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State Water Resources Control Board

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Arnold Schwarzenegger
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NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION TO ESTABLISH MERCURY FISH TISSUE OBJECTIVES, VACATE A MERCURY WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVE, AND ESTABLISH A TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD (TMDL) FOR MERCURY IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will now accept comments on a proposed amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the San Francisco Bay Region that would establish mercury fish tissue objectives, vacate a mercury water quality objective, and establish a TMDL for mercury in San Francisco Bay. For this Basin Plan amendment, the term "San Francisco Bay" means that portion of the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta within the boundaries of the San Francisco Bay Region; Suisun Bay; Carquinez Strait; San Pablo Bay; Richardson Bay; Central San Francisco Bay; lower San Francisco Bay; and south San Francisco Bay (including the lower South Bay). The proposed amendment and the State Water Board item language are available on the State Water Board's Web site at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/tmdl/tmdl.html> or can be received by mail by contacting Joanne Cox at (916) 341-5552. The proposed amendment was adopted by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Francisco Bay Water Board) on August 9, 2006. The State Water Board expects to consider the proposed amendment in the future. Notice of that meeting will be published separately.

The San Francisco Bay does not meet water quality standards, in part due to elevated levels of mercury in water and fish tissue. The water quality objective for Bioaccumulation is: "Controllable water quality factors shall not cause a detrimental increase in concentrations of toxic substances found in bottom sediments or aquatic life. Effects on aquatic organisms, wildlife, and human health will be considered." The beneficial uses impaired by current mercury levels are: (1) Water Contact Recreation (fishing); (2) Wildlife Habitat; (3) Estuarine Habitat; and (4) Preservation of Rare and Endangered Species.

The proposed amendment establishes mercury fish tissue objectives for the protection of human health and wildlife, particularly, piscivorous birds; vacates a water quality objective for mercury; and establishes a TMDL to implement the new objectives. Sources of mercury include: legacy sediment loads from mercury mining in the San Francisco Bay area and from gold mining in the Sierra Nevada foothills; urban and non-urban storm water runoff; wastewater discharges (municipal and industrial); and sediment dredging and disposal.

The proposed amendment establishes allocations for San Francisco Bay bed erosion; the Central Valley watershed; urban storm water runoff; Guadalupe River watershed; atmospheric deposition; non-urban storm water runoff; wastewater discharges from municipal and industrial sources; and sediment dredging and disposal. The allocations are intended to implement the proposed fish tissue objectives and numeric targets for sediment. Responsible parties will be required to reduce discharge of mercury to their allocated loads. Wasteload allocations for

municipal and industrial National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitted discharges will be implemented under watershed NPDES permits.

Comment letters to the State Water Board **must be received by 12 p.m. on April 4, 2007.**

After the April deadline, State Water Board staff will not accept additional written comments unless the State Water Board determines that such comments should be accepted.

Please send comments on the proposed amendment to: Song Her, Clerk to the Board, by email at (commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov), (916) 341-5620 (fax), or addressed to State Water Resources Control Board, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Please also indicate in the subject line, "Comment Letter - Mercury TMDL in San Francisco Bay."

Please direct questions about this notice to Joanne Cox, Division of Water Quality, at (916) 341-5552 or (jcox@waterboards.ca.gov) or Senior Staff Counsel Steven H. Blum at (916) 341-5177 or (sblum@waterboards.ca.gov).

March 5, 2007

Date



Song Her
Clerk to the Board