



Media Release

Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
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Los Angeles Water Board Names Deborah Smith as New Executive Officer

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Los Angeles - The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board has selected Deborah Smith as its next Executive Officer. Smith, who had been Chief Deputy Executive Officer, will replace Samuel Unger, who retires on March 31.

“The entire Board is very pleased with Ms. Smith’s selection,” said Los Angeles Water Board Chair Madelyn Glickfeld. “She has demonstrated strong leadership from her very first years at the Board, when she was selected to assemble and lead a team to perform a comprehensive update to the Region’s Water Quality Control Plan. That major project kicked off 29 years of success and accomplishment at the Board.”

Since 1989, Smith has worked in various capacities for the Los Angeles Regional Water Board, building and improving the many programs in her Division. She has 20 years of service in the Executive Office, first as Assistant Executive Officer and later as Chief Deputy Executive Officer. Smith brings a wealth of scientific and regulatory knowledge and experience, a record of accomplishment, and a passion for protecting and improving water quality.

Smith’s vision has led to a number of “firsts” in California and in some cases, the country. These include her early work addressing trash, ammonia and emerging chemicals of concern (e.g. pharmaceuticals), as well as the impacts of climate change on water quality. In 1996, Smith was the first in the nation to recommend listing trash as a pollutant that impaired waterways, leading to the country’s first trash Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) in 1999. (Under the federal Clean Water Act, TMDLs limit the amount of pollutants that can be discharged to a surface water.)

From 1999 to 2013, Smith worked closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to develop a plan for and oversee the completion of all of the TMDLs in the region per a US EPA consent decree. The adoption of 47 TMDLs addressing approximately 175 waterbodies provided the framework for bringing rivers and coastal waters in the Los Angeles

region back into compliance with water quality standards so that aquatic life and human uses can be fully supported for current and future generations.

In 2012, Smith and her team led efforts to develop an innovative municipal stormwater permit that promotes multiple benefits, including augmenting water supplies, offsetting imported water use and greening our communities in order to provide habitat and healthier environments.

Smith has also been a leader in examining the effects of climate change on water quality and water resources in the region, which led to the development of a Climate Change Framework in 2015. This effort now serves as a model for other regions and agencies. Several key studies are underway that will inform the further development of this framework and strategies to integrate climate change factors with all of the Board's programs, one of which is examining the effects of prolonged droughts on aquatic species in our rivers.

Smith began her 33-year career as a water quality regulator in Louisiana, where she conducted wetland determinations for the state Department of Transportation and Development and later worked as an environmental scientist for the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Smith completed her B.S. in Biology from Slippery Rock State College and her M.S. in Zoology at Louisiana State University. She conducted additional post-graduate research and studies at LSU and the University of Washington, Friday Harbor Marine Labs.

The Los Angeles Region encompasses all coastal watersheds and drainages flowing to the Pacific Ocean between Rincon Point and the eastern Los Angeles County line, as well as the drainages of five coastal islands Rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries, groundwater and the Pacific Ocean within three nautical miles of the coast. The Los Angeles Region is the State's most densely populated and industrialized region. It has a population of more than 10 million people, thousands of regulated facilities, and a great diversity of built and natural environments to regulate, protect, and enjoy.

The Los Angeles Water Board has a staff of 149 employees and an annual operating budget of more than \$30 million.

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