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July 8, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT H.R. 213 (SOLIS) – DRINKING WATER STANDARDS FOR PERCHLORATE (ITEM NO. 8, AGENDA OF JULY 12, 2005)

Item No. 8 is a recommendation by Supervisor Molina to support H.R. 213 (Solis), the "Safe Drinking Water for Healthy Communities Act of 2005."

H.R. 213 (Solis) would amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to propose a national primary drinking water regulation for perchlorate by January 31, 2006, and promulgate a national primary drinking water regulation by January 31, 2007.

There currently is no national primary standard for the acceptable amount of perchlorate in drinking water. Perchlorates are a group of compounds that occur both naturally and through manufacturing and have been used for decades in rocket fuels, explosives, pharmaceuticals, and certain fertilizers. Since 1985, perchlorates have been detected in both water and soil in a number of Superfund sites. Perchlorates have also been found in drinking water, leafy vegetables such as lettuce and Brussels sprouts, cow's milk, and human breast milk. Ingestion of perchlorates may interfere with the uptake of iodide into the thyroid gland, which is necessary for the proper formation of thyroid hormones. For this reason, recent attention has been directed to determining safe levels of perchlorate intake by humans.

At the State level, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment published a final Public Health Goal of 6 parts of perchlorate per billion (ppb) of solution in March 2004. This is not a regulatory requirement; it is a goal that California's public water

suppliers and regulators should strive to meet if feasible. There are no sanctions imposed on drinking water providers if they cannot reduce perchlorate levels to meet the goal. The State Department of Health Services will use the 6 ppb goal as the health basis for developing a regulatory drinking water standard.

The County Department of Health Services (DHS) indicates that the EPA has performed risk assessments based on studies of observed adverse health effects in rats exposed to perchlorates. Based on these assessments, the EPA established that drinking water could safely contain 24.5 ppb of perchlorates. However, when the EPA made this determination, the assumption was that drinking water would be the only source of perchlorate ingestion by humans. DHS notes that we now know that perchlorates are found in various foods and milk.

DHS indicates that research has not determined if the cumulative total of all dietary sources of perchlorates, including water, could be high enough to cause adverse human health effects. DHS supports H.R. 213 because it will begin to address concerns regarding perchlorate contamination by providing a national primary drinking water standard for perchlorates. The Department of Public Works (DPW) indicates that the Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts support H.R. 213 because it will ensure the continued health and safety of the Districts' customers. **Therefore, DHS and DPW recommend that the County support H.R. 213, and we concur.**

Support for H.R. 213 is consistent with existing policy to support proposals which would improve the reliability, quality, and security of water supplies for Los Angeles County and to support proposals and funding for research and development of technologies to improve water quality with respect to brackish water, chromium 6, perchlorate, methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE), arsenic, radon, and disinfection byproducts.

H.R. 213 was referred to the House Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials on February 4, 2005 and has yet to be set for a hearing. Support and opposition to H.R. 213 are unknown.

DEJ:GK
MAL:EW:hg

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Department of Health Services
Department of Public Works