

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
April 14, 2021**

ITEM 3

SUBJECT

Information Item: Sediment Cleanup and Department of Navy (Navy) Dredging Update for San Diego Bay. (*Sean McClain*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational item and the Board will not take an action.

KEY ISSUES

San Diego Bay is the third largest natural bay along California's coastline and is a high priority water body due to its ecological value. The San Diego Water Board's Site Cleanup and Department of Defense Programs have aligned their work to focus on the investigation and cleanup of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) found in Bay sediments. To protect and restore the health of the Bay, contaminated sediment removal projects must implement best management practices (BMPs), to achieve appropriate cleanup levels and prevent the migration of contaminated sediments during dredging.

San Diego Water Board staff developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Navy that establishes standard receiving water limitations, monitoring requirements, and BMPs for dredging operations in areas with elevated PCB concentrations. The Navy plans to conduct significant maintenance dredging in the Bay over the next five years. The Navy anticipates the dredging activities will include the removal of PCB contaminated sediments from the Bay, which will require the sediments to be disposed at a regulated landfill (upland disposal). The MOA will expedite the issuance of Water Quality Certifications for these projects by standardizing many of the requirements. Board and Navy staff estimate the MOA will be completed by May 2021.

PRACTICAL VISION

This item is consistent with the goals of the *Strategizing for Healthy Waters* Chapter of the Practical Vision. This chapter is dedicated to ensuring that Board staff, funding, authority, tools, and influence are directed to the best possible use for the purpose of protecting and restoring the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters in the San Diego Region.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this item is to provide information to the Board and the public regarding Bay sediment cleanups and collaboration efforts with the Navy to develop an MOA for Navy dredging operations. Representatives from the Navy will present information to the Board on its maintenance dredging projects and programs to enhance water quality and marine biology in the Bay.

San Diego Water Board Update

San Diego Bay is a high priority water body due to its ecological value and because it supports commercial and subsistence fishing, recreation, tourism, and a variety of maritime, industrial, commercial, and military uses. The Board is obligated to protect all designated Beneficial Uses and acknowledges that the key uses of recreation, human consumption of fish and shellfish, and healthy habitats and ecosystems are of the highest priority for addressing water quality in the Bay. The Board endorsed the implementation of the *Strategy for a Healthy San Diego Bay* (Strategy) at its meeting in June 2015. The Strategy guides Board staff in making the most efficient and effective use of its resources when taking actions to protect and restore the health of the Bay.

The San Diego Water Board's Site Cleanup and Department of Defense regulatory programs have aligned their work to focus on the investigation and cleanup of contaminated Bay sediments. These projects primarily focus on areas where historical discharges of PCBs occurred from ship manufacturing, repair operations, and other manufacturing facilities around the Bay (Supporting Document 1).

The Navy plans to conduct significant maintenance dredging in the Bay over the next five years. Therefore, the Board developed an MOA with the Navy that establishes standard receiving water limitations, monitoring requirements, and BMPs in areas with elevated PCB concentrations in sediments, which will be required to be designated for upland disposal. The MOA requirements will expedite the issuance of Water Quality Certifications for these dredge projects by standardizing many of the Board's requirements. Board and Navy staff estimate the MOA will be completed in April/May 2021.

Department of Navy Update

The Navy conducts various projects within the Bay that: 1) cleanup contaminated sediments; 2) involve navigational maintenance dredging; 3) involve dredging to support pier repair or replacement activities; and 4) enhance water quality and improve natural resource management and monitoring.

Throughout the last 20 years the Navy has conducted sediment investigations and cleanups at various locations throughout San Diego Bay. All of these cleanup efforts have involved both the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) as well as the San Diego Water Board staff, who acted to ensure these cleanup efforts are protective of the residents of the state and ecological health. Examples of these

cleanups have occurred at outfall areas at Naval Base Coronado, the Naval Training Center, Boat Basin, and sediment sites near Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Coronado. The Navy also participated in other cleanup efforts primarily managed by other entities, recently initiated an investigation of sources contamination at Naval Base San Diego, and is planning to evaluate chemicals in sediment at Naval Base San Diego. Also, as part of its cleanup efforts on the terrestrial portions of its bases, the Navy has installed remedies that prevent discharges to the Bay.

Additionally, the Navy conducts various maintenance dredging operations and has conducted dredging operations in support of pier repair or replacement to maintain safe navigation and berthing and support new ship arrivals. Over the last five years the Navy has conducted maintenance dredging at Naval Base Point Loma (NBPL), Naval Base San Diego (NBSD), and Naval Base Coronado, and as part of those efforts has removed contaminated sediment from the Bay. During these operations the Navy staff worked with San Diego Water Board staff in identifying and implementing BMPs to prevent degradation to water quality in the Bay. Over the next several years the Navy will initiate several maintenance dredging efforts at NBSD and NBPL.

In July of 2020, a devastating fire occurred on the USS Bonhomme-Richard which was ported at NBSD. During the fire, which lasted four days, the Navy employed various methods to control, contain, and put out the fire. San Diego Water Board staff and Navy collaborated on water quality sampling both during the event and following the fire to help better understand the potential impacts to the Bay.

The Navy has developed an Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) for San Diego Bay. This plan is consistent with the military mission while providing for sustainable multipurpose uses and conservation of natural resources per the Conservation Programs on Military Installations (“Sikes Act”). This plan is a collaborative document that is developed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Port of San Diego, and state conservation agencies, and identifies projects that will be implemented to enhance water quality, marine biology, essential fish habitat, and address mechanisms to jointly manage for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. The INRMP is implemented jointly between the Navy and the Port of San Diego. Over past decades, the Navy has funded several efforts in the Bay. Representative projects facilitated under the INRMP include surveys and monitoring of green sea turtles, marine mammals, fishes, invasive species, and seabirds. Efforts to support wildlife assist and rehabilitation of sick and injured wildlife are also included in the San Diego Bay INRMP projects. In addition, the Navy, through partnership with the Port of San Diego, has increased eelgrass extent in San Diego Bay through mitigation banks which have positively affected water quality. The success of the Navy’s eelgrass program has become a state-wide model for implementation. Over the last 20 years the Navy has made a sustained effort to improve water quality during pier repair or replacement projects through the removal and replacement of creosote pilings with inert materials such as concrete or jacketed piles. Finally, the Navy has implemented other projects such as trash removal from the

shorelines and beaches of the Bay that removed of tons of trash and the successful creation of submerged reefs.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This item was publicly noticed in the Meeting Notice and Agenda for the April 14, 2021 meeting. The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. San Diego Bay Map