Regional Media Relations Campaign
Final Report

BAY AREA STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AGENCIES ASSOCIATION
BAY AREA CLEAN WATER AGENCIES

July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005
**FY 2004-2005 Regional Media Relations Campaign**

**Executive Summary**

The two goals of the Bay Area Clean Water Agencies (BACWA) and the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association’s (BASMAA) media relations campaign are to: 1) firmly establish the agencies as media contacts on water quality and pollution prevention issues, and 2) generate media coverage that encourages individuals to adopt behavior changes to prevent water pollution. In FY 04-05, the campaign continued to achieve these goals.

The year was most dramatically marked by the resignation of the longtime campaign project manager, resulting in a 4 ½ month campaign hiatus from media pitching while a new manager was recruited. Given these circumstances, two time-sensitive pitches did not occur at all. During this time, the media contractor assisted the agencies in identifying candidates for project manager and making phone calls to candidates to explain the job in greater detail. In late January 2006, a new project manager was hired and media work resumed.

Despite these circumstances, the number of media placements remained steady this year, with the most coverage coming from a pitch on the release of the draft mercury TMDL (total maximum daily load). Overall media coverage was down this year because some pitches in the workplan could not be pursued without a project manager in place; others were not pursued because of content issues. Still, the campaign achieved a total of thirty-six story placements.

Media coverage was pursued on three planned pitches: one each on the mercury TMDL, household hazardous waste, and pesticides. Additionally, the process of working with meteorologists to incorporate water pollution prevention messages into their broadcasts was begun this year. Some placement highlights included the Associated Press, San Jose Mercury News, KRON-TV and KTVU-TV all carrying the mercury TMDL story; coverage of the integrated pest management annual conference in the foreign language media; and, print and broadcast coverage of a wastewater angle on household hazardous waste. Notably, television coverage increased this year.

The agencies worked again this year with the Clean Estuary Partnership on the highly successful mercury TMDL pitch.

Maintaining good media relationships continued this year, particularly with the San Jose Mercury News and the Fairfield Daily Republic. The campaign broke new ground with the consumer producer at KGO-TV, who included the Our Water, Our World campaign’s “Ask the Experts” website component in a story. In-roads were also made with television meteorologists and their staff.

There were two new components to this year’s campaign. One was a new use of the media “e-mailer” from FY03-04. This year, four emails were launched, each focusing on the background and expertise of one of the campaign’s main spokespeople. The second new component was
pursuing television meteorologists with the request to include water pollution prevention messages in their broadcasts. Simple messages were developed and emailed during times of heavy rains in the early spring of 2005. Although this effort was slowed down by the campaign hiatus during the height of rainy season, the process did begin and initial feedback from meteorology departments was positive.

Overall, 36 articles and broadcast stories were covered by the media in FY 04-05, including 9 print articles, 7 television, 7 radio stories, and 10 web stories and 3 wire stories. These results were achieved despite the fact that two planned pitches were not pursued because of the lack of a project manager; a third pitch on new development was not pursued after the project manager determined that there were no new regulations in place to warrant a story; and, a final pitch on the BASMAA advertising campaign on trash was not pursued because post-campaign survey results did not provide a strong enough hook to warrant a media pitch. Public service announcements were not pursued this year. (See Appendix A, Press Report.)

O'Rorke estimates the value of the coverage was achieved in FY04-05 to be $78,250 if placements are viewed in comparison to the cost of advertising with these media outlets. This figure is down from FY04-05 because some pitches were not pursued at all because the campaign was on hold while a project manager was hired. Also, two other pitches in the workplan were not pursued because of lack of newsworthiness (trash/BASMAA advertising campaign and new development). In that sense, this was an unusual year for a campaign that is normally quite successful. The total value of this year’s coverage represents a 30% decrease over FY 03-04 (See Appendix E, Figure 2).

As Appendix E, Figure 3 illustrates, the agencies that contributed funding to the campaign received a tremendous return on their investment. The seven BASMAA members contributed an average of $3,500. The five BACWA principal agencies contributed an average of $5,000. Given the total value of coverage received in FY04-05 was $78,250, each BASMAA member received approximately $22.00 worth of coverage for every dollar invested in the campaign and each BACWA principal received $15.00 worth of coverage for every dollar invested. The return was even greater for BACWA’s associate members that invested fewer resources to the campaign than BACWA principals.

What follows are recommendations for FY05-06 and a complete report on the accomplishments for the major tasks as outlined in the FY 04-05 scope of work. Appendices include: Press Reports (Appendix A), Budget by Project (Appendix B), Print Articles (Appendix C), Circulation Information for Media Outlets (Appendix D), Comparison of FY02-03, FY03-04, and FY04-05 Media Placements (Appendix E, Figure 1), Comparison of Estimated Media Value (Appendix E, Figure 2), Comparison of Agency Contributions to Value of Media Coverage (Appendix E, Figure 3).
Recommendations for FY 2005-06

Recommendations for FY05-06 include the following:

