WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AND SOURCE REDUCTION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – JANUARY 22, 2002

Mark Gold, Heal the Bay
Michael Lyons, Megan Fisher, Jon Bishop, Melinda Becker, LA Regional Water Quality Control Board
Jessica Morton, California Coastal Commission
Steve Bay, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
Ying Poon, Everest Consultants
Steve Cappellino and Shannon Snyder, Anchor Consulting
Kathryn Curtis, Port of Los Angeles
Kathy Anderson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Rick Cameron, Port of Long Beach

TMDL Processes

Melinda Becker, head of the Los Angeles Regional Board's Standards and TMDL Unit, and Jon Bishop, Chief of the Regional Programs Section (which includes the TMDL Unit), were invited to the Watershed Subcommittee meeting to present background information on the Regional Board's TMDL efforts and explore opportunities to interact with the CSTF Watershed Subcommittee's activities. The LA Regional Board entered into a consent decree to settle a suit brought by environmental groups; the consent decree governs the performance of TMDLs for impaired waterbodies over a 12-year period (identified on the 303d list submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Specifically identified TMDLs for the first seven years are scheduled in the consent decree (29 TMDLs), as well as a requirement to conduct 5-8 TMDLs during the last 5 years (allowing the Regional Board to select which ones to perform); this leaves another 30 TMDLs that must be completed at some time over the 12 year period. The Regional Board has estimated that it takes 2-3 years to complete a TMDL and 6-10 years for implementation. If the impairment is caused by ongoing sources of pollutants, the Regional Board would allocate reductions to the various sources to eliminate the problem; however, if the problem is caused by legacy pollutants (e.g., historical discharges of DDT), it is unclear what strategy would be implemented to deal with this.

The CSTF primarily would be interested in TMDLs required for Los Angeles Harbor, San Pedro Bay, Ballona Creek, Dominguez Channel, Los Angeles River and Ballona Creek Wetlands. The consent decree calls for Marina del Rey metals TMDLs to be completed by 2004, Los Angeles River metals TMDLs by 2004 and Dominguez Channel metals TMDLs by 2006.

The Regional Board has not yet completed a TMDL for impairments caused by trace metals or trace organics as identified by sediment contamination or bioaccumulation problems. Although it is clear that we will need to understand the fate and effects of metals and organics, it is not clear how this will be accomplished within the TMDL process. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will assist the LA Regional Board by completing the first metals and organics TMDL on Marina Del Rey Back Basins (with help from their contractor, CH2M-Hill). It may be possible for EPA to complete TMDLs for the outer portion of Marina del Rey and Ballona Creek at the same time, but this decision has not been made. Although the Marina del Rey TMDL may not be directly related to CSTF activities, it may serve as a model for future TMDLs.

A small group (Department of Energy, WSPA, Port of LA, Port of LB, airport, SCCWRP, City of LA, LA Regional Board) is looking at modelling of the Dominguez Channel watershed to assist TMDL development. The model would focus on land use/runoff patterns and would look at all types of contaminants (metals and organics, nutrients, pathogens). The model would be geared towards hydrodynamics and the Regional Board would apply it first to the pathogens TMDL.

Since some special studies probably will be required as part of the TMDL effort, this could be a good opportunity for collaboration between the CSTF and the TMDL groups. The sediment quality/stormwater database could be a useful tool as TMDLs are developed. The CSTF is planning to spend @ $100,000 to analyze the stormwater data and attempt to identify sources of pollutants; as we develop the scope of work for this task, we can try to incorporate the needs of TMDL development and the ongoing modelling efforts.

One potential question of interest would be: Can we separate ongoing sources from historical deposition via the model? It might be possible to link the Los Angeles River model/Dominguez Channel model/CSTF stormwater analysis into a combined effort; however, the Regional Board does not expect to produce a contaminant model through the current studies until mid-2003 (nutrient and microbiology models must be completed first). The Ballona Creek debris retention basins (see next section) will be monitored by Los Angeles County to measure the effectiveness of trash removal; there are no current plans to measure contaminants at the same time, but this might be a task that the CSTF can encourage.

The Watershed Subcommittee members asked whether TMDL development or implementation would affect dredging projects (for example, would there be any restrictions on dredging in such areas?). In general, dredging probably would be viewed as a good thing in such cases, since it would remove contaminants, so it is unlikely that any restrictions would be imposed.

Ballona Creek Sedimentation Basin Update

Kathy Anderson presented an update on the Ballona Creek Sedimentation Basin project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers currently is completing the F4 phase, which involves a detailed analysis of the alternatives recommended for further evaluation by the F3 study (completed in 1999). The F3 looked at stormwater data, sediment loading data, fate and transport and land uses. The Corps is planning to input the data into a GIS database. Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is responsible for watershed management alternatives recommended by the F3 conference, while the Corps is responsible for structural solutions. The Corps is evaluating in-stream sediment basins to remove some of the coarser sediments (and possibly some contaminants). Five potential locations were evaluated. Location #5, located just north of Lincoln Blvd. Is the preferred location, although it lies within the Ballona Creek tidal prism. Sallinity of sediment dredged from this basin may complicate disposal alternatives. Modifications of the middle jetty to move the area of sediment deposition away from the entrance channel and into the coastal waters of the bay also were evaluated. Mark Gold pointed out that a sedimentation basin at location #5 would be very close to the Playa Vista habitat area, which might lead to opposition, and also that locating the retention basin in the tidal prism might cause disposal problems (due to chlorides). Mark Gold also requested that the Corps evaluate whether the outer breakwater could be modified, rather than just considering jetty modifications. It also was suggested that the Corps attempt to model what the sediment basin would capture, for example through grain size gradation, in order to postulate how much of the captured sediment would be contaminated. The F4 report is being drafted and should be released in April or May.

Stormwater Monitoring Database

This item was postponed until the next meeting. Ken Schiff, SCCWRP, should be able to attend and discuss strategies for analyzing the stormwater database. We plan to add City of Long Beach stormwater data (4 wet weather and 2 dry weather events for one year) to the database, along with other previously identified studies.

Next Meeting: February 27, 2002 – 10 am to noon, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board

We will discuss analysis of the stormwater monitoring data being assembled into an electronic database.