Delta Regional Monitoring Program
NPDES Stakeholder Meeting
16 November 2011
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Central Valley Water Board Office, Board Room
11020 Sun Center Drive #200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Meeting Participants

Lori Gabriel, Town of Discovery Bay CSD, Veolia Water
Virgil Koehne, Town of Discovery Bay CSD, Veolia Water
Kate Lundberg, Larry Walker Associates
Karen Ashby, Larry Walker Associates
Brian Laurenson, Larry Walker Associates
Jeff Wingfield, Port of Stockton
Vyomini Pandya, SRCSD
Jason Lofton, SRCSD
Linda Dorn, SRCSD
Ahmad Haya, Mountain House CSD
Nader Shareghi, Mountain House CSD
Jenny Skrel, Ironhouse Sanitation District
Casey Wichert, City of Brentwood
Erich Delmas, City of Tracy
Delia McGrath, City of Sacramento
Ken Ballard, County of Sacramento
Tony Pirondini, City of Vacaville
Charlie Swimley, City of Lodi
Debbie Webster, CVCWA
Thomas Jabusch, Aquatic Science Center
Brock Bernstein, Aquatic Science Center
Rainer Hoenicke, Aquatic Science Center
Anke Mueller-Solger, Delta Stewardship Council/IEP
Pamela Creedon, Central Valley Water Board
Ken Landau, Central Valley Water Board
Diana Messina, Central Valley Water Board
Jim Marshall, Central Valley Water Board
Jerry Bruns, Central Valley Water Board
Stephanie Fong, Central Valley Water Board
Meghan Sullivan, Central Valley Water Board

Part I

1. Welcome and Introduction (Meghan Sullivan)

Meghan reviewed the agenda and opened introductions

2. Opening Remarks (Pamela Creedon)

Key points:

- There will be a Delta RMP
- Whole region will move towards regional monitoring
- All options are on the table, including waiving all receiving water monitoring in the Delta and putting freed resources in RMP
- Timeline is 18 months for implementation of an initial program
- All regulated dischargers will be required to participate; other entities are likely to be involved as the program matures
- There's an expectation for collaboration and coordination with Delta Stewardship Council (DSC) and Interagency Ecological Program (IEP) as well as all the other entities monitoring in the Delta

Pamela also asked Anke to comment. Anke pointed to the Science Plan in the Delta Plan as a framework for coordinating science and monitoring in the Delta. The Science Plan will integrate and organize science to support adaptive management. It will also identify science and monitoring needed to support adaptive management. This will include an assessment of what's already there. The Delta Stewardship Council is looking for input from the future Delta RMP for developing the Science Plan.

3. Summary of Interview Findings & Pilot Project Ideas (Thomas Jabusch/Brock Bernstein)

Thomas highlighted key findings from the discharger interviews:

- There was general agreement to focus initially on NPDES discharge monitoring programs, because
    - They are under the direct control of the Regional Water Board and monitoring requirements can therefore readily be adjusted
    - Improving these programs will effect needed changes to monitoring
    - Working at the scale of all monitoring programs at the same time would be unwieldy
- Conducted interviews with 14 NPDES dischargers and synthesized their comments, concerns, and suggestions into several themes, in effort to identify both existing constraints and opportunities to work with dischargers, the Regional Board, and eventually additional partners on improving the monitoring system
- Main themes that emerged from the interviews
    - Questions driving regulatory monitoring are not clear
        - Opportunities:
            - Board staff and permittee work together to ensure that permits contain explicit management monitoring questions
            - Identify water quality management decisions, policies, and actions that regional water quality monitoring should inform; shift efforts accordingly from end-of-pipe to regional monitoring
    - Monitoring efficiencies
        - Inflexible monitoring requirements; requirements to monitor constituents that are unlikely to be in the effluent; inflexible design criteria, e.g. related to the selection of upstream and downstream sites; shifting definitions of background conditions have raised questions about the appropriate dataset to use in assessing discharge impacts;
        - Opportunities:
            - Develop adaptive monitoring approaches that adjust the level of monitoring effort based on results
            - Waive certain requirements and use some of the achieved cost savings to fund regional monitoring
            - Convene a workgroup to develop a common definition of background conditions to use for specific questions/assessments
        - Inflexible monitoring requirements limit the ability to apply a variety of study approaches as needed to answer questions

        - Opportunity: Redefine required monitoring to include routine compliance monitoring, special studies, and participation in regional monitoring, with options for shifting resources among the three components as needed (analogous to discharger permits in southern CA)
    - Monitoring coordination
    - Data management issues, specifically related to use and utility of the CWIQS data reporting tool
        - Goes beyond authorities of Regional Board, but there is an opportunity for dischargers and Regional Board staff to work together with the State Water board in addressing some of the issues and improving the tool. The State Water Board is committed to improving the electronic data reporting process.

4. Summary of Receiving Water Monitoring Review (Ken Landau)

Key points:

- Treatment of discharges has improved dramatically over time and many things that were concerns years ago have been resolved. That means that the level of monitoring that was needed in the past to address those concerns is no longer necessary.
- There are therefore options for reducing existing receiving water monitoring. Monitoring in the Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel is an example. There may no longer be a need for half a dozen stations.
- Significant savings can be achieved by cutting number of stations and frequency (cutting of runs).
- Although Pamela cannot simply change permits with the stroke of a pen, issues of modifying permits can be worked out. One option is to prepare a resolution to the Board for modifying several permits coming up for renewal at once. The SF Bay Region can serve as an example. So Cal provides another example.
- Logistic issues are not insurmountable
- Ken has made a start at outreach to CSPA and is trying to schedule a meeting to talk with Bill Jennings.

