

MEMORANDUM

March 21, 2007

To: RMP Technical Review Committee

From: Meg Sedlak, Jay Davis and Mike Connor

Re: Academia and the RMP

The SC requested in its January 2007 meeting that the TRC outline specific methods to increase academic involvement in the RMP. This memorandum outlines several potential ideas for ways to increase academic involvement.

Background

Every five years, the program is reviewed by an outside panel. In 2003, the panel made several recommendations for improving the program including strengthening ties with academia. The Report of the 2003 Program Review states that “SFEI/RMP should enhance its linkages with universities. The RMP is presently focused primarily on status and trends with a lesser emphasis on describing the processes that led to past conditions, or will lead to future ones. The RMP monitoring provides a wonderful platform on which to build additional studies that could address these processes....”

Both the TRC and SC have indicated that they strongly endorse the involvement of academics in the program. Academia can strengthen the RMP by providing oversight and review; by ensuring that the program remains current and informed; and by conducting research on topics that are relevant to the Bay.

At present, the RMP has several linkages to universities through:

- Workgroups. Most of the workgroups have academics serving on the scientific advisory panels. Dan Schlenk of University of California at Riverside and Don Weston at University of California at Berkeley (UCB) serve on our Exposure and Effects Pilot Study (EEPS) workgroup. Keith Stolzenbach of University of California at Los Angeles; Tom McKone, adjunct at UCB; and Frank Gobas of Simon Fraser University serve on the Contaminant Fate Workgroup. David Sedlak of UCB and Jennifer Field of Oregon State University serve on the Emerging Contaminants Workgroup.

- Status and Trends/Pilot Studies. A number of universities are involved with the collection and analyses of RMP samples. Examples of these collaborations include: University of California at Santa Cruz trace element analyses for the summer Status and Trends program; University of California at Davis sediment toxicity analyses; and California State University at Long Beach endocrine disruption research on native Bay fish.
- Guest speakers at universities. RMP staff are frequently asked to speak at local universities which strengthens the ties between staff and local universities. RMP staff frequently attend seminars at local institutions (UCB and Stanford).
- Workshops and seminars. The RMP has hosted a number of workshops in which academics have been speakers (e.g., Jay Gan (UCLA) at the Pyrethroid workshop).

Ideas for Increasing Academic Involvement

At present with the exception of the Sources Pathways and Loading workgroup, we believe we have sufficient academic presence in the workgroup process to offer adequate review and oversight. One area in which it may be appropriate to increase our academic participation is Pilot and Special Studies. What are the possible ways we could use these monies more effectively?

- Give priority to academia. As part of the pilot and special study selection process, studies which are undertaken by universities would be given priority over similar studies which are submitted by consultants.
- Consider establishing a source of multi-year funding for graduate students or post-doctoral fellows conducting research on issues of importance to the Bay.
- Consider teaming up with other organizations to increase the pool of funding available for Bay research through matching funds and in-kinds services (e.g. collection of samples during the S&T cruise, sportfish monitoring, or other activities). We could approach Sea Grant or Ocean Science Trust to see if they would be interested in jointly funding research in the Bay. Other alternatives could include university consortiums such as UC-Toxics coalition.
- Dedicate a portion of the budget to university research (e.g., \$100,000). We could have a line item in the budget every year that is dedicated to university research. The advantage is that it would assure that there is funding for university participation; however, it may unnecessarily constrain the program.