proposed penalty, the change will be consistent with the Enforcement Policy.

Having served as the Board's advisor on nearly all ACL actions, I will be providing this overview. As you may recall, ACL actions must adhere to a "separation of functions" process where a team of Board staff who has not been involved in investigating and prosecuting an enforcement case provides unbiased technical and legal advice to the Board, while a separate team of Board staff prosecutes the case by advocating for the proposed enforcement action. The Assistant Executive Officers have generally led the prosecution teams.

The accompanying Staff Report (Appendix A) summarizes the mechanics of the penalty methodology and provides supplemental information about its use including excerpts of the penalty methodology from the Enforcement Policy.

RECOMMEN-  
DATION: No action is necessary, as this is an information item.

APPENDIX A: Staff Report on the Enforcement Policy Penalty Methodology

# APPENDIX A



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**Edmund G. Brown Jr.**  
Governor

**TO:** Bruce H. Wolfe  
Executive Office

**FROM:** Brian Thompson  
Enforcement Coordinator

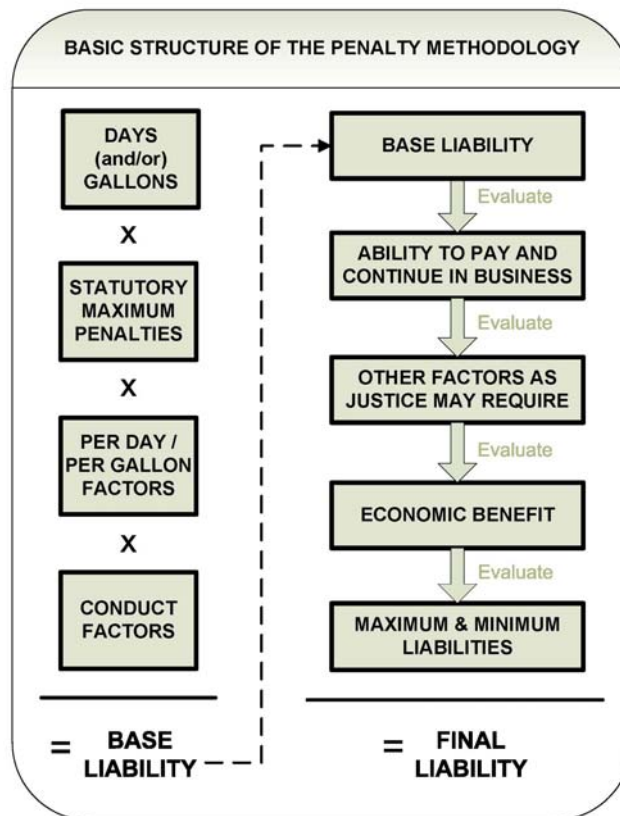
**DATE:** November 30, 2011

**SUBJECT:** **Enforcement Policy Penalty Methodology** – Summary of penalty methodology calculations and discussion of penalty factor assessments.

This staff report reviews how Administrative Civil Liabilities (ACLs) are calculated under the May 20, 2010, Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy), it recommends an approach for changing a proposed ACL at a hearing, and it provides insight into some of the subjective penalty factors which may be contested during a hearing.

## Basic Structure to the Penalty Methodology

There is a basic structure to the penalty methodology which shows the general “equation” for calculating an ACL. There are two parts to the calculation: (1) the steps taken to calculate a Base Liability; and (2) the steps taken to calculate the Final Liability (as illustrated below).



In general, the steps for calculating a Base Liability are based on factors associated with the violation (i.e., factors required by statute such as the nature, extent, gravity, and circumstances of the violation, toxicity of a discharge and its susceptibility to cleanup and abatement, discharger conduct, history of violations, etc.), and the steps for calculating the Final Liability consider other factors associated with the case (i.e., factors required by statute such as the discharger's ability to pay and continue in business, economic benefit, maximum and minimum penalties, etc.).

### **Penalty Factors Input into the Methodology**

The functional part of the penalty methodology is the evaluation of penalty factors and the assessment of values which are input into the methodology to calculate an ACL. Within each step (or main factor) of the methodology, there are more specific penalty factors and sub-factors that are assessed to calculate the Base and Final Liabilities. For Base Liabilities, these factors are illustrated in the first two charts of Attachment A. The first chart is for non-discharge violations, which involve administrative- or procedural-type violations such as not obtaining a permit or submitting a report late, and the second chart is for discharge violations. For Final Liabilities, the factors are illustrated in the third chart. The factors input into the methodology are highlighted in these illustrations and, when applicable, there are page and table references to where the factor is discussed in the Enforcement Policy. For your convenience, a copy of the penalty methodology section of the Enforcement Policy (Section VI) is provided in Attachment B.

### **A Recommended Process for Changing a Proposed Liability**

At an ACL hearing, the Board may decide to change a liability proposed by its Prosecution Team. Since adoption of the May 20, 2010, Enforcement Policy, modifications to a proposed liability must be explained and be compliant with the penalty methodology. Assuming that all facts surrounding the violation(s) are not in dispute, the following process is recommended for the Board and its advisory team to help facilitate this process.

- 1) Identify a penalty factor or factors that the Board wishes to modify based on hearing testimony.
- 2) Select an alternative input value.
- 3) Check the Enforcement Policy to ensure that the alternative value(s) remains within the allowable range and to verify that the definition is consistent with what was learned through hearing testimony.
- 4) Re-calculate the final liability and cross-check that the liability remains compliant with the Policy or statute (e.g., liability at least ten percent more than the economic benefit, and within minimum and maximum liabilities).

### **Supplemental Information about some of the Penalty Factors**

There are some penalty factors that are conceptually similar but are evaluated separately in the methodology. The following penalty factors may, at times, be confused with another factor when discussing an alleged violation. Here are some additional thoughts about these penalty factors for your consideration.

### “Potential for Harm” for Discharge Violations

The Potential for Harm factor for a discharge violation is the sum of three factors: Factors 1 + Factor 2 + Factor 3 (second chart, Attachment A).

Factors 1 and 2 both address harm associated with the discharge. For Factor 1, harm is evaluated by assessing the end result of the discharge (i.e., observed impacts or threat to the receiving water and beneficial uses). For Factor 2, harm is evaluated by assessing the risk associated with the material itself (i.e., the material poses an inherent risk based on the physical, chemical, biological, and thermal characteristics of the discharge). The main difference between these two harm factors is that Factor 1 considers where, when, and how the discharge occurred, Factor 2 does not.

Factor 3 is an evaluation of how much of the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement. The factor is assessed regardless of whether the discharge was actually cleaned up. The evaluation is based on whether 50 percent or more of the discharged material could be cleaned up or the effects abated. Credit for any actual cleanup is given in other steps of the methodology. These steps include the amount of gallons assessed in the Base Liability calculation, and the consideration of cleanup activities under the “Cleanup and Cooperation” conduct factor.