- Build BACWA and BASMAA’s image as environmental professionals by including themes and messages in pitches that highlight the agencies’ accomplishments in protecting water quality, as well as by developing an op-ed piece focusing on those themes.
- Maintain a strong presence with key reporters and media personnel; continue to pitch good quality stories on a regular basis.
- Continue to pursue meteorology coverage in FY05-06, working in advance of the onset of rainy season.
- Seek out new media personnel to build relationships with—particularly by pursuing local television meteorologists to carry environmental messages during their weather reports.
- Utilize a calendar of seasonal pitches that will serve as signposts throughout the campaign year.
- Seek out a new angle for a pesticide pitch in FY05-06 to keep this important topic fresh for the media. This may include focusing on foreign language media.
- Ensure that the roster of pitches planned for FY 05-06 include a range from lighter, feature stories to those with more news potential for greater placement success.
- Evaluate campaign success by comparing number of placements and monetary value of media coverage garnered in FY05-06 to media coverage attained in previous years.
- Continue to seek out partnerships with agencies and organizations who can bring financial resources to the campaign.

Task A - Accomplishments

Generate long-term relationships with regional media outlets and establish BASMAA/BACWA representatives as information sources on water quality and pollution prevention issues.

Building and maintaining relationships with the media continued in FY 04-05. Due to continuous, regular pitching to the media on behalf of the agencies, an excellent springboard existed from which to pitch BASMAA/BACWA’s stories this year (see Task B). Relationships continued to be advanced in two ways: media relationships were enhanced through the consistent, ongoing presence of the agencies and the quality of the stories pitched.

In part, media success is a numbers game. A basic fact holds true: the more pitches conducted over time increases the likelihood of more quality media coverage. Media success is also based on the variety of stories pitched. Going to the same beat reporters with great frequency can sometimes hurt a campaign, so the goal for this project has been to conduct a variety of pitches aimed at different media audiences—some to environmental reporters, others to home section editors, others to consumer reporters, to name a few. These rules of thumb have definitely held true for BASMAA/BACWA, as evidenced by the strong media foothold achieved by this campaign in the last six years. A variety of reporters know and respect our spokespeople and are always receptive to hearing our pitches.
To further enhance media relationships, four emails were sent to media personnel in FY 04-05. Each of these emails contained a brief note followed by the biography of one of the campaign’s four main spokespeople; therefore, each email highlighted one person. The email also included information on scheduling an interview with the spokespeople and directed the media to the BACWA website, where the bios were also posted. This type of contact is extremely useful in that it provides information to the media in a way that isn’t annoying to people who work on tight deadlines. Additionally, the information was a “keeper” in that it acknowledged the need that reporters have to find experts for their stories. Additionally, the email list was updated with each mailing to account for personnel changes at media outlets. This very simple contact is an excellent way to stay in touch with the media. When one mailer was distributed in March, KGO-TV contacted the agencies right away about a story in progress. Although the topic of the story fell outside the agencies’ area of expertise, this response clearly showed the effectiveness of this outreach tool.

Additionally, as appropriate, thank-you notes were prepared and/or reporters were called or emailed when stories were placed to foster good long-term relationships on behalf of BASMAA/BACWA.

**Task A Recommendations:**

- Weave the agencies’ overall message of their extremely positive work on pollution prevention into all media materials, including emails and press releases, as appropriate.
- Send one email focusing on the agencies’ accomplishments in order to highlight BASMAA/BACWA as environmental “good guys” in the eyes of the media.
- Pitch good quality stories on a regular basis to maintain a strong presence with key reporters and media personnel.
- Continue to utilize the BACWA website as a place to post background and contact information on the agencies’ key media spokespeople for easy access by media personnel as needed.
- Capitalize on the media’s interest in TMDLs by conducting serious news pitches as the TMDL process unfolds in the region. This will continue to solidify relationships with environmental reporters who have a hard news focus.
- Utilize any opportunities that arise to pitch a serious news story (e.g. Pesticides in Urban Creeks TMDL) by first pursuing editorial board meetings, if appropriate. These meetings can garner editorial support on a topic and build credibility for the agencies with the opinion makers—the editorial page editors—of the region’s daily newspapers.
- Continue to pursue support and coverage from television meteorologists during the rainy season by calling them and resending the prepared, brief water pollution alert messages during times of heavy rains.
- Remind spokespeople to use the name “Bay Area Clean Water Agencies” when being interviewed, both for name recognition and to avoid confusion with the media.

**Task B Accomplishments**

Generate balanced regional media coverage aimed at promoting individual behavior changes leading to water pollution prevention.
In FY04-05, six media pitches were included in the workplan. Ultimately, three were pursued for coverage: mercury TMDL, household hazardous waste, and IPM annual conference. Additionally, messages on water pollution during rains were developed for use by television meteorologists; these broadcasters were also pitched in the latter part of the rainy season, once a campaign project manager was in place. A summary of the coverage attained follows below.

Because this is a regional campaign, one goal is to ensure that the coverage attained reached the Bay Area-wide. This goal was attained, as major stories ran on KCBS-AM, KSRO-AM, and KQED-FM and in the San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News, Fairfield Daily Republic, and the Contra Costa Times. This goal was further achieved by several stories being carried on media websites and by the Associated Press.

