

MEMORANDUM

January 16th, 2013

To: Steering Committee

From: Naomi Feger, Regional Water Quality Control Board

Re: **Mercury Wetland Restoration Workshop in 2013**

The San Francisco Bay mercury TMDL was adopted by the San Francisco Bay Water Board in 2006 and a number of implementation actions are ongoing (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/TMDLs/sfbaymercurytml.shtml). The RMP has been implementing a Bay-wide mercury strategy to better understand mercury sources and methylmercury production in the Bay while continuing to monitor the mercury TMDL targets established for the Bay. The RMP conducted annual workshops from 2004 through 2010 to coordinate research on mercury. The RMP published a synthesis article on the state of knowledge on mercury in the Bay in 2012. The research coordination workshops were suspended in 2011 so that SFEI could focus on completion of this work and to allow the RMP participants to have a chance to review the results of the synthesis report.

The Water Board is recommending that a workshop be held in 2013 to review information and information needs relating to methylmercury in restored tidal marshes and salt ponds. The mercury synthesis recommended a focus on the design and maintenance of restored marshes and salt ponds as a means of potentially reducing methylmercury impairment in Bay wildlife. There are a number of wetland restoration efforts that have begun since the TMDL was under development. Some of these restoration projects have had requirements to conduct monitoring included in Board-issued 401 Certifications/Waste Discharge Requirements as required by the TMDL. The most significant level of effort to date has been conducted by the South Bay Salt Pond project. Other projects, such as the North Bay Salt Ponds, Hamilton Wetland Restoration, Suisun Marsh restoration projects (Blacklock), have collected or are in the process of collecting data to monitor mercury. There is currently no consensus on the best approach for monitoring mercury and how this information will be used in decision-making. The general requirement is that these projects should not make conditions in the Bay with respect to mercury worse than they are at present. In addition, the Water Board is currently working on a TMDL in Suisun Marsh to address the mercury impairment. There is a need for a regional monitoring approach to collecting data associated with these wetland restoration and salt pond habitats. The proposed workshop would address the state of knowledge regarding the role wetland and salt pond restoration and management play in mercury impairment locally and regionally, and help inform decision-making about monitoring efforts. It is expected that this information would be of interest to dischargers working to reduce loading to the Bay from other sources.