

California Bay-Delta Authority Committee
Drinking Water Subcommittee
Minutes
Meeting of February 25, 2005

The Drinking Water Subcommittee met on February 25 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm at the CALFED offices in Sacramento. Subcommittee chair Greg Gartrell welcomed the group. A list of attendees from the voluntary sign-in follows the meeting summary.

Meeting Summary

Notes from January 28, 2005

The draft notes from the January 28 meeting were approved without edits.

Program Assessment

Cindy Paulson and Sarahann Dow, Brown and Caldwell, provided the group with a review of the Draft Water Quality Program Assessment. Hard copies of the documents and handouts of the PowerPoint presentation were provided to meeting participants. Cindy stressed that the draft document is a work in progress and encouraged input from the group at any point.

They explained that the assessment is being conducted to meet the ROD commitment to "...complete initial assessment of progress toward meeting CALFED water quality targets and alternative treatment technologies." The assessment also provides an opportunity for tracking existing projects and receiving input for future program strategy.

After an introduction that explains the background of CALFED, the Water Quality Program (WQP) and Science Program Performance Measures, the report provides an assessment of existing Delta water quality. Four main sites were selected for analysis: Hood on the Sacramento River, Vernalis on the San Joaquin River, the Contra Costa intake location, and the Banks intake location. Two constituents of primary concern to the WQP, organic carbon and bromide, were measured. Dissolved organic carbon (DOC) rather than total organic carbon (TOC) was assessed because data for DOC are considered to be more accurate and representative. Data related to electrical conductivity and flow was also analyzed in the report.

Cindy showed a graph indicating that monthly measurements for DOC often exceeded the ROD TOC goal of 3 mg/L between 1997 and 2004. Some seasonality was displayed in that concentrations were higher in winter months before the snow-melt begins and lowest in summer months. Several Subcommittee members discussed DWR's "fingerprinting" analysis and recommended using or referring to this technique as an example in the report. It was noted that recent weather, run-off, and wet year versus dry year aren't the only factors to consider. Graphs representing the influence of Delta operations on TOC, including VAMP and Delta Cross Channel, were discussed.

The target for bromide was also consistently exceeded during the monitoring period at all monitoring sites except Hood on the Sacramento River. Seasonal trends were not apparent. While a tidal influence from sea water intrusion is probable, water from the San Joaquin River could also impact bromide levels when flow levels are high relative to export levels. Graphs representing the influence of Delta operations on bromide, including VAMP and Delta Cross Channel, were also reviewed. Members of the Subcommittee commented that the timing shift in

pumping to allow for fish sensitivity has had negative impacts on water quality. Bromide seems to be circulating (ocean to Delta to San Joaquin Valley back to Delta). Since the Sacramento River has low bromide levels and dilutes water in the San Joaquin River, the focus should be on the San Joaquin River for source control (both in discharges and in the salt source to the discharges). G. Fred Lee offered his opinion that the San Joaquin River Water Quality Management Work Group has not been adequately addressing the bromide concern there. Meeting participants spoke of the relationship between managing ocean salt, drainage, and bromide.

Subcommittee members suggested also focusing on pathogens and nutrients, as well as water quality implications to Franks Tract. Lynda Smith recommended that Brown and Caldwell refer to an appendix in the ROD written by Rick Woodard for an opinion on the recirculation of sea water and its implications on water quality.

Cindy explained the next section of the report: the methods of assessing projects that have received funding from the WQP or will have water quality benefits, the three levels of indicators that have been developed by the CALFED Science Program to measure progress, and the results of the project assessment. Surveys were mailed to 79 project managers; 50 were filled out and mailed back. Cindy reported that 15 projects have been completed, while 20 others are scheduled to be finished by May 2005. Over one third of the projects are benefiting waters in the San Joaquin area, one third is in the Delta, and 13% are in the Sacramento area. The remaining are in the Bay Area, southern California, or statewide. Members were very concerned that those with grants were not all responding and were firm in recommending reporting be required in all contracts.

The majority of projects fall into the source improvement category (39%), followed closely by regional planning (28%). Cindy commented that more research-oriented grants are being funded by the Regional Boards, and additional funding for treatment technology projects is needed. DWS members asked if treatment grants treat more than one constituent, and recommended developing a "priority tree" of constituents. It was cautioned not to fund or develop treatment technologies that result in greater problems than what existed before.

