

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
Thursday, October 17, 2019
Regional Water Board Office
Santa Rosa, California

ITEM: 5

SUBJECT: Update on the State Water Board's Emergency Management Program (Katheryn Landau, Sarah Ries, and John Elkins, Office of Research, Planning and Performance, State Water Resources Control Board)

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item; no action will be taken by the Board.

BACKGROUND: The 2017 and 2018 wildfires were the largest, most destructive, and deadliest in California history. From a water quality perspective, wildfire response is broad and multifaceted—affecting human health, the environment, and agency operations. The 2017 California State Emergency Plan tasks the State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (collectively the Water Boards) with assisting public water systems to provide a reliable, adequate and safe drinking water source; advising water systems and the public of emergency situations (including issuing unsafe water notices); and monitoring water quality.

Following the 2017 wildfire season, the Water Boards established the Emergency Response Technical Working Group (ERTWG) to improve and support the Water Boards' preparedness to respond to, and support recovery from, wildfires and other emergency events. It is composed of State and Regional Water Boards staff, including staff from the North Coast Region, and has been meeting consistently since its inception.

DISCUSSION: Emergency response is a multifaceted effort that requires coordination, collaboration, communication, and cooperation over a wide range of disciplines to provide the rapid response necessary for long-term recovery to take place. The ERTWG serves as a centralized resource and supports the Water Boards' coordinated emergency response actions. The ERTWG's primary goal is to develop and improve the Water Boards' preparedness to respond to and support recovery from disasters, including:

- Protecting public health
- Maintaining staff safety
- Minimizing damage to the environment
- Lessening economic impacts

ERTWG's significant accomplishments included the development of emergency response resources and has culminated in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Toolkit (EmPART). EmPART is an internal web-based platform that serves

as the central repository for staff emergency response resources, including the Water Boards' Emergency Operations Center.

In 2019, the Water Boards were provided with six positions specifically designated to develop and maintain emergency response management tools, coordinate emergency response training and exercises, and support staff in responding to emergency events. This new Emergency Response Program unit is located in Sacramento in the Office of Research, Planning and Performance.

This informational item introduces the ERTWG's current work and future goals, the functionality and capabilities of EmPART, and the new Emergency Management Program. Staff will also highlight actions taken to address drinking water and water quality impacts from the 2018 wildfire season.

Recommendation: N/A

Supporting Documents: None