

ITEM: 11

SUBJECT: Original Sixteen to One Mine, Inc., Sixteen to One Mine, Sierra County

BOARD ACTION: *Consideration of NPDES Permit (NPDES No. CA0081809)*

BACKGROUND: Original Sixteen to One Mine, Inc. (Discharger) owns and operates Sixteen to One Mine (Mine). Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) Order R5-2002-0043 permitted the Mine to discharge up to 0.28 million gallons per day of mine drainage to the receiving water, Kanaka Creek.

WDR Order R5-2002-0043 contains technology based effluent limits for cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, total suspended solids (TSS), and zinc, based on the federal Effluent Limitation Guidelines for gold ore mining and milling activities. WDR Order R5-2002-0043 also contains water quality based effluent limits for arsenic, electrical conductivity (EC), and pH. As ordered by State Water Quality Control Board Water Quality Order 2003-0006, Order R5-2002-0043 was amended by the Central Valley Water Board to reduce effluent monitoring frequency. WDR Order R5-2002-0043 Amended expired in 2007.

The proposed NPDES Permit includes new final water quality based effluent limitations for antimony, iron, manganese, and nickel. The proposed NPDES Permit removes the technology based effluent limits for cadmium, copper, and lead, and instead, contains more stringent water quality based effluent limits. The proposed NPDES Permit also reduces the effluent monitoring frequency additionally to quarterly monitoring because the mine drainage data has been consistent, and therefore, once per quarter is sufficient to characterize the discharge.

ISSUES: Comments on the proposed NPDES Permit were received from Michael Miller, President Original Sixteen to One Mine, Inc. Mr. Miller comments that the mine drainage cannot comply with the waste discharge requirements in the proposed NPDES Permit. Staff agrees that treatment or other compliance alternative for the mine drainage is necessary, and that either option cannot be designed, financed, and constructed immediately. Staff met with Mr. Miller and provided guidance for submitting a request for additional time to comply with the WDRs in the proposed NPDES Permit. Mr. Miller also contends that the concentrations of metals and minerals within the mine drainage are of natural causes and that the discharge has no harmful or negative impacts on the beneficial uses of Kanaka Creek. During the meetings, Staff also explained that the effluent limits are based on water quality standards established to protect present and future beneficial uses of Kanaka Creek and the downstream receiving waters.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the proposed NPDES Permit.

Mgmt. Review   NM  

Legal Review           

5/6 February 2015 Central Valley Water Board Meeting

11020 Sun Center Dr. #200

Rancho Cordova, CA 95670