



California State Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Subcommittee 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy
1020 N. Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

California State Assembly Committee on Budget
Subcommittee 4 on Climate Crisis, Resources, Energy and Transportation
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Funding to the State Water Resources Control Board for 6PPD-q Sampling

Dear Governor Newsom and Legislative Leaders,

The undersigned groups write in strong support to provide \$1,000,000 to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to support Tribes and NGOs in conducting essential 6PPD-q sampling in the North Coast (Region 1), the Central Coast (Region 3), and the Central Valley (Region 5). This sampling is critical to protect threatened and endangered salmon populations, safeguard Tribal subsistence and traditional and ceremonial practices, and enable the state to begin addressing one of the most toxic pollutants ever identified for aquatic life.

For years, coho salmon have experienced acute die-offs immediately following precipitation events. These die-offs regularly kill 60-90% of spawning coho salmon and, for decades, researchers were unable to identify the specific pollutant or pollutants in stormwater causing these die-offs. In 2020, however, researchers identified the pollutant as 6PPD-quinone (6PPD-q).

6PPD-q is a chemical byproduct from a compound added to vehicle tires to prevent degradation. As tires wear down, particles and dust containing 6PPD-q accumulate on roadways, where rain then washes these particles into streams, rivers, and coastal waters through stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff has been identified as the primary transport for 6PPD-q, especially during first-flush storm events, and the U.S. EPA has identified 6PPD-q as the second most toxic chemical ever tested for aquatic species. Its extreme toxicity poses a severe threat to aquatic life, particularly coho salmon and steelhead trout – species protected under the Endangered Species Act and species with ecological, cultural, and economic significance.

Scientific studies demonstrate just how lethal 6PPD-q is to salmon. For example, untreated stormwater runoff from a single storm event can cause up to 42% mortality in steelhead trout and 13% mortality in Chinook salmon within just 1-2 days. Impacts on coho salmon are even more severe. Exposure leads to a condition known as urban runoff mortality syndrome, which can kill up to 100% of adult coho salmon returning to spawn in urban streams. In one experiment, juvenile coho salmon were exposed to untreated stormwater runoff for 24 hours. Mortality began within 2 to 4 hours of exposure, with nearly complete cumulative death observed within 8 hours. Even when the stormwater runoff was diluted by 95% with clean water, it remained lethal to coho salmon. Further, coho salmon exposed to 6PPD-q did not recover even after being transferred to clean water.

The threat from 6PPD-q is particularly significant in Northern California, where 75% of the state's precipitation occurs and where California's legally protected coho salmon populations persist. This crisis has profound implications for Tribes in Northern California, including the Yurok Tribe, Karuk Tribe, Hoopa Valley Tribe, and Quartz Valley Indian Reservation. Tribes have long-standing cultural and spiritual connections to salmon and their habitat, and salmon are central to tribal subsistence as well as traditional and ceremonial practices. In recent years, however, declining salmon populations have forced Tribes to severely restrict or close subsistence, commercial, and ceremonial fisheries. The continued presence of unregulated, untreated 6PPD-q in stormwater runoff exacerbates these declines.

Despite the severity of the threat, statewide data on 6PPD-q remain limited, making it essential for California to prioritize sampling in the areas most vulnerable to this pollutant. Tribes and NGOs in Northern California are ready, willing, and best suited to do this work due to their long-standing connection to the land, deep knowledge of impacted watersheds, and monitoring capacity.

For these reasons, we urge the Legislature to provide \$1,000,000 in funding to the State Water Board to support Tribes and NGOs in conducting 6PPD-q sampling within the North Coast (Region 1), the Central Coast (Region 3), and the Central Valley (Region 5). This critical investment will allow California to fill urgent data gaps, protect imperiled salmon populations, and safeguard cultural, spiritual, and subsistence practices of Tribes in Northern California. Acting now ensures that the state can respond effectively to one of the most toxic pollutants ever identified for aquatic life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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