### “Culpability”

Culpability is a penalty factor which considers fault of the discharger (e.g., if the was an intentional, negligent, or accidental violation). It is an evaluation of actions taken (or not taken) to cause a violation and the amount of responsibility the discharger bears. To help determine culpability, conduct may be compared to what a reasonable or prudent person would have done under similar circumstances, and it may compare operational procedures at a discharger’s facility to professional standards or industry practices. The evaluation also considers extenuating circumstances or circumstances beyond the discharger’s control which may have contributed to or caused the violation.

### “Deviation from Requirement”

The Deviation from Requirement penalty factor is an evaluation of the effect of the violation on a legal requirement. For example, deviation may be considered minor when a discharger complies with most but not all of a permit provision and there is little difference between the noncompliance and what was intended by the legal requirement (i.e., effectiveness of the legal requirement remains generally intact). Deviation may be considered major when a discharger violates most or all of a requirement, such as when a discharge occurs in violation of a discharge prohibition, and there is a significant difference between the noncompliance and what was intended by the legal requirement (i.e., the legal requirement is rendered ineffective).

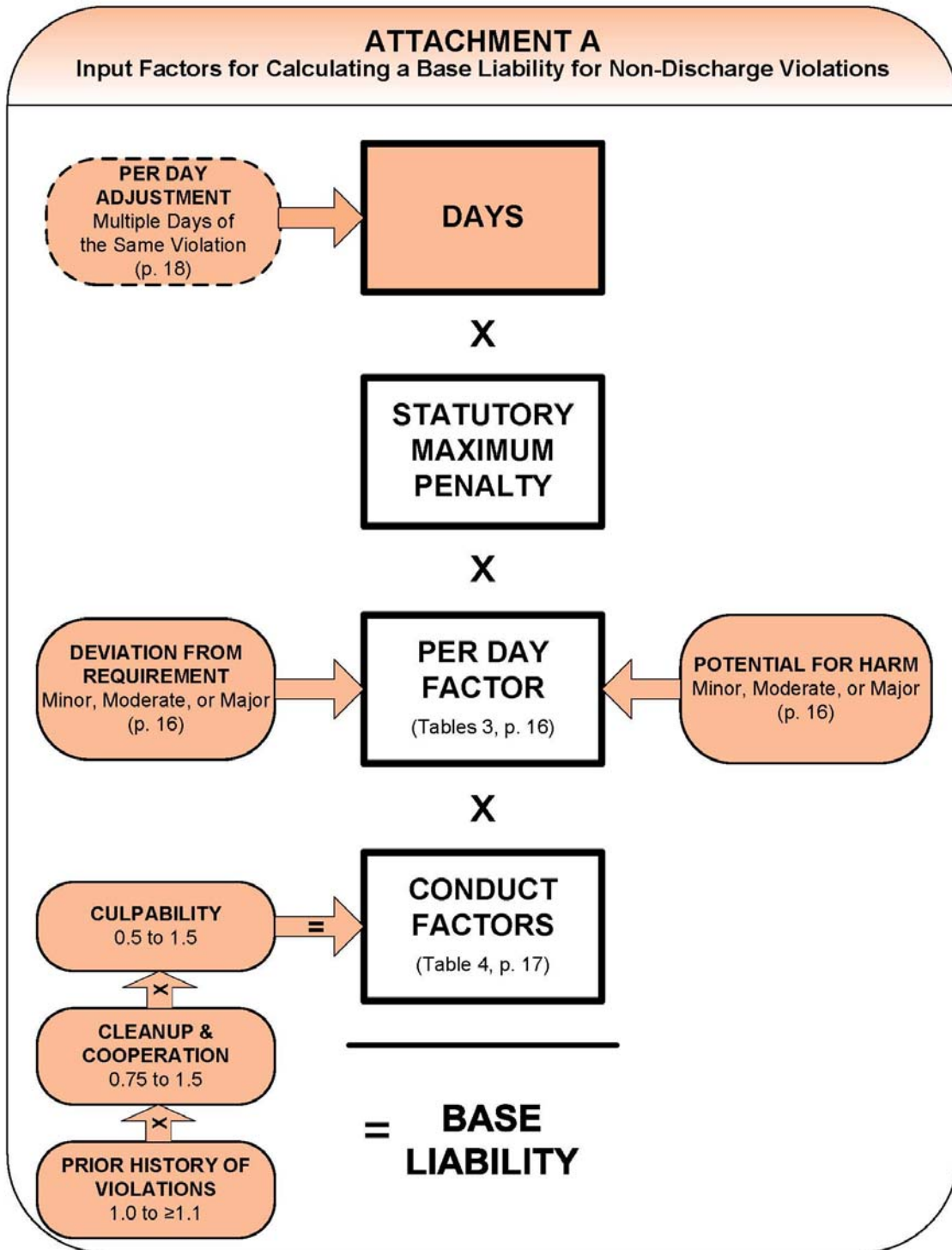
It should be noted that the Policy’s description of Deviation from Requirement includes parenthetical consideration of a discharger’s intent to help explain the requirement. We recommend that discharger intent be evaluated separately under the Culpability factor so as to not weigh this consideration twice.

### **Final Thoughts**

The Enforcement Policy requires that penalty assessments be derived through the penalty methodology. We hope this discussion of the methodology and its penalty factors is helpful to the Board and its advisory team. The attached information, in particular, may be useful tools to aid penalty methodology discussions during an ACL hearing by helping to quickly identify the primary adjustment dials in the methodology with a reference to where these dials are discussed in the Enforcement Policy.

