



Delta Tributaries Mercury Council

~ Meeting Minutes ~

Tuesday, 5 February 2008

12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District

Conference Room 162

Mather, CA

Facilitator: Stephen McCord, LWA

Meeting Minutes by: Stephen McCord, LWA

Attendees

In Person

Karl Burke, HMC

John Ceg, BLM – CASO

Don Coates, North Coast RWQCB

Jay Davis, SFEI

Chris Foe, CVRWQCB

Vicki Fry, SRCSD

Douglas John, CA Dept of Conservation

Tom Kimball, SWRCB

Dane Hardin, AMS

Dave Lawler, BLM – CASO

Sara Martin, SRWP

Carrie Monohan, Sierra Fund

Patrick Morris, CVRWQCB

E Mullenmeister, Shaw Environmental

Greg Reller, Tetra Tech

Darell Slotton, UC Davis

Dave Tamayo, Sacramento County DWR

Alyce Ujihara, CA Dept Public Health

Via Webcast

Leah Wills, Plumas Corp.

I. Introductions and Agenda Review

II. Presentations

Abbott-Turkey Run mine site cleanup; Patrick Morris (Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board)

Patrick shared several photos of the subject mine site showing pre- and post-project views. The project was implemented as an EPA CERCLA emergency remediation project.

In summer 2007, El Paso Energy (a legally “responsible party” for the site) contracted with CDM to clean up the abandoned mercury mine site. Activities included removing all contaminated mining-related structures, regraded steep slopes from 1:1 to 3:1 and covered with 2 feet of local clay, hydroseeded bare soils, redirected spring water around contaminated soils, and added rip-rap to channels.

The total cost for the design and implementation of the project was approximately \$5 million. There is no post-project monitoring requirement, although USGS is continuing to monitor biota downstream in Harley Gulch.

==> DTMC will continue to advocate that pre- and post-project monitoring be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of mine site remediation.

Calfed Fish Mercury Project update; Jay Davis (SFEI), Alyce Ujihara (CA DHS), Darell Slotton (UCD)

Jay Davis provided an overview of the project, noting that it is the most comprehensive fish monitoring project ever undertaken in the watershed. Over 3000 sport fish were sampled from 90 sites over two years. The project also integrates science with health and environmental justice. Copies of a fact sheet and report are available from SFEI (<http://www.sfei.org/cmr/fishmercury/>). Sport fish generally had the lowest concentrations of tissue mercury in the central Delta. Future work includes a ~\$1 million/year effort to monitor mercury and other bioaccumulative pollutants in sport fish throughout the state, starting with 250 lakes in 2007-2008.

Alyce Ujihara describes the project's stakeholder involvement and health communication activities. Environmental justice principles were followed, providing a voice to community-based organizations in the Bay-Delta region through stakeholder meetings, focus-group meetings, surveys, training sessions, and mini-grants for outreach and education activities. Preliminary findings include the need to provide very clear, simple messages in fish consumption advisories.

==> Alyce will provide a LSAG meeting announcement, combined with a workshop on the North Delta and Sacramento River fish advisory, tentatively set for April 2008.

Darell Slotton presented the findings of biosentinel monitoring. Primary species monitored (using a variety of collection techniques) were Mississippi silversides, prickly sculpin and juvenile largemouth bass. Overall findings were that flooding can result in large increases in methylmercury movement into fish and that the most dramatic spikes observed in small fish mercury in recent years could all be linked to episodic flooding of soils that had a chance to dry out previously.

SRCS D Localized Hg Bioaccumulation Study; Stephen McCord (LWA)

Stephen McCord, with assistance from Vicki Fry and Dane Hardin in the meeting, described the subject study's activities and key findings. Field work was conducted in the dry season of a wet year (July – November 2006) in a five-mile reach surrounding the SRWTP outfall in the lower Sacramento River at Freeport. Two monitoring stations were upstream of the outfall while three were downstream. Mercury and related parameters in water and sediment were monitored monthly as grab samples. Mercury in ~4000 resident and suspended clams was monitored concurrently. Mercury in three small "biosentinel" fish was also monitored in November 2006.

Mercury in suspended and resident clams and in 2 of 3 biosentinel fish was ~10% higher downstream of the outfall. Regional biosentinel fish monitoring has identified much larger signals in other parts of the Delta watershed (Sacramento River near the Colusa Basin Drain, Petaluma River, Yolo Bypass, Cache Creek, Cosumnes River, lower San Joaquin River) prone to seasonal flooding.

While there is a measurable increase in mercury bioaccumulation associated with the SRWTP outfall, the evidence of localized environmental risk is not so clear and convincing that a

reasonable decision maker would conclude that some action must be taken locally. Such interpretation of the study's results and its impact on mercury offset policy and implementation of offset pilot projects is a topic for continued discussion among federal, state, and local entities and stakeholders.

==> Vicki Fry will provide information on how to download the study's final report once it is available.

III. Discussion Items

Conference call line: How can we improve the remote conferencing capabilities for DTMC meetings?

Stephen will continue to try to improve the web conferencing capabilities. Dial-up connections are not adequate for viewing presentations on-line.

IV. Other Updates

Sara Martin, Watershed Resource Specialist for the Sacramento River Watershed Program, introduced herself. Sara noted that SRWP's big Prop 50 grant will be winding down in March, but that at the same time they will be ramping up a new grant to develop consistent watershed health indicators for the entire Sacramento River watershed. Mercury will likely be an important indicator. This effort will involve monitoring and should result in an ability to produce reports about the health of subwatersheds based on consistent indicators.

==> Mary Lee Kneckt will provide meeting summaries for those meetings that she facilitated.

Dave Tamayo noted that he is participating in an effort to advocate for legislation on extended producer responsibility, providing a legal requirement for producers of hazardous waste materials such as fluorescent light bulbs to properly dispose of them.

Carrie Monohan noted that the Sierra Fund is beginning to implement a project on mining's toxic legacy, conducting outreach and surveying toxic sites in the region.

==> Jay Davis will send an announcement for SFEI's mercury coordination meeting in Oakland scheduled for February 20. [DONE 2/6/08]

V. Next Meeting

Tentatively set for May 13, the second Tuesday of the month, again at the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District's offices in Mather.