

California Regional Water Quality Control Board North Coast Region

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North Coast Regional Water Board Sets Action Plan for Klamath River Pollution

Eureka-The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) has released new guidelines and an Action Plan for limiting different kinds of water pollution in the Klamath River. The plan is designed to restore and maintain water quality in the Klamath River Watershed in California and Oregon.

The Action Plan includes coordination with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and US EPA to meet water quality standards in both states, a proposed Management Agency Agreement with the US Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Tulelake Irrigation District to address water quality in the Lost River (a Klamath tributary) in California. Limits on various kinds of pollution are set through Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL), which limit certain contaminants that find their way into the Klamath from different sources.

The TMDLs specifically address elevated stream temperatures, low dissolved oxygen levels, nutrient enrichment, and nuisance blue-green algae blooms in the Klamath River in California, water quality conditions which impair the cold freshwater salmon fishery, Native American cultural uses, and recreation. The plan also addresses water quality impacts of the Klamath Hydroelectric Project, a Thermal Refugia Protection Policy, and conditional waivers addressing nonpoint sources of pollution, such as roads, agriculture, and activities on US Forest Service lands.

The Klamath River originates in Oregon and flows through northern California in Siskiyou, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, and is subject to many natural and manmade stresses. Regional Water Board Chair Geoffrey Hales says, "I have dedicated my academic and professional career to studying rivers and fluvial systems. It is my opinion that this TMDL is built on the best available science and is the correct vehicle to attain water quality standards and meet statewide policy."

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore California's water resources and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.