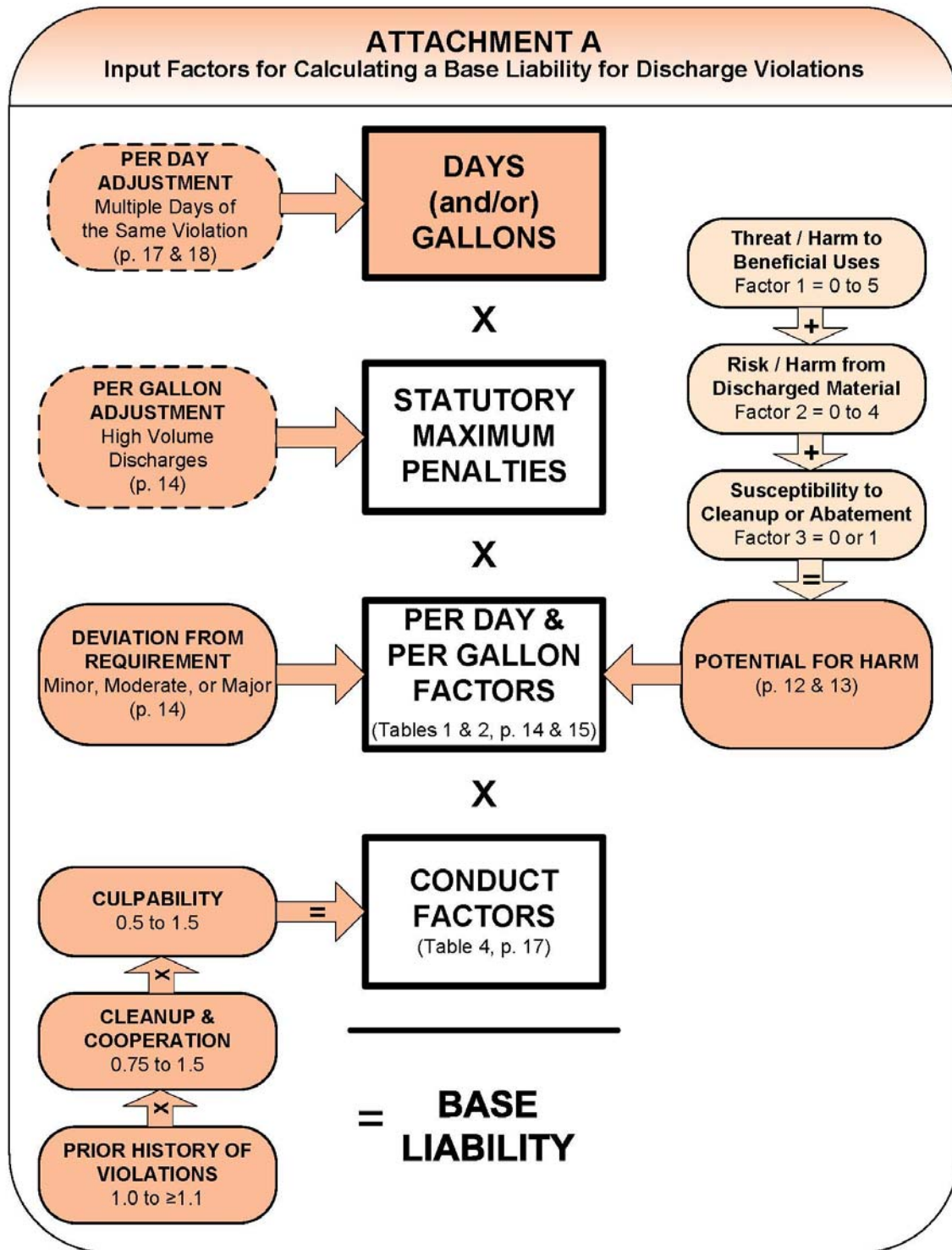
- Attachment A:    -   Input Factors for Calculating a Base Liability for Non-Discharge Violations  
                      -   Input Factors for Calculating a Base Liability for Discharge Violations  
                      -   Factors to be Considered for the Final Liability Calculation
- Attachment B:    -   Enforcement Policy (Section VI), effective date May 20, 2010

# ATTACHMENT A

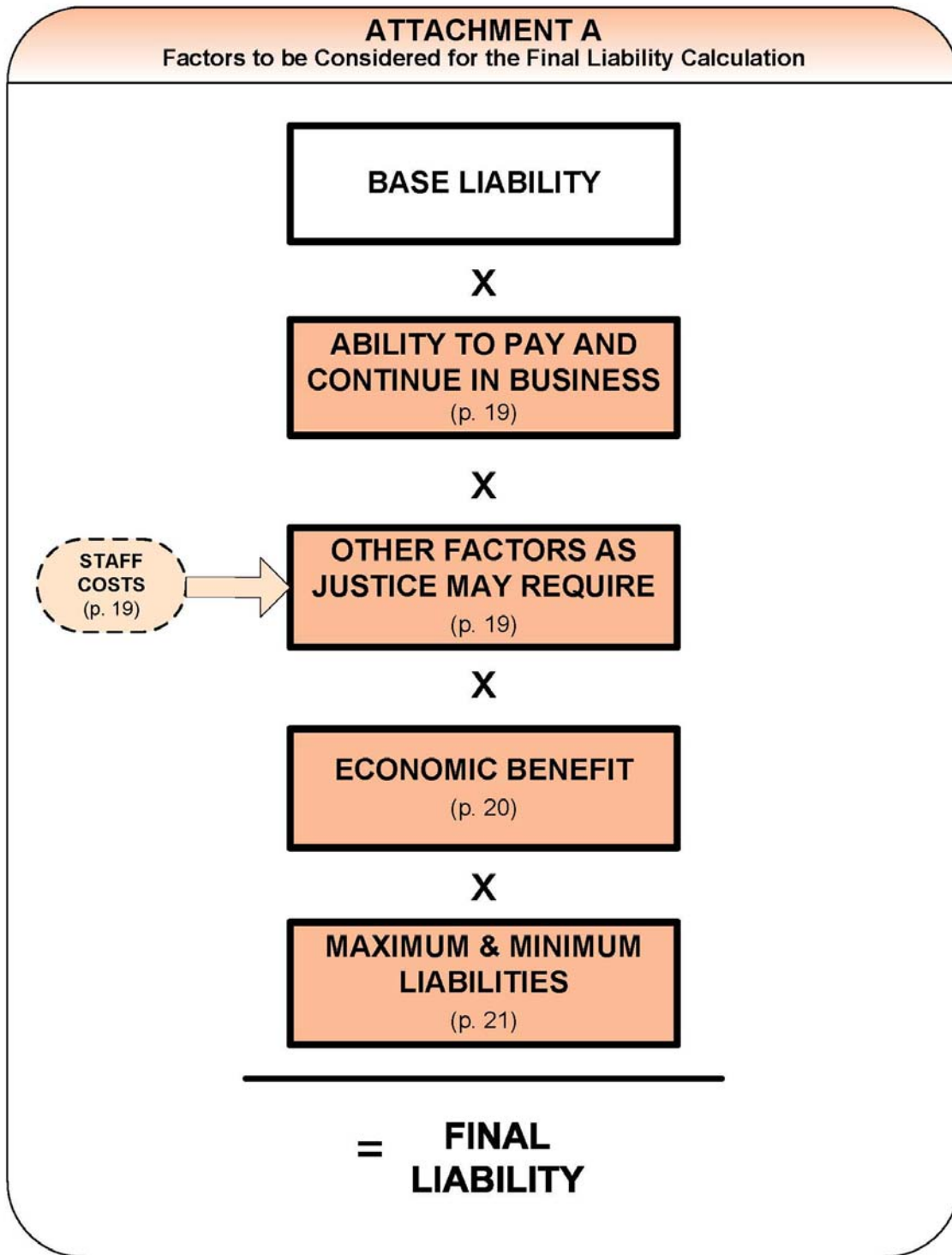


- Thick Border: Calculation step in methodology
- Solid Border: Required factor to be assessed
- Dashed Border: Optional factor to be assessed
- Orange Fill: Penalty factor assessed in the methodology
- Directional arrow showing inputs to methodology steps
- +, x, = Math symbols indicating type of calculation
- ( ) Reference to location of factor in Enforcement Policy





- Thick Border: Calculation step in methodology
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- Orange Fill: Penalty factor assessed in the methodology
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## ATTACHMENT B

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD**

**WATER QUALITY  
ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

Effective May 20, 2010

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

any investigation and the Office of Enforcement will seek input from the Regional Water Board enforcement staff in the development of any resulting enforcement action. Such action may be brought before the State Water Board or the Regional Water Board, as may be deemed appropriate for the particular action. The decision as to where to bring the enforcement action will be discussed with the affected Regional Water Board enforcement staff. Enforcement actions requiring compliance monitoring or long-term regulatory follow-up will generally be brought before the appropriate Regional Water Board.