When reviewing the degree of implementation of the projects, numbers reflecting regional planning projects drop considerably. It is believed that this discrepancy is due to the flexible definition of "regional planning." Leah Wills reminded meeting participants that ELPH is a strategy of regional planning; they are not the same. Vicki Fry expressed concern over the lack of specificity of the performance measures. She was informed that the WQP will be continuing to develop performance standards and was encouraged to participate in that effort.

Steps to improve water quality in regards to ROD commitments were presented next. Cindy reviewed aspects of the San Joaquin Valley drainage solution, where many of the 12 funded projects have just begun their work. While the salt and boron TMBL Basin Plan Amendments are in process, there is still more work to be accomplished. The full-scale demonstration project in Panoche where agricultural drainage water is recycled using membrane technology was highlighted. With this project, the WQP has met a ROD commitment. Tim Quinn shared his observations of this pilot plant in the Grasslands Drainage District that uses salt-tolerant crops to bio-accumulate salt and then disposes of it. Although costly, reverse osmosis technology appears to be effectively applied to ag runoff. Greg Gartrell commented that more projects that benefit farmers as well as drinking water are the type of "win, win" grants that should be funded.

It was noted that source control projects are well funded and monitoring is making progress, however some uncertainties remain. The Central Valley Drinking Water Policy should be ready for adoption by 2009. Qualities of the real-time monitoring station at Vernalis (the third in the Delta) were discussed. Leah Wills commented that the CALFED Science Conference brought up the issue of organic carbon and wondered if this target should be refined. It was reported that the USGS is conducting a great deal of work on source water and it was suggested to coordinate with them to get information. The Bay Delta Keeper was recommended as another source for data. Contra Costa County's awareness program, *The Water You Play in is the Water You Drink*, was highlighted. Greg Gartrell reported on efforts to use aerial photographs to display boater locations while measuring water quality parameters to determine recreational impacts on the Delta during peak summer events.

It was asked if the difficulty in monitoring pathogens is rooted in the lack of a standard. Sarahann Dow responded that monitoring pathogens is also laborious and costly, but that the environmental engineering field is tackling the problem. G. Fred Lee commented that the USEPA has a presentation regarding pathogens on their Web site. Greg Gartrell informed the group that the gravity of illegal pathogen discharge should not be discounted; many illegal housing developments that add pathogens to the Delta are being stopped and tenants evicted.

Vicki Fry expressed her concern that many projects appear to have been approved and funded before developing standards against which they should be measured. While it is understandable that CALFED was under pressure to fund projects of "significance," the importance of establishing a baseline should not be understated. Tom Gohring encouraged DWS members to be sure that the WQ Program Plan stresses monitoring and other activities of concern to the Subcommittee so that staff has appropriate direction to take. Tim Quinn commented that some of these projects are "low hanging fruit" that can be accomplished without a baseline, similar to the Ecosystem program. When developing a baseline, it was recommended to use the expertise of DWS members.

When discussing pollution prevention and source water protection in recreational lakes with reservoirs, the study at Lake Perris near Riverside was highlighted. At this popular small southern California lake and many others like it, limiting body contact is being considered. Dave Spath noted that limiting body contact in lakes is not simply a recreational concern; the Department of Health Services has a very difficult time controlling it. Contra Costa Water District has addressed this problem with success using separated, chlorinated swimming lagoons (encased pools with sandy beaches). He noted that pathogen levels at the beach prior to building the swim lagoon would reach levels that would have shut down any ocean beach in California, but there are no standards for lakes, and they are strongly opposed by recreation groups despite the health risks. Levels are strongly correlated with the number of swimmers at the time (more people in the water means higher concentration of pathogens likely to be found).

Conclusions and recommendations for the WQP were offered by the Brown and Caldwell team in the final section of the assessment. Contracting seems to be the biggest problem and source of frustration mentioned by survey respondents. Suggestions were made to streamline the process, be realistic, and guide proposals to priority areas. A high level CALFED task force should perhaps be established to examine and resolve this problem. It was recommended to speak with John Lowrie of the CALFED Watershed Program for tips on getting grant money out quickly. It was also noted that DWR seems to distribute funds more rapidly than others; Dave Spath commented that this is most likely because DWR doesn't have to go through General Services before issuing contracts.

