



project clean water

## **Science and Technology TAC Basin Planning Issues Technical Workgroup**

Meeting Summary  
November 6, 2002

The Basin Plan Technical Workgroup met for the second time on November 6 to discuss the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's upcoming triennial review of its Basin Plan. Sheri McPherson, County of San Diego, opened by briefly summarizing the results of the workgroup's first meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>. A summary of the first meeting can be downloaded on the Project Clean Water website at [www.projectcleanwater.org/html/wg\\_basin\\_planning.html](http://www.projectcleanwater.org/html/wg_basin_planning.html).

At the September 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, participants agreed that one of this workgroup's primary goals should be to facilitate stakeholder education regarding the triennial review process. As a first step in this educational effort, Regional Board staff were asked to present an overview of the process in general terms.

### Regional Board Presentation

The following are important points raised by Regional Board staff (Art Coe, Dave Barker, and Lesley Dobalian) throughout the meeting:

- Triennial review and Basin Plan amendment are two distinct processes and should be seen as such. In most cases, the triennial review identifies the need for Basin Plan amendments.
- The Basin Plan consists of many different pieces. Stakeholders should focus their efforts and resources only on those pieces where they see a need for change.
- The Regional Board's most pressing need is for better water quality assessment data and information to more clearly indicate current conditions.
- Executive Officer Robertus has identified the triennial review as a goal to be completed by the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2003). A more specific schedule is unavailable at this time, but resource constraints many ultimately affect when the review is conducted.
- Only two person-years of staff resources have been devoted to Basin Plan amendment projects. This is the case regardless of the number of projects identified on the triennial review priority list.

Regional Board staff also emphasized that, as it conducts the triennial review, the following information would be useful:

- What water quality assessment data would help define current conditions and identify potential projects?
- What are the issues that stakeholders are interested in addressing?
- What are some projects to which stakeholders would be willing to devote resources?

Lesley Dobalian then provided an overview of the triennial review process. A copy of her PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from the webpage identified above. The major points of Lesley's presentation are:

- The final result of the triennial review process is a prioritized list of projects. The process can be broken down into the following steps and resulting products:
  1. Notice of intent and public solicitation for information and project proposals
  2. Preparation of a staff report. Outcome ? Draft list of projects
  3. Public hearing and comment period
  4. Resolution adoption hearing. Outcome ? Board adopts list of projects
- Existing surface water beneficial uses – those adopted on or after November 1975 – cannot be removed. Beneficial uses that do not exist may be removed only if supported by a Use Attainability Analysis (UAA) – a structured scientific analysis of the physical, chemical, biological, and economic factors affecting attainment of the use.
- Anti-degradation policies require that existing water quality be maintained, even where it is currently better than required objectives. Water quality may only be reduced in certain instances (i.e. for the maximum benefit of the people or to accommodate important social and economic development), but not lower than that required to protect existing uses.
- The Basin Plan Amendment process can be broken down into the following steps:
  1. Preparation of draft documents
  2. Scientific peer review
  3. Notice and comment period
  4. Adoption hearings
  5. Office of Administrative Law (OAL) review and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approval, if needed

## Discussion

Workgroup participants engaged Regional Board staff with a number of questions. The major points of discussion are summarized below.

- Stakeholder groups have identified problems with the total dissolved solids (TDS) beneficial use designation in the San Luis Rey Watershed (e.g. TDS objectives may be impossible to achieve given that imported drinking water is already at or above the objective. Also, achievement of the TDS objective seems to preclude agriculture as a viable land use in that it has been identified as a primary source of TDS in the watershed). It was noted that stakeholders have raised similar issues in Ramona, where an analogous conflict exists between the need for imported water and compliance with TDS objectives. It was also noted that many factors have changed since this objective was initially set (i.e. the extent of the population and land area receiving imported water). He suggested that addressing the TDS issue could conceivably be a project identified by the triennial review.
- Several participants asked about the feasibility of using grant (i.e. Prop. 40, Prop. 50, Prop. 13, etc.) funding to address Basin Plan amendment projects. Regional Board staff indicated that grant projects would indeed be considered as long as the proposal agreed with the pot of money available for the Basin Plan amendment process.
- When asked whether they have any predetermined project ideas based upon existing priorities or commitments, Regional Board staff indicated that a potential starting point would be the unaddressed projects identified during the last triennial review. They stressed, however, that all potential would be considered.

- A question was raised about how far the Regional Board would be willing to go in considering projects not specifically focused on water quality (i.e. invasive plants). Staff responded that although the state has recently decided not to include non-water quality issues on the 303(d) list, in establishing beneficial uses, there are a host of non-water quality issues that must be considered (i.e. housing and economic considerations). There was general consensus that such projects should not be discouraged during this process.
- Sheri distributed two handouts describing a few ongoing triennial review efforts in other areas (see links below). This sparked a discussion about the stakeholders' need for the Regional Board to more thoroughly illustrate the process in the context of either an ongoing or hypothetical project. Such a presentation would be the logical next step in the workgroup's goal of becoming better educated about the triennial review and in identifying where it can make an impact. The Regional Board agreed to provide a presentation at the next workgroup meeting on December 4<sup>th</sup> (see below).
- Sheri asked that participants begin to email her ideas for potential projects or where they would like to see a change in the Basin Plan. She will compile this information and present it at the December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Basin Plan Technical Workgroup is scheduled for Wednesday, December 4 (1:00-3:00 pm) at the Metro Biosolids facility. At this meeting, the Regional Board will run through a real-world scenario to demonstrate the process involved in drafting a potential project. The example used will likely be the current Regional Board effort to re-write its dissolved oxygen objective for inland surface waters.

### Links

[http://www.state.tn.us/environment/wpc/tr\\_wqs.pdf](http://www.state.tn.us/environment/wpc/tr_wqs.pdf)

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/~rwqcb8/pdf/basinplan/basinplanissues.pdf>

# **Basin Planning Issues Workgroup Meeting**

## **Attendee List for November 6, 2002**

Dave Barker, Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Art Barnett, MEC Analytical Systems, Inc.  
Dan Barnett, Pacific REMS  
Mike Cairnes, PBS&J Engineering  
Severo Chavez, BDS Engineering, Inc.  
Tracy Cline, County of San Diego  
Arthur Coe, Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Paul Davey, County of San Diego  
Arlene Dea Deeley, City of San Diego  
Lesley Dobalian, Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Karen Helyer, Port of San Diego  
Lisa Kay, MEC Analytical Systems, Inc.  
David Keith, Prism Environmental, Inc.  
Ruth Kolb, City of San Diego  
Rosanna Lacarra, MEC Analytical Systems, Inc.  
Jerry Livingston, Building Industry Association  
Sheri McPherson, County of San Diego  
Jeff Murphy, County of San Diego  
Todd Snyder, County of San Diego  
Cid Tesoro, County of San Diego  
Alan Thum, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy  
Jon Van Rhyn, County of San Diego  
Ralph Vasquez, Environmental Business Solutions, Inc.  
George Wilkins, Pacific REMS