## **V. COORDINATION WITH OTHER REGULATORY AGENCIES**

### **A. Hazardous Waste Facilities**

At hazardous waste facilities where the Regional Water Board is the lead agency for corrective action oversight, the Regional Water Board shall consult with Department of Toxics Substance Control (DTSC) to ensure, among other things, that corrective action is at least equivalent to the requirements of the Federal Resource, Conservation, and Recovery Act (RCRA).

### **B. Oil Spills**

The Water Boards will consult and cooperate with the Office of Spill Prevention and Response at the Department of Fish and Game (OSPR) for any oil spill involving waters under the jurisdiction of OSPR.

### **C. General**

The Water Boards will work cooperatively with other local, state, regional, and federal agencies when violations, for which the agency itself is not responsible, occur on lands owned or managed by the agency. Where appropriate, the Water Boards will also coordinate enforcement actions with other agencies that have concurrent enforcement authority.

## **VI. MONETARY ASSESSMENTS IN ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY (ACL) ACTIONS**

### **A. Penalty Calculation Methodology**

As a general matter, where, as in the California Water Code, a civil penalty structure has been devised to address environmental violations, civil penalties do not depend on proof of actual damages to the environment. Courts in reviewing similar environmental protection statutes have held that a plaintiff need not prove a loss before recovering a penalty; instead, the defendant must demonstrate that the penalty should be less than the statutory maximum. In certain cases, a strong argument can be made that consideration of the statutory factors can support the statutory maximum as an appropriate penalty for water quality violations, in the absence of any other mitigating evidence. Moreover, as discussed below, the Porter-Cologne Act requires that certain civil liabilities be set at a level that accounts for any "economic benefit or savings" violators gained through their violations. (Wat. Code, § 13385, subd. (e).) Economic benefit or savings is a factor to be considered in determining the amount of other civil liabilities. (Wat. Code, § 13327.) The Water Boards have powerful liability provisions at their disposal which the Legislature and the public expect them to fairly and consistently implement for maximum enforcement impact to address, correct, and deter water quality violations.

While it is a goal of this Policy to establish broad consistency in the Water Boards' approach to enforcement, the Policy recognizes that, with respect to liability determinations, each Regional Water Board, and each specific case, is somewhat unique. The goal of this section is to provide a consistent approach and analysis of factors to determine administrative civil liability. Where violations are standard and routine, a consistent outcome can be reasonably expected using this Policy. In more complex matters, however, the need to assess all of the applicable factors in liability determinations may yield different outcomes in cases that may have many similar facts.

Liabilities imposed by the Water Boards are an important part of the Water Boards' enforcement authority. Accordingly, any assessment of administrative civil liability, whether negotiated pursuant to a settlement agreement or imposed after an administrative adjudication, should:

- Be assessed in a fair and consistent manner;
- Fully eliminate any economic advantage obtained from noncompliance;<sup>1</sup>
- Fully eliminate any unfair competitive advantage obtained from noncompliance;
- Bear a reasonable relationship to the gravity of the violation and the harm to beneficial uses or regulatory program resulting from the violation;
- Deter the specific person(s) identified in the ACL from committing further violations; and
- Deter similarly situated person(s) in the regulated community from committing the same or similar violations.

The liability calculation process set forth in this chapter provides the decision-maker with a methodology for arriving at a liability amount consistent with these objectives. This process is applicable to determining administratively-adjudicated assessments as well as those obtained through settlement. In reviewing a petition challenging the use of this methodology by a Regional Water Board, the State Water Board will generally defer to the decisions made by the Regional Water Boards in calculating the liability amount unless it is demonstrated that the Regional Water Board made a clear factual mistake or error of law, or that it abused its discretion.

The following provisions apply to all discretionary administrative civil liabilities (ACLs). Mandatory Minimum Penalties (MMPs) required pursuant to California Water Code section 13385, subdivisions (h) and (i), are discussed in Chapter VII.

### **General Approach**

A brief summary of each step is provided immediately below. A more complete discussion of each step is presented later in this section.

Step 1. *Potential for Harm for Discharge Violations* – Calculate Potential for Harm considering: (1) the potential for harm to beneficial uses; (2) the degree of toxicity of the discharge; and (3) the discharge's susceptibility to cleanup or abatement.

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<sup>1</sup> When liability is imposed under California Water Code § 13385, Water Boards are statutorily obligated to recover, at a minimum, all economic benefit to the violator as a result of the violation.

- Step 2. *Per Gallon and Per Day Assessments for Discharge Violations* – For discharges resulting in violations, use Table 1 and/or Table 2 to determine Per Gallon and/or Per Day Assessments. Depending on the particular language of the ACL statute being used, either or both tables may be used. Multiply these factors by per gallon and/or per day amounts as described below. Where allowed by code, both amounts should be determined and added together. This becomes the initial amount of the ACL for the discharge violations.
- Step 3. *Per Day Assessments for non-Discharge Violations* – For non-discharge violations, use Table 3 to determine per day assessments. Multiply these factors by the per day amount as described below. Where allowed by the California Water Code, amounts for these violations should be added to amounts (if any) for discharge violations from Step 2, above. This becomes the initial amount of the ACL for the non-discharge violations.
- Step 4. *Adjustment Factors* – Adjust the initial amounts for each violation by factors addressing the violator’s conduct, multiple instances of the same violation, and multiple day violations.
- Step 5. *Total Base Liability Amount* – Add the adjusted amounts for each violation from Step 4.

