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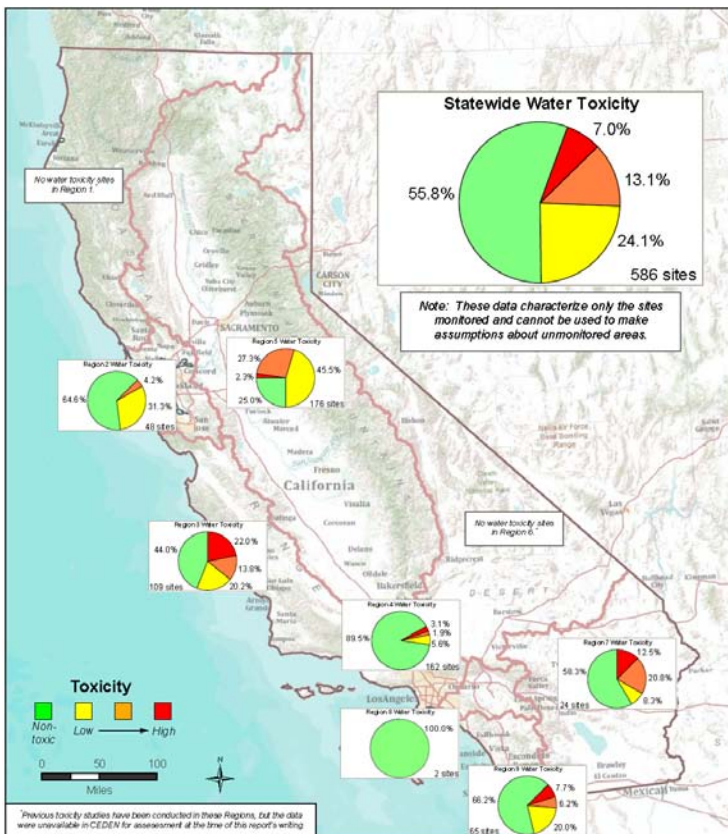
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Central Coast Water Most Toxic in California Lower Salinas Watershed “Deadly”

(Monterey, CA) Last week the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program of the State Water Resources Control Board released a new report, “Summary of Toxicity in California Waters: 2001-2009.” The Report summarizes toxicity results of 7007 water samples taken from 992 sites throughout the State. Toxicity is measured by placing test animals (small crustaceans and fish) in water samples and measuring survival against a standard sample.

Statewide results show that the Central Coast Region (Santa Barbara to Santa Cruz) has the most toxic inland surface water in the State of California. The report found that sites below agricultural areas are more toxic than sites below urban areas.

“Our water is deadly,” said Steve Shimek of Monterey Coastkeeper. “Not only is the Central Coast the most polluted in the State, but if you look at regional data the lower Salinas is the worst of the worst. Our surface water is more deadly than LA’s; that’s disgusting.”



The report points out that toxicity is generally caused by pesticides. Agricultural pesticides are regulated by the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) and the County Agricultural Commissioner. “The Ag Commissioner counts and catalogues but seldom regulates,” said Shimek. “What agriculture wants, agriculture gets.” The agency directly responsible for water quality is the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The agricultural community, including the DPR and the Ag Commissioners are opposing new stricter regulation proposed by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

“The regulators need to regulate and not bend to agriculture’s influence,” added Shimek.

Monterey Coastkeeper is a Monterey based nonprofit whose mission is to protect our watersheds and coastal ocean for the benefit of wildlife and humans alike.

The Report can be found at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/swamp/docs/reports/tox_rpt.pdf

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How to explore your local water quality:

If you live on the Central Coast, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board has a cutting edge water quality research tool at www.ccamp.org. Click on "CCAMP Data Browser." Make selections in the dropdowns across the top. As an example, choose "Salinas 309" then "toxicity" then "invertebrate survival in water." Be careful how you interpret the bar graphs: In this result the bar height represents percent survival, a good thing. No test organisms lived in water from the monitoring sites with zero survivorship, on the left side of the resulting graph. As another example, choose "Salinas 309" then "Basic Water Quality" then "Nitrates as N." In this case the height represents pollutant (nitrate) concentration, a bad thing. Explore "more information" to find things like the regulatory threshold or the amount of pesticide used in the watershed you are exploring. Highlight and click on a row to see all test results for a site. Zoom in and out on the map.