

State Water Resources Control Board/ Regional Water Quality Control Boards

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PILOT PROJECT

Who We Are

Water is California's most precious resource, providing an essential lifeline between agriculture, industry, the environment and urban and rural interests throughout the state. With a growing population of more than 30 million and a limited supply of fresh water, the protection of water for beneficial uses is of paramount concern for all Californians. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) are responsible for protecting California's water resources.

What We Do

The State and Regional Boards work together to protect California's water resources. Created by the Dickey Water Pollution Act, the RWQCBs have been responsible for protecting the surface, ground and coastal waters of their regions since 1949. In 1967, the State Water Rights Board and the State Water Quality Control Board were merged to create the State Water Resources Control Board, integrating water rights and water quality decision-making authority. The nine RWQCBs are semi-autonomous and comprised of up to nine part-time Board members appointed by the Governor. Regional boundaries are based on watersheds. Together, the RWQCBs have over 1,000 staff members in 12 regional locations, making critical water quality decisions for its region. These decisions include setting standards, issuing waste discharge requirements, determining compliance with those requirements, and taking appropriate enforcement actions.

The SWRCB's role in protecting water quality includes setting statewide policy, coordinating and supporting the RWQCBs' efforts and reviewing petitions contesting RWQCBs actions. The SWRCB is also solely responsible for allocating surface water rights. Today, the SWRCB, with roughly 700 staff members, is organized into four divisions that address water quality, water rights, and administrative functions. These functions not only support the SWRCB, but also the nine RWQCBs. Five full-time Board members, appointed by the Governor, are responsible for setting statewide water policy.

Pilot Project Parameters

The SWRCB and the California Bay-Delta Authority (CalFED) will co-lead a pilot project in North Central California, focusing on water resources management and related environmental issues in a tribal or rural community. The following parameters will be critical in the site-selection process:

Regulator Involvement

Do the SWRCB/CalFED have regulatory program authority relating to the major sources of environmental emission/discharge in the area? Are the SWRCB and CalFED currently involved in a local environmental project?

Community Participation

Is the local community actively involved in environmental issues? Is there existing community capacity and infrastructure to support local stakeholder participation in the project?

Environmental Data

Is there existing environmental emissions/discharge, exposure, and health risk data for this area? Do the SWRCB and CalFED have the necessary resources or capability to acquire such data?

Objectives and Outcomes

Can SMART (simple, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) objectives to address children's environmental risk be established for the project? Will there be an opportunity to explore the issue of cumulative impacts and precautionary approaches? Can the result be effectively transferred to other regions?

Resources and Time

Given the current constraints regarding staff resources and time, is the project manageable and feasible? Can funding be acquired from other resources?