**Household Hazardous Waste/Sink Pitch**
A press release was developed in FY 04-05 specifically to address the wastewater pollution caused by common household products. With approval from a regional HHW facility work group, this pitch was pursued as “Think Before You Put it in the Sink.” This pitch resulted in 5 placements: two print stories, one TV mention, and two web placements.

**Trash/BASMAA Advertising Campaign Pitch**
The regional advertising campaign on trash began in August 2004, and released a survey in September. The survey findings were reviewed by O’Rorke for newsworthiness, but it was deemed that there were not any significant hooks for a media pitch this year.

**Mercury TMDL/Basin Plan Amendment Pitch**
In the fall of 2004, a pitch was conducted on the adoption of the Basin Plan Amendment to adopt the mercury TMDL. A press advisory was crafted, and Chuck Weir, Michele Pla, Geoff Brosseau, and Tom Mumley were tapped as spokespeople. The advisory was issued the week before the amendment was adopted by the RWQCB. This pitch resulted in 24 placements: 6 print stories, 7 TV hits, 2 radio stories, 3 wire stories, and xx web placements.

**Mercury PSAs**
The campaign’s original plan to send out existing mercury PSAs was put on hold when the City of San Jose offered to develop new ones, with messages more closely tied to the mercury TMDL. Ultimately, the City of San Jose did not develop these messages and the media relations committee determined that a PSA pitch on mercury would best be saved for February 2006, when a new regulation on disposal of fluorescent bulbs would be in effect.

**FOG (Fats, Oils, Grease) Pitch**
This time-sensitive pitch was not conducted because the campaign had no project manager in place.

**Joint BAAQMD Winter Pitch**
This time-sensitive pitch was not conducted because the campaign had no project manager in place.
New Development Pitch
It was determined to not pursue this pitch since no new regulations had been enacted that would make this story timely or newsworthy.

Pesticide Pitch
A press advisory and press release were developed about the second annual IPM conference. The advisory highlighted Geoff Brosseau, Dr. Gina Solomon, Phil Boise, and Luis Agurto as expert spokespeople, representing different areas of the pesticide issue. A follow up press release was sent out about the conference and included website information from the Our Water, Our World campaign. This pitch results in seven placements: one print story, five radio stories, and one wire story. Of special note: this pitch resulted in a foreign language print story in the China Press.

Breaking News Response
Looking for opportunities to respond to news is an ongoing part of the workplan for this campaign every year. This year, the agencies responded to a longtime-good media contact when several of her stories on pesticides did not include information from BASMAA/BACWA or the Our Water, Our World campaign, with which she is quite familiar from past pitches. The media contractor contacted this editor, suggesting she should refer her readers to the Our Water, Our World website because it has a lot of good information and fact sheets.

While she was happy to get the information, she was direct in letting the agencies know the San Jose Mercury News has done a lot of coverage on Our Water Our World. The media contractor fully understands that media like to vary their sources and include different information and advised the agencies as such

Media Emailer
Four emails were sent to key media in FY04-05. Each email included a brief introductory note and highlighted one of the campaign’s four main spokespeople as an expert to be called on as a media contact. Spokesperson Chuck Weir was called by KGO-TV after one of these emails was sent. Although the station called about a story in progress that was outside the agencies’ area of expertise, this clearly showed that the email had an impact and brought results.

Meteorologist Messages
Based on feedback from an informal survey of television meteorologists conducted in FY04-05, several brief messages were crafted messages to be used as “water pollution alerts” on rainy days. The plan was to pursue meteorology departments to have broadcasters mention a brief tip or two during the weathercast. Despite diligent follow-up and several rounds of rainy day emails and calls, no mentions can be documented. However, this effort was somewhat derailed by the project manager/campaign hiatus in that the campaign was on hold during the start of and height of the rainy season in FY04-05. Still, feedback was positive: both Shannon O’Donnell at NBC11 and Joel Bartlett at KGO-TV thought the messages provided were very good.
Value of PSAs Placed in FY 03-04

PSA coverage was not pursued in FY04-05.

Value of Media Placements in FY 03-04

Although there is no clear-cut way to assign monetary value to media coverage, the value of print articles and broadcast stories (collectively referred to as media placements) garnered in FY 04-05 is estimated at $78,250. This figure was derived by reviewing all media placements and assigning a fair market value cost to them if they had been purchased as advertising time or space. For example, a quarter page ad in the San Francisco Chronicle’s Home & Garden section costs $7,600; an article of comparable size in the section, then, is valued accordingly. Currently peak drive-time rates on KCBS are about $1,200. The typical news story will air on KCBS at least 12 times in one day, with most of those placements falling during peak drive-time hours. Thirty-second ads in evening news programs can cost as much as $2,000 each. Additionally, O’Rorke sought out estimates on the value of tie-in internet coverage from media salespeople and those were included in the valuation. Note: Wire service stories and letters to the editor were not factored into this value estimate because there are no advertising comparisons to be made for these venues.

