

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
JANUARY 15, 2008**

ITEM 6

SUBJECT

CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE LOS ANGELES REGION (BASIN PLAN) TO INCORPORATE SITE-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR AMMONIA IN SELECT WATERBODIES OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER, LOS ANGELES RIVER, AND SAN GABRIEL RIVER WATERSHEDS

DISCUSSION

The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan amendment for site-specific objectives (SSOs) for ammonia for the Los Angeles Region was adopted on June 7, 2007 as [Resolution No. 2007-005](#). The purpose of this proposed Basin Plan amendment is to take into account ionic composition in local receiving waters to develop site-specific 30-day average objectives for a subset of inland surface waters in three watersheds in the Los Angeles Region (Santa Clara, Los Angeles, and San Gabriel River). By taking into account ionic composition, the site-specific objectives for these water bodies are intended to fully protect beneficial uses at these sites, and more closely approach U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA's) and the Los Angeles Water Board's intended level of protection than the current regional objectives.

When developing its recommended water quality criteria for ammonia, USEPA reviewed data regarding the relationship of ammonia toxicity to various physicochemical properties of the laboratory water. USEPA concluded that ammonia toxicity can depend on the temperature, pH, hardness, and ionic composition of the water, but the effects of hardness and ionic composition, in particular, were not clear and consistent enough to take it into account in the national criteria. In its 1999 update of the national ammonia criteria, USEPA stated, "there is still insufficient understanding and information to account for these effects in the criterion and they will have to be addressed using water-effect ratios or other site-specific approaches."

Specifically, studies cited in USEPA's 1999 update indicate that ammonia toxicity may be reduced in water bodies with high hardness and elevated concentrations of certain ions. The hardness and ionic concentrations of many water bodies in the Los Angeles Region are much higher than concentrations found in the laboratory water used in the national studies that were the basis for the national ammonia criteria.

Prior to updating the ammonia objectives in 2002, the Basin Plan contained ammonia objectives based on USEPA's 1985 recommended criteria. The Los Angeles Water Board recognized that significant upgrades to treatment facilities at publicly owned treatment works might be needed to achieve the new objectives. As a result, the Los Angeles Water Board included in the Basin Plan a compliance schedule of up to eight years to achieve the ammonia objectives or to develop SSOs for ammonia. The proposed objectives are generally less stringent than, or equal to, the current objectives; therefore, a compliance schedule for the revised objectives is not being proposed. When the Los Angeles Water Board updated the ammonia objectives in 2002, it retained language supportive of developing ammonia SSOs.

In the recent past, and in subsequent years, the Los Angeles Water Board will consider several Total Maximum Daily Loads for nitrogen compounds, including ammonia. Adoption of this Basin Plan amendment will revise the Los Angeles Water Board 30-day average ammonia water quality objective for select water bodies based on local conditions. By adopting the most appropriate objectives based on local conditions, the Los Angeles Water Board will facilitate and strengthen future TMDL development and implementation and permit issuance in these water bodies.

POLICY ISSUE

Should the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) approve the amendment to the Basin Plan to adopt SSOs for ammonia for the Los Angeles Region, as adopted under Los Angeles Water Board [Resolution No. 2007-005](#)?

FISCAL IMPACT

Los Angeles Water Board and State Water Board staff work associated with or resulting from this action will be addressed with existing and future budgeted resources.

REGIONAL WATER BOARD IMPACT

Yes, approval of this resolution will amend the Basin Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the State Water Board:

1. Approves the amendment to the Basin Plan as adopted under Los Angeles Water Board [Resolution No. 2007-005](#).
2. Authorizes the Executive Director or designee to submit the amendment adopted under Los Angeles Water Board [Resolution No. 2007-005](#) to the Office of Administrative Law for approval of the regulatory provisions and to USEPA for approval of the Basin Plan amendment.

DRAFT

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2008-

APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN
FOR THE LOS ANGELES REGION (BASIN PLAN) TO INCORPORATE
SITE-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR AMMONIA IN SELECT WATERBODIES OF THE
SANTA CLARA RIVER, LOS ANGELES RIVER, AND SAN GABRIEL RIVER WATERSHEDS

WHEREAS:

1. On June 7, 2007, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (Los Angeles Water Board) adopted Resolution No. 2007-005 ([Attachment](#)) amending the Basin Plan to adopt site-specific objectives (SSOs) for ammonia.
2. The Los Angeles Water Board found that the environmental documents of the draft amendment language, staff report, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) checklist prepared by Los Angeles Water Board staff complies with the requirements of the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board's) certified regulatory CEQA process, as set forth in the California Water Code of Regulations, Title 23, section 3775 et seq.
3. The Los Angeles Water Board found that adoption of this amendment would result in no adverse effect on wildlife, and the amendment would be consistent with the State Antidegradation Policy ([State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16](#)) and federal antidegradation requirements.
4. The State Water Board finds that the Basin Plan amendment is in conformance with the Water Code section 13240, which specifies that Regional Water Quality Control Boards may revise Basin Plans, section 13241, which specifies what needs to be considered when establishing water quality objectives, and section 13242, which requires a program of implementation of water quality objectives. The State Water Board also finds that the amendment is consistent with the requirements of the federal Clean Water Act section 303(c).
5. This amendment to the Basin Plan incorporates site-specific 30-day average objectives for ammonia along with corresponding site-specific early life stage implementation provisions for select water body reaches and tributaries in the Santa Clara, Los Angeles, and San Gabriel River watersheds. These site-specific 30-day average objectives and corresponding site-specific early life stage implementation provisions shall replace the previously applicable regional 30-day average objective for the affected water body reaches. This amendment will not change the regional one-hour average objective for these water bodies.
6. The adoption of SSOs for ammonia is part of a comprehensive strategy for addressing nitrogen impairments in the Santa Clara and Los Angeles River watersheds, which includes development and implementation of a Total Maximum Daily Load and corresponding effluent and receiving water limitations in National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits.

D R A F T

7. This amendment must be submitted for review and approval by the State Water Board, the State Office of Administrative Law (OAL), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The Basin Plan amendment will become effective upon approval by OAL and USEPA.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The State Water Board:

1. Approve the amendment to the Basin Plan as adopted under Los Angeles Water Board [Resolution No. 2007-005](#).
2. Authorizes the Executive Director or designee to submit the amendment adopted under Los Angeles Water Board [Resolution No. 2007-005](#) to OAL for approval of the regulatory provisions and to USEPA for approval of the Basin Plan amendment.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned Acting Clerk to the Board does hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of a resolution duly and regularly adopted at a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board held on January 15, 2008.

Jeanine Townsend
Acting Clerk to the Board