
State Water Resources Control Board

NOTICE OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP

AMENDMENTS TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLANS FOR OCEAN WATERS AND ENCLOSED BAYS AND ESTUARIES TO ADDRESS DESALINATION FACILITIES AND BRINE DISPOSAL

June 6, 2012

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Joe Serna, Jr. - Cal/EPA Headquarters Building
Coastal Hearing Room
1001 "I" Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) has scheduled a public workshop to provide information about proposed amendments to the *Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California* (Ocean Plan) and the *Water Quality Control Plan for Enclosed Bays and Estuaries of California*. The meeting will be held at the location and time specified above.

The purpose of this meeting is to present the findings and recommendations of an expert panel on brine discharges, an expert panel on intake impacts and mitigation, and the preliminary results of a scientific study to determine the tolerance of Ocean Plan test species to various concentrations of hyper-saline brine. The public will have the opportunity to ask questions or comment during the meeting.

A quorum of State Water Board members may be present; however, no formal action will be taken by the State Water Board at the workshop.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

State Water Board staff is developing an amendment to the Ocean Plan to address issues associated with desalination facilities and the disposal of brine discharges. Desalination facilities and brine disposal was discussed as Issue No. 4 in the 2011-2013 Ocean Plan Triennial Review Workplan. The issue has been identified as very high priority for the State Water Board to address, because several new desalination facilities have been planned along the California coast to augment existing potable water supplies.

During the process of ocean desalination, salt and minerals are removed from saltwater to produce freshwater. Other projects, such as brackish groundwater desalination and wastewater treatment/recycling, also generate brine discharges. The salt, minerals, and other compounds are discharged as hyper-saline brine. Brine is denser than the receiving ocean water and, depending on discharge methods, may settle on the ocean bottom. Accumulation of brine on the seafloor may have an adverse effect on marine organisms.

Currently, the State Water Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards regulate brine discharges from these types of facilities through the issuance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits that contain conditions protective of aquatic life. However, the Ocean Plan does not yet have an objective for elevated salinity levels in the ocean, nor does it describe how brine discharges are to be regulated and controlled, leading to permitting uncertainty. The Ocean Plan also does not address possible impacts to marine life from intakes for desalination facilities.

The planned Ocean Plan amendment is currently envisioned to have the following components:

- 1) A “narrative” objective for salinity.
- 2) Provisions to minimize impacts to marine life from desalination plant intakes.
- 3) Implementation provisions for brine disposal.

Public meetings were held on April 18, 2011 and July 5, 2011, and a Scoping Meeting was held on March 30, 2012 to get input from stakeholders on relevant issues to consider during the environmental review process.

As part of the development of the amendment, staff initiated three studies to gather scientific data and get technical input and scientific recommendations on key issues. Researchers at the Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory at Granite Canyon are in the process of determining the tolerance of Ocean Plan test species to various concentrations of hyper-saline brine using established test protocols. Toxicity tests will also be conducted using a brine effluent sample from a desalination facility.

The State Water Board contracted with the Moss Landing Marine Laboratory to establish an expert panel to address issues associated with minimizing and mitigating intake impacts from power plants and desalination facilities. The panel members met on August 8, 2011, November 15, 2011, and March 1, 2012 and have finalized a report with their findings and recommendations after taking input from stakeholders.

The State Water Board also contracted with the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project to establish a panel of experts to answer key questions related to brine discharge. The panel members met on December 8–9, 2011 and March 8–9, 2012, and have finalized their findings and recommendations.

State Water Board staff anticipates that the Ocean Plan amendment will be completed in 2013.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

All relevant documents are available electronically on the State Water Board Web site at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ocean/desalination/.

SUBMISSION OF COMMENTS

Written comments are not being solicited at this time.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

At this meeting, there will be no sworn testimony or cross-examination of participants. However, the State Water Board and its staff may ask clarifying questions. At the meeting, participants will be given an opportunity to provide oral presentations. To ensure a productive and efficient public meeting in which all participants have an opportunity to participate, oral presentations may be time-limited. For other presentation recommendations, go to:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_info/meetings/board_presentations.shtml.

PARKING AND ACCESSIBILITY

For directions and parking information, please refer to:

<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/EPAbldg/location.htm>

The facilities will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals requiring special accommodations are requested to call (916) 341-5880 at least five working days prior to the meeting. Persons with hearing or speech impairments can contact us by using the California Relay Service Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD). TDD is reachable only from phones equipped with a TDD device. TDD users may contact the California Relay Service, TDD to voice (800) 735-2929 or voice to TDD (800) 735-2922.

The meeting will be Webcast live at <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/broadcast>. Approximately 15 minutes prior to the event (Pacific Time), the audio and/or video Webcast links will be added, providing a direct audio/video feed from the meeting room. Remember to test your connection prior to connecting to a Webcast. These Webcasts are generally not recorded for later use.

All visitors are required to sign in and receive a badge prior to attending any meeting in the building. The Visitor and Environmental Services Center is located just inside and to the left of the Joe Serna, Jr.- Cal/EPA Headquarters Building's public entrance. Valid picture identification may be required due to security requirements. Please allow up to 15 minutes for receiving clearance, and then proceed to the Sierra Hearing Room.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please direct questions about this notice to Ms. Joanna Jensen at (916) 341-5582 (jjensen@waterboards.ca.gov) or Ms. Maria de la Paz Carpio-Obeso, Chief of the Ocean Unit, at (916) 341-5858 (mcarpio-obeso@waterboards.ca.gov).

Date May 25, 2012

Jeanine Townsend
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Clerk to the Board