Thereafter, the Total Base Liability amount may be adjusted, based on consideration of the following:

- Step 6. *Ability to Pay and Ability to Continue in Business* – If the ACL exceeds these amounts, it may be adjusted downward provided express findings are made to justify this.
- Step 7. *Other Factors as Justice May Require* – Determine if there are additional factors that should be considered that would justify an increase or a reduction in the Total Base Liability amount. These factors must be documented in the ACL Complaint. One of these factors is the staff costs of investigating the violations and issuing the ACL. The staff costs should be added to the amount of the ACL.
- Step 8. *Economic Benefit* – The economic benefit of the violations must be determined based on the best available information, and the amount of the ACL should exceed this amount. (Note that the Economic Benefit is a statutory minimum for ACLs issued pursuant to California Water Code section 13385.)
- Step 9. *Maximum and Minimum Liability Amounts* - Determine the statutory maximum and minimum amounts of the ACL, if any. Adjust the ACL to ensure it is within these limits.
- Step 10. *Final Liability Amount* – The final liability amount will be assessed after consideration of the above factors. The final liability amount and significant considerations regarding the liability amount must be discussed in the ACL Complaint and in any order imposing liability.

### **STEP 1 - Potential for Harm for Discharge Violations**

Calculating this factor is the initial step for discharge violations. Begin by determining the actual or threatened impact to beneficial uses caused by the violation using a three-factor scoring

system to quantify: (1) the potential for harm to beneficial uses; (2) the degree of toxicity of the discharge; and (3) the discharge's susceptibility to cleanup or abatement for each violation or group of violations.

***Factor 1: Harm or Potential Harm to Beneficial Uses***

The evaluation of the potential harm to beneficial uses factor considers the harm that may result from exposure to the pollutants or contaminants in the illegal discharge, in light of the statutory factors of the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of the violation or violations. The score evaluates direct or indirect harm or potential for harm from the violation. A score between 0 and 5 is assigned based on a determination of whether the harm or potential for harm is negligible (0), minor (1), below moderate (2), moderate (3), above moderate (4), or major (5).

0 = Negligible - no actual or potential harm to beneficial uses.

1 = Minor - low threat to beneficial uses (i.e., no observed impacts but potential impacts to beneficial uses with no appreciable harm).

2 = Below moderate – less than moderate threat to beneficial uses (i.e., impacts are observed or reasonably expected, harm to beneficial uses is minor).

3 = Moderate - moderate threat to beneficial uses (i.e., impacts are observed or reasonably expected and impacts to beneficial uses are moderate and likely to attenuate without appreciable acute or chronic effects).

4 = Above moderate – more than moderate threat to beneficial uses (i.e., impacts are observed or likely substantial, temporary restrictions on beneficial uses (e.g., less than 5 days), and human or ecological health concerns).

5 = Major - high threat to beneficial uses (i.e., significant impacts to aquatic life or human health, long term restrictions on beneficial uses (e.g., more than five days), high potential for chronic effects to human or ecological health).

***Factor 2: The Physical, Chemical, Biological or Thermal Characteristics of the Discharge***

The characteristics of this discharge factor are scored based on the physical, chemical, biological, and/or thermal nature of the discharge, waste, fill, or material involved in the violation or violations. A score between 0 and 4 is assigned based on a determination of the risk or threat of the discharged material, as outlined below. For purposes of this Policy, "potential receptors" are those identified considering human, environmental and ecosystem health exposure pathways.

0 = Discharged material poses a negligible risk or threat to potential receptors (i.e., the chemical and/or physical characteristics of the discharged material are benign and will not impact potential receptors).

1 = Discharged material poses only minor risk or threat to potential receptors (i.e., the chemical and/or physical characteristics of the discharged material are relatively benign or are not likely to harm potential receptors).



- 2 = Discharged material poses a moderate risk or threat to potential receptors (i.e., the chemical and/or physical characteristics of the discharged material have some level of toxicity or pose a moderate level of concern regarding receptor protection).
- 3 = Discharged material poses an above-moderate risk or a direct threat to potential receptors (i.e., the chemical and/or physical characteristics of the discharged material exceed known risk factors and /or there is substantial concern regarding receptor protection).
- 4 = Discharged material poses a significant risk or threat to potential receptors (i.e., the chemical and/or physical characteristics of the discharged material far exceed risk factors or receptor harm is considered imminent).

### ***Factor 3: Susceptibility to Cleanup or Abatement***

A score of 0 is assigned for this factor if 50% or more of the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement. A score of 1 is assigned for this factor if less than 50% of the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement. This factor is evaluated regardless of whether the discharge was actually cleaned up or abated by the violator.

### ***Final Score – “Potential for Harm”***

The scores for the factors are then added to provide a Potential for Harm score for each violation or group of violations. The total score is used in the “Potential for Harm” axis for the Penalty Factor in Tables 1 and 2. The maximum score is 10 and the minimum score is 0.

## **STEP 2 - Assessments for Discharge Violations**

For violations of NPDES permit effluent limitations, the base liability should be established by calculating the mandatory penalty required under Water Code section 13385(h) and (i). The mandatory penalty should be adjusted upward where the facts and circumstances of the violation warrant a higher liability.

This step addresses per gallon and per day assessments for discharge violations. Generally, it is intended that effluent limit violations be addressed on a per day basis only. Where deemed appropriate, such as for a large scale spill or release, both per gallon and per day assessments may be considered.

### ***Per Gallon Assessments for Discharge Violations***

Where there is a discharge, the Water Boards shall determine an initial liability amount on a per gallon basis using on the Potential for Harm score and the extent of Deviation from Requirement of the violation. These factors will be used in Table 1 below to determine a Per Gallon Factor for the discharge. Except for certain high-volume discharges discussed below, the per gallon assessment would then be the Per Gallon Factor multiplied by the number of gallons subject to penalty multiplied by the maximum per gallon penalty amount allowed under the California Water Code.

**TABLE 1 - Per Gallon Factor for Discharges**

Deviation from Requirement	Potential for Harm									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Minor	0.005	0.007	0.009	0.011	0.060	0.080	0.100	0.250	0.300	0.350
Moderate	0.007	0.010	0.013	0.016	0.100	0.150	0.200	0.400	0.500	0.600
Major	0.010	0.015	0.020	0.025	0.150	0.220	0.310	0.600	0.800	1.000

The Deviation from Requirement reflects the extent to which the violation deviates from the specific requirement (effluent limitation, prohibition, monitoring requirement, construction deadline, etc.) that was violated. The categories for **Deviation from Requirement** in Table 1 are defined as follows:

Minor – The intended effectiveness of the requirement remains generally intact (e.g., while the requirement was not met, there is general intent by the discharger to follow the requirement).

Moderate – The intended effectiveness of the requirement has been partially compromised (e.g., the requirement was not met, and the effectiveness of the requirement is only partially achieved).

Major – The requirement has been rendered ineffective (e.g., discharger disregards the requirement, and/or the requirement is rendered ineffective in its essential functions).

For requirements with more than one part, the Water Boards shall consider the extent of the violation in terms of its adverse impact on the effectiveness of the most significant requirement.

