

**CV-SALTS Executive Committee Administrative Meeting  
9 August 2011**

**Item 8. Information item - Calaveras (Hodson/Littlejohns Fault)  
Salt-Related Regional Board Basin Plan Amendment**

Background: The Royal Mountain King Mine (RMKM), in Calaveras County, is located in a fractured bedrock fault zone with unique and complex geologic and hydrogeologic conditions. The area contains pockets of naturally occurring high saline groundwater (up to 10,000 mg/l TDS) adjacent to relatively low salinity groundwater (less than 500 mg/l TDS). The facility was operated as an open pit gold mine from 1989 through 1994. During that time, overburden material, waste rock, and gold ore were removed from three excavation pits. The mine ceased operations in 1994.

In 2003, the Regional Board issued a Cease & Desist Order (CDO) to address water quality concerns by requiring containment of the material removed from three excavation pits. In 2004, the State Board reviewed the CDO and remanded it to the Regional Board to consider alternative planning and/or regulatory approaches other than strict compliance with Title 27 containment requirements for the mining operations.

Project: Regional Board staff is currently considering a proposal to develop a Basin Plan amendment that would de-designate areas of poor quality groundwater in the project area. As part of the process, the Board will evaluate which areas of groundwater meet the conditions in the Sources of Drinking Water Policy for beneficial use de-designation. In order to de-designate the groundwater beneficial uses, staff must have adequate information to justify the de-designation in accordance with the Sources of Drinking Water Policy, and must also have adequate information to delineate the groundwater that can be considered suitable for de-designation. Because of the geologic and hydrogeologic complexity of the area, there is currently technical uncertainty regarding the boundaries of such a zone.

In addition to considering de-designation of beneficial uses, staff is also considering alternative planning and regulatory alternatives. Those alternatives include:

- establishing site-specific water quality objectives based on background site conditions and the uses that are made of the water locally;
- establishing a special groundwater management area where applicable water quality objectives will not be met and where beneficial uses will not be fully protected; and
- no action alternative.

Project Status:

1. Staff held an early public consultation/scoping meeting in Stockton on June 23, 2011.
2. Written comments were received from Meridian Beartrack Company, owner of the RMKM site, and from one homeowner living near the RMKM site.
3. Another public meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2011 in Copperopolis.
4. The tentative schedule is to complete a draft Basin Plan amendment and staff report next spring and have the Board consider the matter next summer.

For more detailed information, go to:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water\\_issues/basin\\_plans/hodson\\_littlejohns\\_fault\\_zone/index.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/hodson_littlejohns_fault_zone/index.shtml) or contact Gene Davis @ 916-464-4687.