Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan was developed by the Delta Tributaries Mercury Council (DTMC) with support from the Sacramento River Watershed Program, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The objective of this Plan is to guide the DTMC’s activities towards fulfilling its mission and vision. The DTMC’s primary area of interest is the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and its watershed; nonetheless, work in the Delta’s watershed, statewide, and in the southwestern U.S. region is often relevant. Strategic planning is an iterative process of reviewing where we have been, adjusting to incorporate new findings, then planning and implementing the new plan.

Our Foundation

The DTMC’s history and a compendium of information about mercury in the region are available on our website (www.sacriver.org/aboutwatershed/mercury/dtmc). The website also provides a fact sheet about mercury issues, explains the DTMC meeting expectations, lists entities that actively participate in DTMC activities, provides relevant websites, and records all past meetings held and documents shared.

Who Are We?

The DTMC strives to be diverse and comprehensive. The DTMC is a collaboration by hundreds of individuals with national and local expertise and strong interest in mercury issues. The email distribution list includes nearly 500 individuals. The DTMC operates through in-kind support and participant interests. Participants represent the following general categories of stakeholders:

- Federal and state agencies
- Researchers
- Consultants
- Planners and land managers
- Lawyers and lawmakers
- Permitted dischargers
- Non-profit organizations
- Native American communities
- Private companies
- Public citizens

The DTMC forum provides for timely communication among its participants, who are involved in these activities:

- Recommending or informing funding and implementation of funded actions (e.g., planning, monitoring, research, and cleanup projects).
- Identifying appropriate areas for and types of pilot mercury monitoring and remediation projects.
- Developing a mercury modeling framework for incorporating quantified relationships, assessing monitoring data, and improving predictive ability.
- Designing and implementing monitoring programs to assess the status and trends of mercury contamination, to quantify local and regional effect of pilot projects, and to support models.
- Designing, performing, and reviewing mercury research projects to reduce uncertainties in the linkage between sources and impacts, to improve numerical models, to stay informed of current research, and to coordinate with other ongoing research projects.
- Developing and implementing outreach programs on fish consumption to inform potentially affected people regarding their mercury exposure risks.

What Activities and Insights Inform Our Understanding?

The DTMC tracks activities and shares information about a wide range of topics, including:

- **Science**: Scientific research; water and biota monitoring data; simulation modeling studies.
- **Policies and Plans**: Beneficial uses for high-fish-consumer populations; pollutant offsets principles.
- **Regulations**: Mercury control programs; statewide fish-tissue-mercury objectives.
- **Controls**: Mine site cleanup projects; mercury contaminated sediment removal and management projects; methylmercury control studies.
- **Outreach**: Fish consumption surveys and feedback on published advisories.

**What Are Our Major Knowledge Gaps?**

We lack sufficient knowledge in the following areas to develop a comprehensive mercury control strategy:

- **Source control**: Source loadings (particularly atmospheric deposition, contaminated site drainage, and mineral spring discharges) are only coarsely quantified. Source control effectiveness in such cases is site-specific and dependent on the source's forms and concentrations.
- **Methylation**: Functional relationships among the myriad factors that appear to drive mercury methylation rates remain elusive for predicting and controlling methylmercury production.
- **Bioaccumulation**: The ecological pathways and processes that lead to environmental impairments from elevated mercury levels in top predators are complex and variable.
- **At-risk populations**: Human and wildlife consumption rates of fish with elevated mercury concentrations are poorly quantified for most of the Delta’s watershed. Effects on humans and wildlife in the region have not been adequately documented.

**Our Course of Action**

**What is the DTMC’s Role?**

The DTMC’s primary role is to provide a communication forum for the development, implementation, and synthesis of monitoring activities, research studies, and environmental improvement projects. Such a forum allows the community to maintain, update, and share our base of knowledge with stakeholders by:

- Providing science-based mercury information in a transparent, understandable form;
- Providing a record of the information communicated among participants; and
- Continuously planning and evaluating progress.

**What Activities Fulfill the DTMC’s Role?**

These activities fulfill the DTMC’s role as a communication forum for mercury stakeholders:

- Host open quarterly meetings of stakeholders to exchange information, share project updates, gather feedback, and announce upcoming events.
- Post meeting summaries and presentations available on the DTMC website.
- Maintain an active listserv, providing timely news and announcements to all interested stakeholders.
- Compile an annual summary of key results, conclusions and status updates of activities in the major topic areas.

**What Upcoming Activities Should the DTMC Support?**

These topic areas and activities are priorities for future DTMC support:

- **Science**: Synthesis of Bay-Delta mercury science (led by Delta Science Program).
- **Policies and Plans**: Headwaters Mercury Strategy for the Sierra Nevada region (led by The Sierra Fund); Integrated Regional Water Management Plans; development of pollutant trading and offsets programs; monitoring plans for projects in mercury-contaminated sediment deposits.
- **Regulations**: Delta Methylmercury Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and Control Program, Phase I review / Phase II development; Delta tributaries and statewide reservoirs mercury TMDLs.
- **Controls**: Mine-site cleanup projects, reservoir dredging, and mercury recovery.
- **Outreach**: Publicizing fish consumption advisories; announcing reports and articles.