While media relations does not offer the guaranteed placements that advertising does, press coverage brings a special value to an effort that is hard to quantify. The credibility provided by a media outlet, a specific reporter or anchorperson to a story really elevates the quality of media coverage. People often naturally trust something they see on the evening news or read on page one of the San Francisco Chronicle or San Jose Mercury News. Today’s consumers are also savvy to advertising and marketing practices aimed at getting them to buy products. For this reason, consumers increasingly view paid ads with skepticism. Media coverage avoids this kind of negativity entirely.

This year, an analysis of the past three years of the campaign was also conducted in order to take a critical look at media placements achieved and estimated coverage value over time. Although FY04-05 was atypical for this campaign, the analysis showed that this campaign has remained strong over time. Over the years, this campaign has consistently achieved high quality coverage on a diverse range of topics. What was notable this year was the increase in television stories. In FY04-05, media coverage value decreased by 30%, but the number of story placements remained close to FY03-04. This can be explained by the fact that some pitches were not pursued because of the project manager issue and some placements were wire stories, for which no comparable advertising value can be determined.

It is clear from the coverage that was achieved in FY04-05 that, if all planned pitches had been pursued, this year would have been comparable to or perhaps would have even surpassed FY03-04 in overall coverage.

Total Value of Media Placements in FY 04-05: $78,250
Task B Recommendations:

- Develop an op-ed piece, working closely with the executive directors, to highlight the good work of BASMAA/BACWA in order to set the stage for putting forth the overriding message that the agencies are “environmental good guys.”
- Build on the relationships established last year with meteorologists to gain coverage during weathercasts on rainy-day water pollution alerts.
- Focus concerted pitches toward ethnic audiences through the use of ethnic media and bilingual spokespeople, perhaps via a pitch on the translation of Our Water, Our World materials in FY05-06.
- Include a breaking news component as part of media pitches to allow the campaign flexibility in responding to news events as they occur.
- Identify opportunities to collaborate on media pitches with other partners. BASMAA/BACWA’s ongoing collaborations with the BAAQMD and the Clean Estuary Partnership have proved successful in generating media coverage over the years.
- Include a variety of topics in the FY 05-06 workplan to ensure maximum media interest and placements. The topics should include a range from lighter, feature-oriented stories (fats, oil and grease) to more news-oriented topics (such as TMDLs).
### APPENDIX B: Budget by Project

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Now we turn to tough case of pollution

KEEPING MERCURY OUT OF THE BAY IS AN EXPENSIVE, BUT WORTHY, GOAL

The ambitious plan to reduce mercury in San Francisco Bay proves how far we've come in battling pollution.

For the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board to be able to turn its attention to mercury means that what were once the worst sources of pollution -- factories and sewage plants -- have been greatly diminished.

In the bay, mercury pollution is mostly a legacy of the past, although modern consumer products such as fluorescent lights contribute to it. Most mercury in the bay comes from streams washing over the residue of mercury mines from a century ago.

Mercury in high concentrations is a clear threat to human health, affecting the brain and nervous system. Once in the bay, it moves up through the food chain. The principal danger lies in eating too much fish from the bay.

Mercury comes from diffuse sources, which will make it hard to clean up. Only about a sixth of it comes from current human activity in the Bay Area. Most washes in either from the Guadalupe River and the Sierra Nevada foothills, or is released off the bay floor where it has accumulated.

The new cleanup plan puts a special burden on the South Bay. Old mine sites in the Guadalupe River watershed, including places like Almaden Quicksilver Park, produce high concentrations there. The slow tidal action in the South Bay means that pollutants are slow to flush out.

The $30 million annual cost for the South Bay will be a challenge to finance for the Santa Clara Valley Water District and the county Parks Department. Old mine residue is expensive to remove. Urban runoff -- essentially what the rain washes into creeks -- is difficult to capture and filter.

It's worth the effort, not just to make the fish in the bay healthy for people, but to make the bay healthy for fish.
Taking on mines' toxic legacy, bold plan deals with mercury

Cleaning up Valley's legacy of toxic mercury

By Paul Rogers

Mercury News

Before computers, before electronics, before even orchards, Silicon Valley's leading industry was mercury.

Starting in the 1850s, thousands of people from the United States, Mexico, China and England descended on the Almaden Hills south of San Jose, where the mercury they pulled from the ground helped fuel California's Gold Rush by allowing gold to be separated from ore. But runoff from those mines has contaminated fish in creeks and San Francisco Bay for decades.

Today, nearly a century after most of the mines closed, the Bay Area will finally begin in earnest to clean up its massive toxic legacy. State water officials are scheduled to vote on a sweeping plan to reduce the amount of mercury flowing into the bay from the mines and other sources by nearly half in the next 20 years.

The goal is to make fish caught from the bay safe to eat someday and to reduce the health risk to humans and wildlife for generations to come.

``Mercury is one of the most serious pollutants in the bay. This is a big one,'' said Bruce Wolfe, executive officer of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. ``We can say, gee, we wish people knew about it back then, but we are in some ways paying for the sins of the fathers.''

The board's plan, the product of 10 years of study, will cost an estimated $2.6 billion between now and 2025. It represents the largest effort ever to clean up toxic pollution in the bay.

If approved today as expected by the water board, the plan will set in motion broad government efforts to remove mercury-laden mining waste from San Jose's creeks.

