



State Water Resources Control Board

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STATE WATER BOARD ISSUES DRAFT POLICY TO PROTECT FISH AND MAMMALS AT COASTAL POWER PLANTS

Proposal Would Protect Electric Grid Reliability and Save Marine Life

SACRAMENTO-- The State Water Resources Control Board today issued a draft policy for 19 California coastal, electric power plants (including nuclear plants) that use once-through-cooling water intake systems. The draft policy gives system owners/operators several compliance choices such as dry cooling and reduced water cooling. It is the result of collaboration with energy agencies that has resulted in recommendations to ensure electric supply reliability and the use of best technologies to protect marine life.

Currently, a large numbers of fish, larvae, seals, sea lions and turtles, are killed each year in California due to the once-through-cooling process in which the power plants collectively draw about 16 billion gallons of water a day to cool equipment turbines and return hot water to the ocean.

In developing this policy, State Water Board staff has met regularly with representatives from the California Energy Commission (CEC), the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the California State Lands Commission, the California Air Resources Board, and the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) to develop realistic implementation plans and schedules.

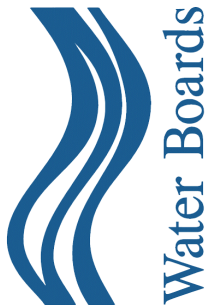
Executive Director Dorothy Rice commented, "The State Water Board staff's intent with this draft policy is to assure that California's coastal waters are protected while making certain that essential electrical power is available to Californians."

The draft policy can be found at

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/npdes/cwa316.shtml.

Proposed changes include that an owner or operator of an existing once-through-cooling plant must:

- reduce each unit's intake flow rate to a level that is commensurate with a closed-cycle, wet cooling system by a minimum of 93% or, if that is not feasible,



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- use operational or structural controls, or both to reduce impingement mortality and entrainment of all life stages of marine life for the facility, as a whole at a comparable level to a closed-cycle wet cooling system.

(“Impingement” occurs when marine life is trapped against an intake structure. “Entrainment” is when it is trapped in the flow of water into the cooling system.)

Once a policy takes effect, an owner or operator of an existing power plant with an offshore intake has up to one year to install large organism (mammal) exclusion devices.

The *Clean Water Act* (Section 316 (b)) requires that the location, design, construction and capacity of cooling water intake structures reflect the best technology available for minimizing adverse environmental impact.

Beginning five years after the policy’s effective date, the owner or operator of an existing power plant must implement measures to lessen marine life impingement and entrainment – and must continue to do so until full compliance is achieved.

