

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S SUMMARY REPORT
10:00 a.m., January 17, 2008
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
Hearing Room
5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA

ITEM: 4

SUBJECT: Workshop on the Draft Work Plan to Control Excess Sediment in Sediment-Impaired Watersheds.

DISCUSSION

Overview

The Draft Work Plan to Control Excess Sediment in Sediment-Impaired Watersheds (Work Plan) describes the actions and tasks Regional Water Board staff are currently taking and intend to take over the next ten years, as resources allow, to reduce and control human-caused excess sediment in the sediment-impaired water bodies of the North Coast Region. The Work Plan is a staff-level planning tool and is designed to be a living document that will be updated as conditions change.

The Draft Work Plan includes:

- Thirty-three regional tasks and many watershed-specific tasks.
- Priority rankings for each regional task and for each watershed.
- A ten year timeline for executing the tasks, assuming resources are available.
- An estimate of the resources and staff needed.

Applicability

The Work Plan focuses on the following twenty-seven water bodies that are listed as sediment impaired per the 2006 303(d) List. Approximately 61% of the North Coast Region drains to these sediment-impaired water bodies.

Albion River	Estero Americano	Noyo River
Big River	Freshwater Creek	Redwood Creek
Eel River, North Fork	Garcia River	Russian River
Eel River, Middle Fork	Gualala River	Scott River
Eel River, South Fork	Jacoby Creek	Stemple Creek & Estero de
Eel River, Upper Mainstem	Klamath River (downstream	San Antonio
Eel River, Middle Mainstem	of Weitchpec)	Ten Mile River
Eel River, Lower Mainstem	Mad River	Trinity River, Mainstem
Eel River, Van Duzen River	Mattole River	Trinity River, South Fork
Elk River	Navarro River	

What is Excess Sediment?

Excess sediment is soil, rock, and/or sediments (e.g., sand, silt, or clay) from human related activities that is discharged to waters of the state in an amount that could be deleterious to beneficial uses or cause a nuisance. Some of the most sensitive beneficial uses to high sediment loads are associated with the migration, spawning, reproduction, and early development of cold water fish such as coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and steelhead trout. Besides harming aquatic life, excess sediment can limit the use of water for domestic consumption, agriculture, industry, wildlife, fishing, and recreation, and can cause or contribute to flooding. Excess sediment can also result in the exceedence of water quality objectives for suspended material, settleable material, sediment, and turbidity.

Task Priorities and Funding Needs

As described in the Draft Work Plan, staff intend to work first on sediment control tasks that are currently funded over the next few years. As more funding becomes available, staff intend to work on developing regional tasks and on outreach and education. In general, staff intend to execute regional tasks before watershed-specific tasks if staff resources are not fully funded, starting with the highest priorities. Staff also intend to take advantage of opportunities with willing partners, consortiums, and watershed groups as they become available.

The Draft Work Plan identifies the need for an estimated 19.2 additional permanent technical staff, plus more support staff (e.g., clerical), to execute all the tasks listed in the Work Plan in the next ten years, and thereby reduce excess sediment and improve water quality.

Public Comments

The written comment period for the Draft Work Plan ended on December 14, 2007. Staff received twenty-three comment letters. Almost all the letters include suggested changes and clarifications to the Draft Work Plan, most of which are minor in scope. Nine letters explicitly support the Work Plan. None of the letters oppose the Work Plan as a whole.

Next Steps

The Public Review Draft Work Plan was released November 14, 2007. The workshop at the January 17, 2008 Board Meeting will include examples of the implementation of the Work Plan, and for the opportunity for input to the plan. Staff are currently incorporating changes based on public and Board Member comments. Staff also are preparing a written response to the written public comments received. Staff intend to present the final Work Plan to the Regional Water Board at the March 6, 2008 Board Meeting in Fortuna, CA, along with a resolution for the Board's consideration directing staff to execute the sediment control tasks listed in the Work Plan.

PRELIMINARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

No Regional Water Board action is recommended at this time, as this is an informational item.