It also will accelerate projects to seal up old mining sites in the Sierra Nevada foothills; capture and filter billions of gallons of storm water flowing from Bay Area streets; regulate how dentists dispose of fillings; and launch public education campaigns to better dispose of everything from old thermometers to fluorescent lights.

Even if the plan is successful, it will still take 120 years before enough mercury in bay muds flushes out into the ocean so that bay fish are safe to eat in any amount, water board scientists estimate.

But city and county officials are grumbling that the plan sets targets that may be nearly impossible to achieve. Environmentalists say the goals don't go far enough.
Not biodegradable

Mercury is a naturally occurring metal that is harmful to fish, wildlife and people in high concentrations. It does not degrade in the environment.

It affects the brain and nervous system. Young children and pregnant women are most at risk from its effects, particularly for birth defects. For children, long-term exposure to mercury can impair physical coordination, decrease brain function and even cause mental retardation. In adults, it can impair hearing and speech, blur vision and damage the kidneys.

There are two major sources of mercury in the bay. Large amounts flow from long-closed mines in the Sierra Nevada and Almaden Hills when it rains. And mercury from consumer products, even air pollution from the burning of coal, flows into the bay in storm water.

Mercury in its basic form is not harmful, and does not pollute drinking water.

But when there is a lack of oxygen in the water and it is exposed to bacteria, it can change into a form called methylmercury, which is absorbed by plankton and other species at the bottom of the food chain.

Small fish eat the plankton, and when big fish or birds eat the small fish, levels of mercury move up the food chain, building up in tissue. When people eat certain fish from the bay, they, too, can absorb mercury.

One recent study found that as many as 170,000 people a year around the Bay Area eat fish they have caught in the bay, such as halibut, white croaker, walleye and rockfish. Many are low-income Latino and Asian immigrants. No comprehensive studies have been done to determine if they are ingesting unhealthy levels of mercury.

"We see people fishing off piers in places like Oakland and San Francisco all the time," said Sejal Choksi, attorney with the environmental group San Francisco Baykeeper. "People are telling us they are eating lots of the fish. There aren't enough warning signs on the piers, and many of them are covered with graffiti."

Although the signs, put out by local health departments, are printed in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and other languages, sometimes people eat the fish out of necessity, Choksi said.

"Some people are catching these fish because they don't have a choice," she said. "They don't have the money to go to Whole Foods."

Because of mercury and PCB pollution, state health officials in 1999 recommended that adults should eat no more than two meals per month of San Francisco Bay sport fish, including sturgeon and striped bass. (One meal for an adult is about eight ounces.)

Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, nursing mothers and children under age 6 should not eat more than one meal of fish per month. The advisory does not apply to salmon, anchovies or herring caught in the bay, or to fish caught in the delta or ocean.

Mercury also has been found in bird eggs at levels high enough to account for high rates of the eggs failing to hatch, particularly in some endangered birds, such as the California clapper rail,
biologists say.

**Bay cleans itself**

The cleanup plan to be voted on today lays out the arithmetic.

Every year, 2,698 pounds of mercury flows into the bay. But more than that -- 3,086 pounds a year -- is washed under the Golden Gate Bridge and diluted in the ocean, while an additional 419 pounds a year evaporates from the bay's surface, according to the water board's report.

In other words, the bay is slowly cleaning itself by losing about 807 pounds of mercury a year.

The goal of the plan, which is required under the federal Clean Water Act, is to cut the amount going into the bay by 42 percent so the bay cleans itself faster.

Much of the mercury flowed into the bay from the 1850s to the 1880s.

San Jose's New Almaden Mines became the largest mercury mines in North America in the mid-19th century, putting the young city on the map and giving its newspaper, the San Jose Mercury, a name.

Brick furnaces were built near Los Alamitos Creek and stoked with firewood from the oak trees that lined the hillsides. Miners with pickaxes, blasting powder and sledgehammers chiseled out cinnabar, the ore that contains mercury, and fed it into the smoking furnaces, where it released the liquid known as quicksilver. They produced more than a million 76-pound flasks of mercury.

There were seven mines and 3,000 residents, with Cornish tin miners and their families living in "Englishtown," and Mexican miners living nearby in "Spanishtown."

Today the area is Almaden Quicksilver County Park. The mines have been sealed, and hot spots of contamination cleaned. But sediment remains in creeks such as Los Alamitos and Guadalupe.

``The practice was to shove all the processed ore and waste rock into the creeks and wait for the winter rains to wash it away," said Dave Drury, a senior civil engineer with the Santa Clara Valley Water District. "Some of it made it to the bay. A lot of it is still here, in the banks."

The water district is working to complete a $1 million survey of mercury. Under the plan to be approved today, it and the Santa Clara County Parks Department will be largely responsible for reducing the amount of mercury flowing into the bay from the Guadalupe watershed from 200 pounds a year to about four.

They will do that, Drury said, by carving away hard deposits of waste rock along creek beds and removing dredged materials as part of normal flood-control efforts.

``The county is doing whatever it can to remove it from the watershed," said Lisa Killough, county parks director. But she said she doesn't know how the county can meet such an ambitious goal.

Others are more skeptical of the need to spend $2.6 billion on a cleanup.

