

BOG Meeting Summary

November 24, 2009

In attendance: Bob Brodberg, Terry Fleming, Jennifer Doherty, Mark Stephenson, Autumn Bonnema, Karen Taberski, Jay Davis, Gary Ichikawa, Michael Lyons, Jon Marshack, Cassandra Lamerdin, Aroon Melwani, Eric von der Geest, Chris Foe, Stacey Swenson

Agenda Modification: Due to the extended discussion that occurred on Item 3, items 4 and 6 were postponed to the next BOG meeting.

Item 1: Roll Call and General Updates

Key Points

- New paper published by Melwani et al. on Fish Mercury Project sport fish data: Spatial trends and impairment assessment of mercury in sport fish in the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta watershed.
- New report on USEPA National Lake Fish Tissue Study (<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fishstudy>)

Action Items

- Check on making the Melwani paper available through the My Water Quality Portal.

Item 2: Coast Year 1 and 2

Key Points

- Gary and his team did an excellent job of sampling this year, completing 36 zones.
- BOG members do find the sampling summaries to be helpful and want them to continue.
- Having a good list of secondary target species is helpful, as the primary targets are often not available. It would be helpful to have a longer list.
- 322 composite samples are being created from the 36 zones, most are complete.
- The original plan was to sample 33 zones in year 2. Due to the sampling effort being underestimated in year 1 and the expectation that rough seas on the north coast will lead to even more down time next year, as well as considerations of the locations of coastal access points, Gary is going to recommend that we collapse 8 zones into 4. This would allow us to remain within the existing budget.

Action Items

- Gary and Autumn develop an expanded list of secondary targets for the group to consider.
- Gary to write a short, 1-2 page report summarizing the year's fishing activity.
- Gary to develop plan and budget showing the proposed revision to the year 2 sampling plan. This will be discussed at the next BOG meeting (Jan 5).
- Autumn to develop an inventory of existing archived samples.

Item 3: Lakes Year 2

Key Points

- Aroon presented draft CDF plots for the 2008 sampling and contrasted them with the 2007 plots. Differences in the distributions are evident. Factors that may be contributing to the differences include sampling of many small lakes in 2008, fewer bass lakes in 2008, and the bias towards southern California in 2007 due to the sampling of many Region 4 lakes. The study was not designed to detect these differences, but if they are observed it would be of interest to understand them.
- Jay gave a preview of the spatial maps for 2008 using the Portal mapping function. The group approved the use of the same format for these graphs for the year 2 report as was used in the year 1 report.
- Little Oso Flaco Lake had some extremely high concentrations of organics. Sand crabs collected from this lake in a previous study were also high. People do fish at this lake.
- Karen and Region 2 staff think that a significant amount of the mercury in their lakes is coming from atmospheric deposition.
- Aroon provided a progress report on gathering data on lake and watershed attributes.
- Mark told the group that a draft report on the lakes bioaccumulation factor study would be available in January. The group was interested in seeing a presentation on this study.
- The group had a thorough discussion on follow-up sampling at hot lakes identified in the lakes survey for the purpose of developing consumption guidelines. Region 4 is planning extensive followup sampling. Region 2 is also performing follow-up sampling at several lakes. Karen put together a design for the Region 2 surveys with Margy Gassel of OEHHA. Bob Brodberg encouraged the regions to sit down with OEHHA to develop plans, as there is no one-size-fits-all recipe that applies to all situations. However, 3 composites of 3 species is a good general starting point. OEHHA likes to have a comprehensive picture where possible. Michael noted the lack of success in catching catfish from Region 4 lakes, and would like to fill this gap. The possibility of testing hatchery fish was discussed. Chris Foe noted the strong correlation between mercury in bass and in other species, and suggested that these relationships could be used to get a better picture of net methylmercury exposure. Funding of followup studies was also discussed. Chris Foe suggested that at some point other entities than SWAMP (such as reservoir owners) should perform the needed monitoring. The lakes were created for fishing and the owners are benefitting from this, so they should bear some responsibility for the mercury hazard. The sampling needed has a high pricetag –well beyond the BOG’s current budget. Karen noted that in 2000 some of the responsible parties paid for translations and some of the followup work. Bob noted that FERC regulators have been able to get licensees to pay for studies in some instances. 303(d) listing and 13267 letters were discussed as means to trigger or require the necessary monitoring. The group agreed that along with the year 2 report, the BOG needs to lay out possible strategies for addressing this issue.

Action Items

- Evaluate differences in CDFs between years statistically, and investigate causes if significant differences are observed.
- Include a note on the portal that some dot may be hidden underneath other dots.
- Add a feature allowing the user to enter a threshold for mapping.
- Create a private BOG portal site for viewing the preliminary data from 2008.
- Add a function allowing the use to enter their own threshold to use in mapping.
- Distribute the screening level PBDE data to the group in spreadsheet form.
- Discuss the role of atmospheric deposition in the Year 2 report.
- Schedule a presentation on the lakes BAF study for the next BOG meeting.
- Send the draft BAF report to the BOG Review Panel along with the year 2 lakes report.
- Gary to develop cost estimates for sampling catfish from region 4 lakes.
- Michael Lyons to meet with OEHHA to develop sampling plans for region 4 lakes.
- A separate companion report to the year 2 lakes report will be written, led by Terry Fleming, laying out possible strategies for addressing the need for followup sampling at lakes identified as having high concentrations in the lakes survey.

Item 5: Safe to Eat Portal

Key Points

- Jon Marshack provided a demo of the revised portal.
- The group commended Jon and the team for doing a great job on the portal, and approved of moving forward with making the portal accessible by the public.
- The BOG reaffirmed that it will take ownership of the portal and provide oversight for future refinements. However, the BOG noted that a stable source of funding will be needed to support maintenance and improvements to the site. State Board staff and SFEI need to determine roles in maintaining the portal.
- Other comments on the portal:
 - The group liked the picture pop-ups that were on the status page.
 - The advisory page implies things are OK for water bodies without advisories.
 - A data gaps tab would be useful for highlighting data gaps.
 - The effort to develop a mercury tissue objective could be listed on the Improvements page.
 - Showing a map of the water board regions would be helpful.
 - It would be good to warn users that the portal will be changed and refined over time.

Action Items

- BOG members were asked to test the website and let Jon know if there are any showstoppers or ways to improve the site by December 1.
- State Board staff and SFEI need to determine roles in maintaining the portal.

Item 7: Next Meeting

Action Items

- The next meeting will be a teleconference on January 5 from 1:00 to 4:00.