

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
Thursday, December 10, 2015
Hopland Research & Extension Center
Hopland, CA 95449, CA

ITEM: 1

SUBJECT: Strategic Planning Discussion (*Matt St. John*)

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item. No action will be taken by the Regional Water Board.

BACKGROUND: This is an informational item to discuss strategic planning and to prioritize the work of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board over the next few years in carrying out its mission of preserving, protecting, restoring, and enhancing the waters of the north coast region. At the January 29, 2015 Board meeting the Executive Officer reported on key outcomes of a strategic visioning process completed by staff of the North Coast Regional Water Board. Fundamental to this visioning process was the development of a vision statement for the Regional Water Board:

Healthy Watersheds,
Effective Regulation,
Strong Partnerships.

In addition to implementing a new organization chart and cultivation of cross-program teams, the visioning process identified key strategic directions for the organization, including both ongoing priorities and new initiatives. The identified strategic directions have been formed into the following strategic teams:

- Addressing the impacts of reduced surface water flows on water quality and beneficial uses;
- Protecting and restoring aquatic habitat at the watershed scale;
- Addressing groundwater quality at the groundwater basin scale;
- Implementing the watershed stewardship approach; and
- Improving the enforcement capabilities of the organization.

At the January 29, 2015 Board meeting, members of the Board expressed support for these strategic directions and expressed an interest in having a Board discussion on regional priorities and strategic planning for the Regional Water Board.

DISCUSSION: To facilitate the Board's strategic planning discussion, staff will provide a presentation covering the following topics:

- Organizational structure of the Regional Water Board (Attachment A);
- Programmatic functions and responsibilities of each unit (Attachment B);

- Current staff funding for each unit and program (Attachment C);
- Current programmatic work commitments;
- Progress of the five strategic teams: Flow; Aquatic habitat protection and restoration; Groundwater; Watershed stewardship; and Enforcement; and
- Staff's key priorities for 2016.

Staff's key priorities for 2016 can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ Board consideration of general WDRs for Discharges of Wine, Beverage, and Food Processor Waste to Land;
- ✓ Board consideration of Sediment TMDL and WDR for timber operations in Elk River watershed;
- ✓ Board consideration of Russian River Watershed Pathogen Indicator Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load and Action Plan;
- ✓ Board consideration of Outstanding National Resource Waters designation for Smith River;
- ✓ Implementation of Cannabis waste discharge regulatory program; and
- ✓ Implementation of Russian River watershed MS4 permit and development of Russian River Regional Monitoring Program.

Setting priorities for the Regional Water Board requires identifying the highest water quality concerns the north coast region facing on a program-by-program basis, recognizing any legal mandates that drive implementation of the programs, and ensuring that each division's funding is appropriately applied based on the source of that funding. In other words, while the water quality concerns of all programs vary, we are limited in our ability to move funds between funding sources. Additionally, we recognize that we need to address new and evolving water quality issues, such as climate change and contaminants of emerging concern, but our funding sources may limit how we address those issues in the near term. Our current funding is largely based on a reactive identification of water quality concerns and legal mandates over many years. Attachment D summarizes the annual budget process the Regional Water Boards are subject to and demonstrates why our funding does not "react" quickly to new and evolving issues. As part of summarizing our priorities, it also becomes clear that our funding limits our ability to fully address known water quality issues at one time. Nonetheless, the Board does have some flexibility as to how we allocate our funding, and over time shifts in fund allocations can shape the work that the Regional Water Board conducts.

The intent of this informational item is for the Board, Board staff, and stakeholders to discuss strategic planning and priorities in an open session.

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

**SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:**

Attachment A: Organizational Chart
Attachment B: Unit Programs, Permits, and Functions
Attachment C: Program Fund Allocations
Attachment D: Annual Budget Process