5. Questions

Who is the Delta RMP?

- The Delta RMP is still developing and the exact details of participants are to be determined. However, the Delta RMP is intended to involve and eventually be led by those with existing monitoring programs and significant interest in the Delta
- Linda Dorn liked the idea of a pilot project, since it helps to identify who needs to be involved. Discussing the pilot project opportunities, Karen Ashby commented that the monitoring questions would have to come first.

How can efficiency be a pilot?

- Brock explained the rationale (see Interview Discharger Findings) and pointed to a prior decision to focus the initial efforts of the Delta RMP on identifying and realizing efficiencies that would be of immediate benefit to dischargers.

What are the Regional Board's water quality management questions?

- Ken responded that the questions haven't been fully developed, but that there is a list of issues that are a priority for the Regional Board. One main question for the Board is: "Is water in the Delta in compliance with the Water Quality Control Plan?" From the Regional Board's perspective, monitoring accomplishes two things: 1) are individual dischargers causing an impact, and what is that impact? and 2) what is the overall water quality in the Delta?

Part II

1. Example Monitoring Questions and Designs

- Brock pointed to the pilot project idea for Cache Slough Complex. He asked Anke what the DSC/IEP's water quality questions would be for Cache Slough? Anke: is water quality good enough to support beneficial uses?
- Debbie Webster suggested the Delta Methylmercury TMDL as an option for a pilot project. Asked by Brock, Ken discussed the Regional Board's mercury questions. The question of where and where isn't Hg methylating is important for wetlands restoration and management. Another key question is: what is the overall budget for Hg, in terms of sources, transport, fate, and transformation?

2. Discussion of Opportunities to Improve Monitoring Designs

- To address questions about the scope and possible overlaps of the proposed pilot studies with ongoing efforts, Brock explained the concept of using them as "nodes" around which interest and involvement can be built to address issues collaboratively on a pilot scale where measurable, positive outcomes can likely be achieved soon. As "nodes", the pilots will help determine who else needs to be involved, identifying gaps and needs, steps for moving forward on a broader scale, thereby addressing issues of governance organically, at least in the interim.

3. Prioritize an Initial Set of Pilot Studies

- Linda Dorn suggested that the concept of a "node" would apply well to a pilot focused on the Delta MeHg TMDL. Brock asked Linda to comment on the value added by the Delta RMP to the Delta MeHg TMDL. Linda suggested reframing the question as: "What is the value added to the Delta MeHg TMDL by understanding Hg in the Delta?" She pointed to the other stakeholders interested in this question, specifically the parties developing the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan and, specifically, the Conservation Strategy therein, which is part of the permit requirements. Debbie Webster noted that she had already talked to other Delta MeHg TMDL stakeholders about monitoring

collaboratively.

4. Summary and Discussion of Institutionalizing New Monitoring Approaches

- Several participants had questions about a possible governance structure for the Delta RMP. The SF Bay and Southern California Bight RMPs were discussed as examples of existing models. Brock suggested another model as a third option, provided by the California Water Quality Monitoring Council, that relies on topic-focused workgroups that operate with a large degree of autonomy under a common umbrella.
- Delia McGrath suggested that it would be the Regional Board's responsibility to do a comprehensive assessment and synthesis of monitoring needs prior to issuing any new permits. She noted that Sacramento's stormwater monitoring requirements reflect a piecemeal request that reflects the specific interests of individual programs of the Regional Board at the time when the permit comes up for renewal. She asked why the Regional Board couldn't do a synthesis of monitoring needs across the region. Ken Landau cautioned that it might not be desirable for dischargers to leave defining monitoring questions and needs entirely up to the Board staff: "You don't want us to do it in isolation". Brock suggested that there would also need to be local knowledge involved. Brock proposed initiating a pilot project to define the monitoring needed to get the ambient picture, based on a hybrid monitoring design:
    1) Probabilistic: define sampling frame and sampling design. The initial step will be to define what types of waterbodies are in and out of the sampling frame.
    2) Fixed stations: where would they make sense, in relation to existing stations? All or a subset of existing IEP stations could be used as the fixed network.
- Brock achieved agreement on three initial efforts:
    1) Fix compliance monitoring
    2) Hg in the Delta, with initial governance structure(s) to be suggested by workgroup (Debbie Webster as the lead contact person)
    3) Ambient water quality monitoring plan to assess if Basin Plan Objectives are met.

5. Additional Items

- Diana Messina confirmed earlier discussion and elaborated on the types of monitoring questions the Regional Board is faced with:
    1) What is the water quality compared to water quality standards (i.e. what is the current state of the Delta)?
    2) What are the major and minor sources of current impairments (what are the major contributors)?
- Debbie Webster noted that she is looking for the Delta RMP to provide fate and transport information. She is not looking for the Delta RMP to coordinate TMDL implementation activities.

6. Determine Next Steps and Additional Workgroup Meeting Dates

- Debbie Webster to consult with Delta MeHg Stakeholders about designating a lead for a Delta RMP Mercury Workgroup. Will use the Delta RMP Governance strawman

proposal as a working draft in order to get a sense from stakeholders what is required to herd cats and lead the effort.

- Brock and Thomas to
    a. Work with Regional Board staff to develop a "back-of-envelope" ambient monitoring plan and define the monitoring questions
    b. Work with Regional Board staff and dischargers on monitoring efficiency pilot projects
        i. Highlight 2-3 examples of permit issues to review with Regional Board staff
        ii. Work with dischargers to identify proposed changes based on question-driven, probabilistic monitoring design
- Meghan to schedule next Delta RMP meeting