

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

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
August 10, 2022**

**ITEM 7**

**SUBJECT**

A Sediment Investigation and Cleanup Update for San Diego Bay (Sarah Mearon)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Informational item only; no recommendation.

**KEY ISSUE**

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) and other contaminants of concern found in Bay sediments. Board staff have also developed a successful partnership with the Unified Port of San Diego (Port) to work cooperatively on past and ongoing sediment projects in San Diego Bay. To protect and restore the health of the Bay, contaminated sediment mitigation and removal projects must implement the Sediment Quality Provisions of the Water Quality Control Plan for Enclosed Bays and Estuaries of California Sediment Quality Provisions (Sediment Quality Provisions).

**PRACTICAL VISION**

Continued implementation of the Strategy for a Healthy San Diego Bay is an important component of Chapter 1 (Strategize for Healthy Waters) of the Practical Vision. The Strategy helps the Board focus on the highest priorities and align its work toward achieving the most important goals for San Diego Bay. The Strategy also implements Chapter 2 (Monitor and Assess) of the Practical Vision.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this item is to provide an opportunity for the San Diego Water Board and members of the public to learn about the ongoing sediment investigation and cleanup projects overseen by Board staff in San Diego Bay at military and non-military sites. This item will also include a presentation by the Port on (1) recent projects and innovative technologies being implemented in and around San Diego Bay, (2) the Regional Harbor Monitoring Program's assessment of the water, sediment, and marine ecosystems, and (3) recent studies and modeling efforts coordinated with the San Diego Water Board's sediment cleanup projects as well as the dissolved copper total maximum daily load (TMDL) in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin.

San Diego Bay is a high-priority water body in the San Diego region because it supports fishing, recreation, tourism, and a variety of maritime, commercial, and military uses. Restoring the fish and shellfish consumption key beneficial use in San Diego Bay is a high priority for San Diego Water Board staff. Advisories have been issued for the Bay because

of contaminant levels found in several aquatic species that may be consumed. The advisories recommend limits on the amount of several aquatic species that can be consumed safely for the protection of human health. There are also several underrepresented communities located very close to the Bay. Available data and information indicate members of these communities are consuming fish and shellfish from the Bay on a regular basis, which may disproportionately impact the health of these communities. Therefore, restoring this key beneficial use is important for the protection of human health, especially for these underrepresented communities. This informational item will summarize for the Board the sediment investigation and remediation work the San Diego Water Board's Department of Defense program and Site Cleanup Program have implemented and are planning to implement to help restore the fish and shellfish consumption key beneficial use.

### **Department of Defense Program Update**

The San Diego Water Board's Department of Defense regulatory program continues to focus on the investigation and remediation of Installation Restoration Program (IRP) sites discharging into the Bay and cleanup of Bay sediments. These projects primarily focus on areas where historical discharges of petroleum, chlorinated solvents, and slag waste (metallic scrap) have occurred in shoreline sediments. The San Diego Water Board's oversight of IRP sites is conducted pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

In 2021, the Board and the U.S. Department of the Navy developed and signed a [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) to establish agreed-upon duties and responsibilities related to Navy navigational maintenance dredging in San Diego Bay at Naval Base San Diego, Naval Base Point Loma, and Naval Base Coronado. The MOA establishes standard receiving water limitations, monitoring requirements, and best management practices in areas with elevated PCB concentrations in sediments, which are required to be designated for upland disposal. The Navy has used the MOA criteria when preparing and issuing Water Quality Certifications for Naval Base San Diego sediment dredging projects.

### **Site Cleanup Program Update**

The San Diego Water Board's Site Cleanup Program (SCP) currently oversees implementation of the Sediment Quality Provisions at several active sediment cleanup sites in San Diego Bay. The Sediment Quality Provisions integrate chemical and biological measures to determine if sediment-dependent biota are protected or degraded because of exposure to toxic pollutants in sediment. The Sediment Quality Provisions include (1) narrative Sediment Quality Objectives (SQOs), (2) identification of the beneficial uses that the SQOs are intended to protect, and (3) a program of implementation for each SQO. The SCP regulates several sediment projects in the northern and central areas of San Diego Bay, all of which are in different stages of investigation and cleanup and abatement. These projects operate under enforcement orders issued to Dischargers responsible for the discharges of wastes to sediments within and adjacent to the areas of concern.

### **Port of San Diego Update**

The Port is a specially created public benefit corporation and special district, balancing multiple uses along 34 miles of San Diego Bay spanning five cities: San Diego, Chula Vista, National City, Imperial Beach, and Coronado. Created in 1962 for the people of the

State of California, it is the duty of the Port to oversee public and private investment on the tidelands in a manner that best serves the public trust and is consistent with the Port Act, the California Coastal Act (for the portion of the Port in the coastal zone), and the Public Trust Doctrine. In this role, the Port develops, manages, and promotes commerce, navigation, fisheries, recreation, and environmental stewardship for San Diego Bay in accordance with those governing doctrines.

Protecting San Diego Bay and its valuable resources is an important component of the Port's mission. The Port has developed several comprehensive programs dedicated to Bay health assessment, natural resource management, climate change and resiliency, environmental compliance, and environmental education. These programs protect and enhance the Bay's habitats, ecosystems, and marine life, and ensure the sustainability of the Bay.

**LEGAL CONCERNS**

None.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

None.