### ***High Volume Discharges***

The Water Boards shall apply the above per gallon factor to the maximum per gallon amounts allowed under statute for the violations involved. Since the volume of sewage spills and releases of stormwater from construction sites and municipalities can be very large for sewage spills and releases of municipal stormwater or stormwater from construction sites, a maximum amount of \$2.00 per gallon should be used with the above factor to determine the per gallon amount for sewage spills and stormwater. Similarly, for releases of recycled water that has been treated for reuse, a maximum amount of \$1.00 per gallon should be used with the above factor. Where reducing these maximum amounts results in an inappropriately small penalty, such as dry weather discharges or small volume discharges that impact beneficial uses, a higher amount, up to the maximum per gallon amount, may be used.

### ***Per Day Assessments for Discharge Violations***

Where there is a discharge, the Water Boards shall determine an initial liability factor per day based on the Potential for Harm score and the extent of Deviation from Requirement of the violation. These factors will be used in Table 2, below, to determine a Per Day Factor for the violation. The per day assessment would then be the Per Day Factor multiplied by the maximum per day amount allowed under the California Water Code. Generally, it is intended that effluent limit violations be addressed on a per day basis. Where deemed appropriate, such

as for a large scale spill or release, it is intended that Table 2 be used in conjunction with Table 1, so that both per gallon and per day amounts be considered under Water Code section 13385. Where there is a violation of the permit not related to a discharge incident, Step 3/Table 3 below should be used instead.

<b>TABLE 2 - Per Day Factor for Discharges</b>										
	Potential for Harm									
Deviation from Requirement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Minor	0.005	0.007	0.009	0.011	0.060	0.080	0.100	0.250	0.300	0.350
Moderate	0.007	0.010	0.013	0.016	0.100	0.150	0.200	0.400	0.500	0.600
Major	0.010	0.015	0.020	0.025	0.150	0.220	0.310	0.600	0.800	1.000

The categories for **Deviation from Requirement** in Table 2 are defined as follows:

Minor – The intended effectiveness of the requirement remains generally intact (e.g., while the requirement was not met, there is general intent by the discharger to follow the requirement).

Moderate – The intended effectiveness of the requirement has been partially compromised (e.g., the requirement was not met, and the effectiveness of the requirement is only partially achieved).

Major – The requirement has been rendered ineffective (e.g., discharger disregards the requirement, and/or the requirement is rendered ineffective in its essential functions).

For requirements with more than one part, the Water Boards shall consider the extent of the violation in terms of the adverse impact on the effectiveness of the most significant requirement.

The Water Boards shall apply the above per day factor to the maximum per day amounts allowed under statute for the violations involved. Where allowed by code, both the per gallon and the per day amounts should be determined and added together. This becomes the initial amount of the ACL for the discharge violations.

**STEP 3 - Per Day Assessments for Non-Discharge Violations**

The Water Boards shall calculate an initial liability factor for each non-discharge violation, considering Potential for Harm and the extent of deviation from applicable requirements. These violations include, but are not limited to, the failure to conduct routine monitoring and reporting, the failure to provide required information, and the failure to prepare required plans. While these violations may not directly or immediately impact beneficial uses, they harm or undermine the regulatory program. The Water Boards shall use the matrix set forth below to determine the initial liability factor for each violation. The per day assessment would then be the Per Day Factor multiplied by the maximum per day amount allowed under the California Water Code. For multiple day violations, please refer to the Adjustment Factors in Step 4, below.

Table 3 shall be used to determine the initial penalty factor for a violation. The Water Boards should select a penalty factor from the range provided in the matrix cell that corresponds to the appropriate Potential for Harm and the Deviation from Requirement categories. The numbers in parenthesis in each cell of the matrix are the midpoints of the range.

TABLE 3 - Per Day Factor			
Deviation from Requirement	Potential for Harm		
	Minor	Moderate	Major
Minor	0.1 (0.15)	0.2 (0.25)	0.3 (0.35)
	0.2	0.3	0.4
Moderate	0.2 (0.25)	0.3 (0.35)	0.4 (0.55)
	0.3	0.4	0.7
Major	0.3 (0.35)	0.4 (0.55)	0.7 (0.85)
	0.4	0.7	1

The categories for **Potential for Harm** in Table 3 are:

Minor – The characteristics of the violation present a minor threat to beneficial uses, and/or the circumstances of the violation indicate a minor potential for harm.

Moderate – The characteristics of the violation present a substantial threat to beneficial uses, and/or the circumstances of the violation indicate a substantial potential for harm. Most incidents would be considered to present a moderate potential for harm.

Major –The characteristics of the violation present a particularly egregious threat to beneficial uses, and/or the circumstances of the violation indicate a very high potential for harm. Additionally, non-discharge violations involving particularly sensitive habitats should be considered major.

The categories for **Deviation from Requirement** in Table 3 are:

Minor – The intended effectiveness of the requirement remains generally intact (e.g., while the requirement was not met, there is general intent by the discharger to follow the requirement).

Moderate – The intended effectiveness of the requirement has been partially compromised (e.g., the requirement was not met, and the effectiveness of the requirement is only partially achieved).

Major – The requirement has been rendered ineffective (e.g., discharger disregards the requirement, and/or the requirement is rendered ineffective in its essential functions).

For requirements with more than one part, the Water Boards shall consider the extent of the violation in terms of the adverse impact on the effectiveness of the most significant requirement.

For any given requirement, the Deviation from Requirements may vary. For example, if a facility does not have a required response plan or has not submitted a required monitoring report, the deviation would be major. If a facility has a prepared a required plan or submitted the required monitoring report, but significant elements are omitted or missing, the deviation would be moderate. If a facility has a required plan or submitted the required monitoring report with only minor elements missing, the deviation would be minor.

**STEP 4 – Adjustment Factors*****Violator’s Conduct Factors***

There are three additional factors that should be considered for modification of the amount of the initial liability: the violator’s culpability, the violator’s efforts to cleanup or cooperate with regulatory authorities after the violation, and the violator’s compliance history. Not all factors will apply in every liability assessment.

**TABLE 4 – Violator’s Conduct Factors**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Adjustment</b>
Culpability	Discharger’s degree of culpability regarding the violation. Higher liabilities should result from intentional or negligent violations than for accidental, non-negligent violations. A first step is to identify any performance standards (or, in their absence, prevailing industry practices) in the context of the violation. The test is what a reasonable and prudent person would have done or not done under similar circumstances.  Adjustment should result in a multiplier between <b>0.5 to 1.5</b> , with the lower multiplier for accidental incidents, and higher multiplier for intentional or negligent behavior.
Cleanup and Cooperation	Extent to which the discharger voluntarily cooperated in returning to compliance and correcting environmental damage, including any voluntary cleanup efforts undertaken. Adjustment should result in a multiplier between <b>0.75 to 1.5</b> , with the lower multiplier where there is a high degree of cleanup and cooperation, and higher multiplier where this is absent.
History of Violations	Prior history of violations. Where there is a history of repeat violations, a minimum multiplier of <b>1.1</b> should be used to reflect this.

