

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

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT (Robert Schlipf)
MEETING DATE: April 9, 2014

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: **Nutrients from Municipal Wastewater Treatment Facilities' Discharges to San Francisco Bay; Counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara – Issuance of New NPDES Permit**

CHRONOLOGY: January 2014 – Presentation to Board on Nutrient Management Strategy for San Francisco Bay

DISCUSSION: The Revised Tentative Order (Appendix A) would establish a new NPDES permit for nutrients from all municipal wastewater treatment facilities that discharge to San Francisco Bay. This permit would cover more than 30 permittees that represent about two-thirds of the nutrient load to the Bay.

The Revised Tentative Order is a crucial first step in implementing the Nutrient Management Strategy presented in January. It would require studies to inform future Board consideration of the level of nutrient reduction that may be necessary to avoid Bay impairment and to increase the certainty that those reductions, if required at wastewater treatment plants, will produce the desired outcome. Specifically, the Revised Tentative Order would require (1) evaluation of treatment optimization and upgrade, (2) support of receiving water monitoring, modeling, and embayment studies through collaboration with other stakeholders, and (3) effluent monitoring to characterize the quantity and types of nutrient discharged.

We received nine comment letters (Appendix B) on a tentative order distributed for public review and have prepared responses to all the comments (Appendix C). The Revised Tentative Order reflects revisions made in response to comments where appropriate.

The most significant issues raised are from the San Francisco Baykeeper and the Water Contractors. These commenters asked for more specificity in the studies that would be required, in particular, the requirements for receiving water monitoring, modeling, and embayment studies. The Baykeeper and Water Contractors also asked for more opportunities for interested parties to provide input on implementation of these requirements. Both concerns will be fully addressed through a Steering Committee that we are forming to guide implementation of the Nutrient Management Strategy (see response to comment 7). This will provide a process and forum to develop details for the

studies and how they will be implemented with involvement from regional and national experts including the Baykeeper and Water Contractors.

The Water Contractors also call for nutrient load reductions to ensure that narrative water quality objectives in Suisun Bay are met. We disagree that available information supports the need for such measures at this time. While available scientific information continues to indicate that nutrient loads are a cause for concern, setting load reductions in this permit would be premature. Better scientific information is needed to determine nutrient assimilative capacities and, subsequently, what level of load reductions, if any, would be needed particularly in light of the fact that the Sacramento Regional wastewater treatment facility will reduce its nutrient load to Suisun Bay by more than 50 percent by 2020.

**RECOMMEN-
DATION:**

Adopt the Revised Tentative Order

Appendices:

- A. Revised Tentative Order
- B. Comment Letters
- C. Response to Comments