Kitty Monahan has lived in New Almaden since 1970 and said she's never seen any health effects.
``I'm concerned about the state saying we are toxic out here,'' she said. ``It's not. We have fought hard for county parks funds and we don't want all of them spent on things that are unnecessary.''

**Getting gold from ore**

The effects of the Gold Rush on San Francisco Bay continue, 156 years after James Marshall found gold at Coloma.

To get gold from ore in the Sierra Nevada, miners crushed rocks, then mixed them with quicksilver, which bound to the gold. The mixture was then heated in smelters, separating the gold.

After miners had panned most of the easily recoverable gold nuggets in the streams of the Sierra Nevada, they used picks and shovels, blasting and then hydraulic hoses to tear down whole hillsides in search of gold-bearing ore. The hoses washed away soil, sand and gravel, sending it downstream to the bay. By the time the practice was finally halted in the 1880s by a lawsuit from farmers, the bay's floor was coated with a three-foot layer of mud, killing historic oyster beds and sealing thousands of pounds of mercury in the sediment.

``I don't think they understood the consequences of their actions,'' said Geoff Brosseau, executive director of the Bay Area Storm Water Management Agencies Association. ``They were chopping down redwood forests and washing away whole hillsides, so I don't think the thought even crossed their mind that mercury would end up causing a problem decades later.''

He paused.

``The lesson for us in this is be careful what you do today, so you don't cause problems for future generations.''

*Contact Paul Rogers at progers@mercurynews.com or (408) 920-5045.*
Mercury cleanup proposal OK’d

S.J.-AREA MINE RUNOFF AMONG TOP TARGETS

By Paul Rogers

State water officials Wednesday approved the largest cleanup plan ever for a toxic pollutant in San Francisco Bay, endorsing a $2.6 billion effort to reduce the amount of mercury flowing into bay waters by nearly half over the next 20 years.

With a 6-0 vote, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board approved the plan after a four-hour hearing in Oakland.

``It is going to be a long road, and mercury is a serious problem, but we have now a reasonable, achievable approach. We're on our way,'’ said Wil Bruhns, a spokesman for the board.

Mercury, a naturally occurring element, is a potent neurotoxin that can build up in bay fish and bird eggs, posing a health risk to wildlife and to humans who eat some species of fish caught from the bay.

Each year, 2,698 pounds flow into the bay, mostly from runoff of 19th-century mining operations, including Sierra Nevada gold mines and the long-closed New Almaden mercury mines south of San Jose. Other sources include thermometers, fluorescent lighting, erosion of bay sediments and air pollution from burning coal as far away as China.

The greatest reductions will be required in San Jose’s Guadalupe watershed, because concentrations are high in creeks near former mine sites. The Santa Clara Valley Water District will have to remove mining waste, reduce erosion and take other measures.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

For more information, go to www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb2/ sfbaymercurytmdl.htm.

Contact Paul Rogers at progers@mercurynews.com or (408) 920-5045.
Scientists have a plan to clean up 150 years of mercury contamination of the Bay but it will take almost that long to do it.

Today, the Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board will consider a plan that would take 120 years to cut mercury in the Bay by half.

If successful, residents could safely eat more shark, striped bass, sturgeon and other Bay fish by 2124.

The mercury pollution began with mining 150 years ago, often in places more than 100 miles away.

During the Gold Rush, millions of gallons of mercury were used to separate gold from sand and rock, and much of that mercury washed down streams and rivers into the San Francisco Bay, where an estimated 140,000 pounds of it remain in the bottom mud and in the food web.

It is largely because of mercury that health officials now warn against eating many types of fish in the Bay more than a couple of times a month. Scientists also believe the toxic metal in the eggs of shore birds prevents many from hatching.

The plan, the first of a new generation of water pollution control plans for the Bay, would require city and county stormwater agencies to reduce mercury in urban runoff by half in the next 20 years.

Mercury that drains out of a historic mercury mining district in Santa Clara County would have to be reduced by 98 percent.

Beyond that, the plan, which has been under development since 1998, will rely largely on natural flows to scour mercury-laden sediment out through the Golden Gate, and on a related effort under consideration by a Sacramento-based water board to reduce mercury in the Central Valley.

Refineries and sewer systems, both relatively minor sources of Bay mercury, would not have to reduce their discharges.

Mercury that settles out of the air would be largely unaddressed because the water board’s scientists believe the bulk of it comes from coal-fired power plants in Asia.

In all, the water board’s scientists estimate that 3,900 pounds of mercury flows out of the Bay each year because of flushing, evaporation and dredging.

And about 2,700 pounds of mercury gets into the Bay waters each year. The goal of the plan is to cut the flow to about 1,500 pounds a year.

Representatives of sewer agencies and refineries said they mostly accept the plan, but flood control agencies expressed doubt about meeting the goals.

"It's going to be a significant cost," said David Drury, a senior civil engineer for the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which is responsible for flood control in the drainage that holds the New Almaden mines. "It puts a big burden on the community here."