After each of the above factors is considered for the violations involved, the applicable factor should be multiplied by the proposed amount for each violation to determine the revised amount for that violation.

***Multiple Violations Resulting From the Same Incident***

By statute, certain situations that involve multiple violations are treated as a single violation per day, such as a single operational upset that leads to simultaneous violations of more than one pollutant parameter. (Water Code § 13385, sub. (f)(1).) For situations not addressed by statute, a single base liability amount can also be assessed for multiple violations at the discretion of the Water Boards, under the following circumstances:

- a. The facility has violated the same requirement at one or more locations within the facility;
- b. A single operational upset where violations occur on multiple days;
- c. The violation continues for more than one day;

- d. When violations are not independent of one another or are not substantially distinguishable. For such violations, the Water Boards may consider the extent of the violation in terms of the most egregious violation;
- e. A single act may violate multiple requirements, and therefore constitute multiple violations. For example, a construction dewatering discharge to a dewatering basin located on a gravel bar next to stream may violate a requirement that mandates the use of best management practices (BMPs) for sediment and turbidity control, a requirement prohibiting the discharge of soil silt or other organic matter to waters of the State, and a requirement that temporary sedimentation basins be located at least 100 feet from a stream channel. Such an act would constitute three distinct violations that may be addressed with a single base liability amount.

If the violations do not fit the above categories, each instance of the same violation shall be calculated as a separate violation.

Except where statutorily required, multiple violations shall not be grouped and considered as a single base liability amount when those multiple violations each result in a distinguishable economic benefit to the violator.

### ***Multiple Day Violations***

For violations that are assessed a civil liability on a per day basis, the initial liability amount should be assessed for each day up to thirty (30) days. For violations that last more than thirty (30) days, the daily assessment can be less than the calculated daily assessment, provided that it is no less than the per day economic benefit, if any, resulting from the violation. For these cases, the Water Board must make express findings that the violation:

- a. Is not causing daily detrimental impacts to the environment or the regulatory program;
- b. Results in no economic benefit from the illegal conduct that can be measured on a daily basis; or,
- c. Occurred without the knowledge or control of the violator, who therefore did not take action to mitigate or eliminate the violation.

If one of the above findings is made, an alternate approach to penalty calculation for multiple day violations may be used. In these cases, the liability shall not be less than an amount that is calculated based on an assessment of the initial Total Base Liability Amount for the first day of the violation, plus an assessment for each five day period of violation until the 30<sup>th</sup> day, plus an assessment for each thirty (30) days of violation. For example, a violation lasting sixty-two (62) days would accrue a total of 8 day's worth of violations, based on a per day assessment for day 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and 60. Similarly, a violation lasting ninety-nine (99) days would accrue a total of 9 day's worth of violations, based on a per day assessment for day 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 60, and 90.

### **STEP 5 – Determination of Total Base Liability Amount**

The Total Base Liability Amount will be determined by adding the amounts above for each violation, though this may be adjusted for multiple day violations as noted above. Depending on the statute controlling the liability assessment for a violation, the liability can be assessed as either a per day penalty, a per gallon penalty, or both.

**STEP 6 – Ability to Pay and Ability to Continue in Business**

If the Water Boards have sufficient financial information necessary to assess the violator's ability to pay the Total Base Liability Amount or to assess the effect of the Total Base Liability Amount on the violator's ability to continue in business, the Total Base Liability Amount may be adjusted to address the ability to pay or to continue in business.

The ability of a discharger to pay an ACL is determined by its revenues and assets. In most cases, it is in the public interest for the discharger to continue in business and bring its operations into compliance. If there is strong evidence that an ACL would result in widespread hardship to the service population or undue hardship to the discharger, the amount of the assessment may be reduced on the grounds of ability to pay. For a violation addressed pursuant to California Water Code section 13385, the adjustment for ability to pay and ability to continue in business can not reduce the liability to less than the economic benefit amount.

If staff anticipates that the discharger's ability to pay or ability to continue in business will be a contested issue in the proceeding, staff should conduct a simple preliminary asset search prior to issuing the ACL complaint. Staff should submit a summary of the results (typically as a finding in the Complaint or as part of staff's initial transmittal of evidence to the discharger), in order to put some evidence about these factors into the record for the proceeding and to give the discharger an opportunity to submit additional financial evidence if it chooses. If staff does not put any financial evidence into the record initially and the discharger later contests the issue, staff may then either choose to rebut any financial evidence submitted by the discharger, or submit some financial evidence and provide an opportunity for the discharger to submit its own rebuttal evidence. In some cases, this may necessitate a continuance of the proceeding to provide the discharger with a reasonable opportunity to rebut the staff's evidence. As a general practice, in order to maintain the transparency and legitimacy of the Water Boards' enforcement programs, any financial evidence that the discharger chooses to submit in an enforcement proceeding will generally be treated as a public record.

**STEP 7 – Other Factors As Justice May Require**

If the Water Board believes that the amount determined using the above factors is inappropriate, the amount may be adjusted under the provision for "other factors as justice may require," but only if express findings are made to justify this. Examples of circumstances warranting an adjustment under this step are:

- a. The discharger has provided, or Water Board staff has identified, other pertinent information not previously considered that indicates a higher or lower amount is justified.
- b. A consideration of issues of environmental justice indicates that the amount would have a disproportionate impact on a particular disadvantaged group.
- c. The calculated amount is entirely disproportionate to assessments for similar conduct made in the recent past using the same Enforcement Policy.

**Costs of Investigation and Enforcement Adjustment**

The costs of investigation and enforcement are "other factors as justice may require", and should be added to the liability amount. These costs may include the cost of investigating the violation, preparing the enforcement action, participating in settlement negotiations, and putting on a hearing, including any expert witness expenses. Such costs are the total costs incurred by

the Water Boards enforcement or prosecution staff, including legal costs that are reasonably attributable to the enforcement action. Costs include the total financial impact on the staff of the Water Board, not just wages, and should include benefits and other indirect overhead costs.

