Key Facts about SRCSD's Operations

Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District

In addition to providing quality wastewater treatment service for nearly 35 years, the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCSD) has been a diligent steward for both the environment and its ratepayers. SRCSD has consistently and effectively fulfilled its mission to provide reliable, high level protection of beneficial uses in the Sacramento River and the Delta at a reasonable cost to its ratepayers.

SRCSD serves residents and businesses in the urbanized areas of Sacramento County and the cities of Sacramento, West Sacramento, Citrus Heights, Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove and Folsom.

SRCSD's size and location make it unique.

- Although SRCSD is the largest inland municipal wastewater treatment facility in California, it discharges to California's largest river, the Sacramento River.

- SRCSD's discharge is a relatively small percentage of the total volume of the Sacramento River - often constituting only 1% – 2%.

- The Sacramento River is part of the Delta estuary, an important water and habitat resource for the entire state. The Delta has received much attention recently as policymakers work to ensure its viability and sustainability.

SRCSD's secondary treatment process adequately protects beneficial uses of the Delta and is similar to those used in other major communities like Los Angeles, Orange County, San Francisco, Oakland, Contra Costa County and the East Bay communities.

- Water treatment requirements and effluent limits in California – and throughout the U.S. – are based on the beneficial use impacts on and the proportional volume of the receiving water. Simply put, the regulations are geared to provide levels that are safe for human health as well as the fish and other organisms.

- For instance, San Diego only provides primary treatment because its effluent flows into the ocean and is a very small portion of the ultimate mixture. Conversely, advanced treatment is necessary for facilities whose effluent dominates the receiving water, such as the City of San Jose. This is not the case for SRCSD since the Sacramento River is the largest river in California and provides dilution levels similar to the San Francisco Bay and some ocean discharges.

- Treatment requirements established in this manner are fully protective of beneficial uses and in full compliance with the Clean Water Act and California Water Code. In fact, the SRCSD has an outstanding record of compliance, consistently meeting or outperforming its long list of permit requirements.

***No existing information demonstrates that discharges from SRCSD's treatment facility are adversely impacting Delta species* - but SRCSD is supporting more research to yield definitive answers to new questions.**

- Several issues have been raised regarding ammonia impacts to the ecosystem; however, none of these hypotheses have been adequately studied nor, more importantly, have they been confirmed.

- According to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB), "current Delta ammonia concentrations are far lower than concentrations that US EPA guidance indicates would be toxic."

- Data does demonstrate that several other stressors, including Delta exports and flow manipulation have contributed to significant looses of fish and that invasive species, contaminants, increased number of predators, fish entrainment and Delta island urbanization may have contributed to the decline of the Delta and its fish populations. Prudent policy and fiscal management dictate the largest impacts be tackled first, instead of expending significant resources to nibble around the edges of the problem.

- Results from a 2008 study conducted by the CVRWQCB indicate the SRCSD's effluent is not acutely toxic to Delta smelt Another CVRWQCB study is underway to determine whether ammonium in the Delta are inhibiting phytoplankton growth and disrupting Delta fishes' food chain. Results should be available in 2009.

- SRCSD has been monitoring ammonia in its effluent and in the Sacramento River for years. Using its sophisticated mathematical modeling tools in combination with effluent and river monitoring data, USEPA aquatic life criteria for ammonia, and results from routine effluent toxicity tests, SRCSD has determined that its discharge has no adverse toxicity impacts on sensitive aquatic organisms in the Delta, including both fish and invertebrate species.

SRCSD ratepayers should not have to pay for unwarranted advanced treatment simply because water interests from Southern California, Bay Area and South Central Valley want to move their transfer facilities further north up the Sacramento River.

- Under current conditions the SRCSD meets all regulatory and water quality requirements and provides a high level of environmental protection at reasonable cost to its ratepayers.

- Requiring the SRCSD to use advanced treatment to remove ammonia may not have a beneficial effect on the Delta's uses, yet will require a substantial cost as well as significant energy expenditures and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

- Delta water policy must benefit all Californians – and all who benefit must share in its costs.

- SRCSD has a fiduciary obligation to its rate payers to avoid unnecessary costs and will strongly oppose projects that lack a sound rationale and fail to provide measurable benefits to the Delta and its uses.

To ensure that the SRCSD's treatment plant is properly designed and operated, SRCSD has invested significant resources to understand the water quality impact of its discharge, including:

- Developed sophisticated mathematical modeling tools that have been extensively field validated and supported by independent modeling experts.

- Brought together numerous stakeholders to develop and implement ambient monitoring programs in the Sacramento area and the Sacramento River watershed to enhance regional understanding of ambient water quality conditions;

- Worked with the Central Valley Regional Water Board and other stakeholders in formal processes to understand and develop solutions to difficult issues, including, but not limited to, mercury, pesticides, salts, nutrients, pathogens and organic carbon.