It is unclear who will pay the cost of the clean-up, but the requirements could force local governments to seek tax hikes or fee increases to pay for them, a stormwater association spokesman said.
"If you're trying to pull microscopic amounts of mercury out of water, it can get very expensive very quickly. Hundreds of millions of dollars is the kind of figure we'd be talking about," said Gary Brosseau, a spokesman for the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association. "With the information we have on hand, we could go in the wrong direction very expensively."

Individual efforts will be important, too.

Brosseau said cities and counties can encourage more recycling of thermometers and fluorescent light bulbs, but that will not be enough to reduce mercury in urban runoff by half.

The head of an environmental group that has monitored the plan's development said it does not go far enough.

"Considering the magnitude of the problem, it's disappointing," said San Francisco Baykeeper Sejal Choksi.

Noting that water quality regulators said they do not know what happens to hundreds of pounds of mercury in crude oil that goes to refineries, Choksi said she believes the water board underestimated the amount of Bay mercury from refinery smokestacks.

"They know these air sources are a problem, so reduce it," she said.

The water board estimates the five Bay Area refineries combined discharge less than seven pounds of mercury a year. As part of the plan being considered today, the water board and refineries are expected to determine more accurately how much mercury comes to the refineries and where it goes.

Other contaminants are also coming under greater scrutiny.

Before the end of the year, the board plans to issue a similar clean-up plan for PCBs, an industrial chemical widely used until a 1979 ban.

"We think mercury is the most significant pollutant, followed closely by PCBs. That's why we did those first," said Wil Bruhns, a water board spokesman.

"The health advisory for fish (which is based largely on mercury and PCBs), is the most significant problem in the Bay," Bruhns added.

If the water board adopts the plan, it will still have to be approved by the State Water Resources Control Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency before it becomes final.

Mike Taugher covers the environment and energy. Reach him at 925-943-8257 or mtaugher@cctimes.com

IF YOU GO

The water board meets at 9 this morning at the Elihu M. Harris State Office Building, 1515 Clay St., Oakland.
EPA faults mercury cleanup plan for Bay

By Mike Taugher
CONTRA COSTA TIMES

OAKLAND - A plan to clean up more than a century's worth of mercury contamination in San Francisco Bay hit a snag Wednesday when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency told regulators here it would reject the plan unless it is changed.

It was the first time the EPA has taken such a stance on any of the more than 200 such pollution clean-up plans approved in California during the last decade or so, said David Smith of the EPA.

Despite Smith's warning about the plan's deficiencies, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board approved the comprehensive blueprint to reduce mercury on a 6-0 vote. It still must be approved by state water officials in Sacramento before going to the EPA.

Called a TMDL, for "total maximum daily load," the plan estimates how much mercury is already in the Bay and its food web, how much mercury pollution goes into the Bay each year and how much pollution must be reduced.

The document estimates that by reducing mercury pollution over the next 20 years from such sources as urban runoff, historic mercury mines in Santa Clara County and the rivers that drain into the Delta and Bay waters, it will again be safe to eat local fish in about 120 years.

"I think (the plan's adoption) is extremely significant in that this is the largest restoration that we've ever adopted for the Bay as a whole," said Bruce Wolfe, the regional water board's executive officer.

Wolfe said he is confident adjustments can be made in the coming months to address the EPA's objections and that the plan would ultimately be approved and implemented.

Smith, who oversees development of TMDLs for the EPA's San Francisco office, said the problem with the plan approved Wednesday is that it fails to guarantee mercury levels in the Bay would fall far enough to meet targets a century from now.

He also said regulators are being too soft on refineries and city sewer systems. Despite assurances from regional regulators that those sources will not be allowed to increase mercury discharges, the math used in the plan appears to allow refineries and sewer plants to increase mercury discharges.

Smith, who had asked the board to reject the plan until it was modified, said the differences nevertheless are likely to be worked out.

"Maybe you can address that by modifying the (water quality) standard or maybe you do that by tightening" regulations on refineries and city sewer systems, Smith said.

Lawrence Kolb, another regional board official, expressed frustration with the EPA's stance. Of the 2,700 pounds of mercury that flow into the Bay each year, he said, only about 44 pounds come from those sources.

"All the point sources (like refineries and sewer treatment plants) taken together are almost irrelevant to solving the problem," Kolb said. "To get into non-stop wars with the dischargers is a waste of staff resources."

Regional water board officials also said the water quality standard that the EPA is asking them to meet is 20 years old and is out of date. If that water quality standard, which was designed to prevent poisoning of aquatic organisms, is adjusted, the regional board might be able to show that the mercury plan will in fact reach that goal.

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SAN FRANCISCO BAY
State approves plan to flush out mercury
Agency's proposal would cut flow by 40% over 20 years
- Patrick Hoge, Chronicle Staff Writer
Thursday, September 16, 2004

A key state regulatory agency approved a sweeping plan Wednesday to clean up mercury pollution in San Francisco Bay that is largely the legacy of mining during California's Gold Rush.

The plan, which intends to cut mercury discharges to the bay by about 40 percent over 20 years, was unanimously accepted by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Under the plan, the bay's tidal action would remove the bulk of the mercury, which is stored in underwater sediment. Scientists estimate it will take 120 years to reduce mercury in the bay to pre-Gold Rush levels.