### **STEP 8 – Economic Benefit**

The Economic Benefit Amount shall be estimated for every violation. Economic benefit is any savings or monetary gain derived from the act or omission that constitutes the violation. In cases where the violation occurred because the discharger postponed improvements to a treatment system, failed to implement adequate control measures (such as BMPs), or did not take other measures needed to prevent the violations, the economic benefit may be substantial. Economic benefit should be calculated as follows:

- a. Determine those actions required to comply with a permit or order of the Water Boards, an enforcement order, or an approved facility plan, or that were necessary in the exercise of reasonable care, to prevent a violation of the Water Code. Needed actions may have been such things as capital improvements to the discharger's treatment system, implementation of adequate BMPs, or the introduction of procedures to improve management of the treatment system.
- b. Determine when and/or how often these actions should have been taken as specified in the order or approved facility plan, or as necessary to exercise reasonable care, in order to prevent the violation.
- c. Estimate the type and cost of these actions. There are two types of costs that should be considered; delayed costs and avoided costs. Delayed costs include expenditures that should have been made sooner (e.g., for capital improvements such as plant upgrades and collection system improvements, training, development of procedures and practices) but that the discharger is still obligated to perform. Avoided costs include expenditures for equipment or services that the discharger should have incurred to avoid the incident of noncompliance, but that are no longer required. Avoided costs also include ongoing costs such as needed additional staffing from the time determined under step "b" to the present, treatment or disposal costs for waste that cannot be cleaned up, and the cost of effective erosion control measures that were not implemented as required.
- d. Calculate the present value of the economic benefit. The economic benefit is equal to the present value of the avoided costs plus the "interest" on delayed costs. This calculation reflects the fact that the discharger has had the use of the money that should have been used to avoid the instance of noncompliance. This calculation should be done using the USEPA's BEN<sup>2</sup> computer program (the most recent

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<sup>2</sup> USEPA developed the BEN model to calculate the economic benefit a violator derives from delaying and/or avoiding compliance with environmental statutes. Funds not spent on environmental compliance are available for other profit-making activities or, alternatively, a defendant avoids the costs associated with obtaining additional funds for environmental compliance. BEN calculates the economic benefits gained from delaying and avoiding required environmental expenditures such as capital investments, one-time non-depreciable expenditures, and annual operation and maintenance costs.

BEN uses standard financial cash flow and net present value analysis techniques based on generally accepted financial principles. First, BEN calculates the costs of complying on time and of complying late adjusted for inflation and tax deductibility. To compare the on time and delayed compliance costs in a common measure, BEN calculates the present value of both streams of costs, or "cash flows," as of the date of initial noncompliance. BEN derives these values by discounting the annual cash flows at an  
(Continued)



version is accessible at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/plnspols/docs/wqplans/benmanual.pdf>) unless the Water Board determines, or the discharger demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Water Board, that, based on case-specific factors, an alternate method is more appropriate for a particular situation. However, in more complex cases, such as where the economic benefit may include revenues from continuing production when equipment used to treat discharges should have been shut down for repair or replacement, the total economic benefit should be determined by experts available from the Office of Research Planning and Performance or outside experts retained by the enforcement staff.

- e. Determine whether the discharger has gained any other economic benefits. These may include income from continuing production when equipment used to treat discharges should have been shut down for repair or replacement.

The Water Boards should not adjust the economic benefit for expenditures by the discharger to abate the effects of the unauthorized conduct or discharge, or the costs to come into or return to compliance. In fact, the costs of abatement may be a factor that demonstrates the economic extent of the harm from the violation and, therefore, may be a factor in upwardly adjusting any monetary liability as a benefit from noncompliance. The discharger's conduct relating to abatement is appropriately considered under "cleanup and cooperation" liability factor.

The Economic Benefit Amount should be compared to the adjusted Total Base Liability Amount. The adjusted Total Base Liability Amount shall be at least 10 percent higher than the Economic Benefit Amount so that liabilities are not construed as the cost of doing business and that the assessed liability provides a meaningful deterrent to future violations.

### **STEP 9 – Maximum and Minimum Liability Amounts**

For all violations, the statute sets a maximum liability amount that may be assessed for each violation. For some violations, the statute also requires the assessment of a liability at no less than a specified amount. The maximum and minimum amounts for each violation must be determined for comparison to the amounts being proposed, and shall be described in any ACL complaint and in any order imposing liability. Where the amount proposed for a particular violation exceeds to statutory maximum, the amount must be reduced to that maximum. Similarly, the minimum statutory amount may require raising the amount being proposed unless there is a specific provision that allows assessment below the minimum. In such cases, the reasons for assigning a liability amount below this minimum must be documented in the resolution adopting the ACL.

### **STEP 10 – Final Liability Amount**

The final liability amount consists of the added amounts for each violation, with any allowed adjustments, provided the amounts are within the statutory minimum and maximum amounts.

The administrative record must reflect how the Water Board arrived at the final liability amount. In particular, where adjustments are made to the initial amount proposed in the ACL complaint, the record should clearly reflect the Water Board's considerations, as the staff report or complaint may not reflect those considerations, or for any adjustments that are made at hearing

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average of the cost of capital throughout this time period. BEN can then subtract the delayed-case present value from the on-time-case present value to determine the initial economic benefit as of the noncompliance date. Finally, BEN compounds this initial economic benefit forward to the penalty payment date at the same cost of capital to determine the final economic benefit of noncompliance.

that are different from those recommended in the ACL complaint or that further support the final liability amount in the administrative civil liability order.

## **B. Settlement Considerations**

The liabilities resulting from the above methodology are for adoption by the Water Boards after formal administrative proceedings. The calculated liabilities may be adjusted as a result of settlement negotiations with a violator. It is not the goal of the Enforcement Policy to address the full range of considerations that should be entertained as part of a settlement. It is appropriate to adjust the administrative civil liabilities calculated pursuant to the methodology in consideration of hearing and/or litigation risks including: equitable factors, mitigating circumstances, evidentiary issues, or other weaknesses in the enforcement action that the prosecution reasonably believes may adversely affect the team's ability to obtain the calculated liability from the administrative hearing body. Ordinarily, these factors will not be fully known until after the issuance of an administrative civil liability complaint or through pre-filing settlement negotiations with an alleged violator. These factors shall be generally identified in any settlement of an administrative civil liability that seeks approval by a Water Board or its designated representative.

Factors that should not affect the amount of the calculated civil liability sought from a violator in settlement include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. A general desire to avoid hearing or minimize enforcement costs;
2. A belief that members of a Water Board will not support a proposed liability before that Water Board has considered the specific merits of the enforcement case or a similar case;
3. A desire to avoid controversial matters;
4. The fact that the initiation of the enforcement action is not as timely as it might have been under ideal circumstances (timeliness of the action as it affects the ability to present evidence or other timeliness considerations are properly considered); or
5. The fact that a water body affected by the violation is already polluted or impaired.

Except as specifically addressed in this Policy, nothing in this Policy is intended to limit the use of Government Code 11415.60

## **C. Other Administrative Civil Liability Settlement Components**

In addition to a reduction of administrative civil liabilities, a settlement can result in the permanent suspension of a portion of the liability in exchange for the performance of a Supplemental Environmental Project (see the State Water Board's Water Quality Control Policy on Supplemental Environmental Projects) or an Enhanced Compliance Action (see Section IX).

As far as the scope of the settlement is involved, the settlement resolves only the claims that are made or could have been made based on the specific facts alleged in the ACL complaint. A settlement shall never include the release of any unknown claims or a waiver of rights under Civil Code section 1542.