It was also suggested to add a feed-back requirement to all grant RFPs. Sam Harader responded that most grants do have that requirement, such as all new State Board grants. Meeting participants commented that some environmental justice applicants or smaller groups with limited resources, and even academics with limited time, might not be able or willing to handle the extra paperwork associated with contacting and feed-back.

Action Item: DWS members shall provide comments on the Draft Assessment to Lisa, Cindy and Sarahann by March 11. Brown and Caldwell will revise the report and expect to have a final version ready by March 25.

Action Item: Greg Gartrell requested that a two-page summary be provided to him to report to the BDPAC. Lisa will develop one with help from Cindy and Sarahann.

Multi-Year Program Plan

Liz Borowiec, EPA, provided a presentation to the DWS on the Multi-Year WQ Program Plan that she has been working on with Lisa. She explained that the Plan is still a work in progress and encouraged input from meeting participants. Since this is a document that is submitted annually to CALFED, Liz reviewed new aspects of the Plan, including ten criteria for approval of program plans that were adopted in June 2004. Also new is the Program Assessment component, discussed earlier by the Brown and Caldwell team. This section will provide an opportunity to fold recommendations into the Program Plan and will present WQ projects by region, subject, and ELPH area. A discussion of the 10-year Finance Plan will also be included. This will establish funding needs, move Franks Tract into the Water Quality Program and allows for the opportunity to discuss the costs of delayed funding in terms of real projects. Liz reported that there are still some issues with SJRWQMP and its role in WQP, and uncertainty in Proposition 50 funds in the Finance Plan. Baseline water quality issues in the Performance Measures Report and Program Assessment will be addressed, although the specifics of performance measures still need to be refined. Performance measures will most likely be discussed in the science or project management sections.

Other issues that are still being developed include: environmental justice and tribal outreach (a joint meeting with the EJS is scheduled for next month), the completion of the Program Assessment, the public review aspect, updates to project descriptions, and finance tables. It was noted that the WQ funding table from the Finance Plan still needs refining since there is considerable overlap between funded projects and how they are classified. Jennifer Clary offered to assist in prioritizing or ranking projects, if that is needed. While members of the DWS and public can provide Liz and Lisa with comments on the Plan through the month of May, it was requested that comments be sent by March 18th so that time can be spent discussing suggestions.

Manager's Report

Lisa informed the group that the March meeting, currently scheduled for March 25th, will overlap with the Environmental Justice Subcommittee. It will begin as a DWS meeting and then move into discussions of over-lapping concerns. Possible agenda topics include regional planning ELPH grants, Multi-Year Program Plans, and EJS Guidelines. It was suggested to look at other dates since March 25th is Good Friday. A joint meeting with the Ecosystem Restoration Program Subcommittee is being debated for either April or May. Possible agenda topics include Frank's Tract, mercury problems and dissolved oxygen concerns. Leah Wills suggested conducting outreach by publicizing the joint meetings and presentations to a broader audience.

Lisa reported that the agricultural waiver grant process was moving along. Also, she had recently met with treatment plant operators and received good feed-back from them regarding MIEX.

Public Comment

There was no comment from the public.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the DWS (overlapping with EJS) currently is scheduled for March 25, 2005. However, alternative dates will be considered since that date is Good Friday and the week of Spring Break. Lisa will coordinate with Ken McGhee of the EJS and contact DWS meeting participants to determine the best possible date.

Partial List of Attendees for the DWS Meeting 2-25-05

The following Subcommittee members participated the meeting:

1. Jennifer Clary
2. Vicki Fry
3. Greg Gartrell
4. Steve Macaulay
5. Tim Quinn
6. Leah Wills

Other meeting participants:

7. Elizabeth Borowiec
8. Bill Crooks
9. Sarahann Dow
10. Patricia Fernandez
11. Paul Gilbert-Snyder
12. Tom Gohring
13. Sam Harader
14. Lisa Holm
15. Karen Larsen
16. G. Fred Lee
17. Lee Mao
18. Ken McGhee
19. Irenia Quitiquit
20. Lynda Smith
21. Dave Spath