"I think it's a victory for the environment," said board member Josephine De Luca.

Representatives of several environmental groups attacked the plan for lacking specifics about the cleanup of abandoned mines, the reduction of mercury runoff from the Sierra via Central Valley rivers and efforts to prevent thousands of people -- often poor people -- from eating too much fish from the bay.

"How is that going to be accomplished, and who is going to pay for it, and when is it going to be done?" asked Leo O'Brien, executive director of WaterKeepers Northern California, concerning efforts to limit fish consumption. "This does not say one word about that."

The water board's vote came despite objections from a representative of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which must also ultimately approve the plan.

David Smith, a manager in the EPA's water division in San Francisco, told board members that the plan's standards were not strong enough and that he wanted to see more work done before a vote was taken.

Smith also said the plan left too many details to be resolved by mercury-discharge proposals under development for the Central Valley and the Guadalupe River in the South Bay, where the nation's largest mercury mines once operated.

Without changes, Smith said he thought it would be "very difficult for the EPA to approve" the plan, which was 10 years in the making.

Tom Mumley, the regional water board's chief of planning, said the bay plan set overall requirements and left the specifics of how to meet standards up to local agencies.
Several sewage-treatment agencies around the bay, for example, have started to regulate dentist offices in anticipation of stricter mercury discharge requirements, he said.

"We don't prescribe that level of detail," Mumley said. "We're saying that they have to come up with a plan."

Representatives of water-treatment agencies objected Wednesday to the plan, saying it would be overly expensive for them, with costs ranging from $100 million to $500 million a year, they said.

"We feel it is unfair," said Antioch Mayor Donald Freitas, speaking as a representative of the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association, which includes 90 cities and counties.

Freitas' comments were echoed by David Chester of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which has the heavily polluted Guadalupe River in its jurisdiction. Mercury discharges from the river must be cut from about 200 pounds a year to about 4 pounds a year, under the cleanup plan.

Mumley said the cost of reducing water-treatment discharges could be as high as the agencies' estimates but would most likely be less. The benefits also would include reduction of other toxic materials, such as PCBs, improved flood control and restored natural areas, such as creeks.

"It's not a large amount of money," said Mumley, considering that local agencies in the Bay Area are spending about $500 million a year treating sewage for more than 6 million people in the region.

Even small amounts of mercury can impair the neurological development of fetuses and children, while in adults mercury can cause tremors, memory loss and other health problems.

Elemental mercury is not readily absorbed by the body -- but in the bay, bacteria can transform it to methylmercury, which is accumulates in certain aquatic animals, presenting a threat to humans and wildlife.

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Think before you put products down the sink.

HOME & GARDEN

DAILY REPUBLIC
Home & Garden

Home stuff

CLEAN UP YOUR ACT: Before you clean your paint roller or toss an unused prescription down the sink, the Bay Area Clean Water Agencies asks that you think twice.

According to Phil Bobel of BACWA, many cleaning products, pesticides, solvents and other items many people have around the house contain hazardous waste. These chemicals pass through the sewer system to treatment plants that aren't designed to remove toxics from wastewater, and it all flows right into the bay.

Worst offenders, according to Bobel, are cleaning solutions with lye, many spot removers, oil-based paint and pharmaceuticals such as antibiotics and hormone medications.

There are safe disposal methods for all of this stuff. For details, visit www.hhw.org or call (408) 299-7300 in Santa Clara County. And to really clean up your act, check out the ``Clean It! Safer Housecleaning Methods That Really Work,'" which you can download off the home page of www.bacwa.org.

-- Holly Hayes, Mercury News
APPENDIX D: Circulation & Average Audience Size Information

Radio

Average daily audience sizes for the following Bay Area radio stations:

- **ALICE -FM** =250,000 during morning show & 500,000 weekly
- **KBLX- FM** =310,000
- **KCBS-AM** =901,000
- **KFRC-FM** =Average .25hr 30,000 & 600,000 listeners per week
- **KOHL FM** =N/A non-commercial station not rated
- **KPOO-FM** =N/A station not rated
- **KQED-FM** = 598,000
- **KSJO- FM** =247,000
- **KSRO-AM** =36,000
- **KUFX- FM** =204,000
- **KZYX-FM** =22,500

Print

Average circulation for the following Bay Area newspapers:

- **Alameda Times Star** =7,300
- **The Argus** =31,873
- **Daily Review** =37,000
- **Fairfield Daily Republic** =21,465
- **Marin Independent Journal** =40,267
- **Oakland Tribune** =67,308
- **San Francisco Chronicle** =527,466
- **San Jose Mercury News** =283,757
- **San Mateo County Times** =34,331
- **Tri-Valley Herald** =33,535

Internet

Average page views per month for the following websites:

- **Alameda Times Star** =149,000 page views per month
- **The Argus** =253,000 page views per month
- **Daily Review** =180,000 page views per month
- **KCBS-AM** =3 Million page views per month
- **Oakland Tribune** =1,494,000 Million page view per month
- **San Francisco Chronicle** =64 Million page views per month
- **San Mateo County Times** =277,000 page views per month
- **Tri Valley Herald** =216,000 page views per month