



Enforcement News

Los Angeles Water Board introduces expedited enforcement of municipal stormwater violations

Board this month offered penalty payment option to 12 municipalities

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LOS ANGELES – In a new development intended to expedite enforcement of municipal separate stormwater sewer system (MS4) permit violations, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board for the first time offered multiple entities the option of paying a penalty to resolve discharge and reporting violations rather than going through the lengthy enforcement process.

The Los Angeles Water Board this past month issued 12 settlement letters to the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, the County of Los Angeles, the Cities of Los Angeles, Lomita, Carson, Torrance, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes and La Habra Heights, proposing a total of \$669,000 in penalties for stormwater discharge violations, most of which occurred at Machado Lake and Harbor Regional Park.

The permittees have until Feb. 9 to pay the mandatory minimum penalties or submit a response challenging the fines and requesting a review by the regional board through the formal enforcement process.

“The upfront penalty payment option is an innovation that enables us to address stormwater sewer violations more quickly,” said Hugh Marley, the board’s assistant executive officer. “This is the first time this approach has been used in California, though other regional boards are considering similar steps. By accelerating our enforcement of stormwater permits, we are ultimately limiting the amount of pollution released into our sewer systems and strengthening protection of human health and the environment.”

In July 2021, the board adopted a [permit for stormwater](#) and urban runoff that sets limits on bacteria, trash and other pollution discharged to the region’s waters. Under the previous MS4 permits first issued in the 1990s, Los Angeles and Ventura counties and the City of Long Beach were regulated by three separate board orders. The change consolidated the permits and gave cities and counties the time and flexibility to choose, plan and construct stormwater projects that are appropriate for local conditions.



The proposed penalties are the result of the board's efforts to enforce the maximum pollution levels incorporated into the MS4 permit, which covers permittees within the coastal watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The permittees have the option of paying the entire penalty to the [State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account](#) or a portion of the fine toward completion of a supplemental project to benefit the environment and further enforcement goals. The Abatement Account provides grants for the cleanup or abatement of pollution when there are no viable responsible parties to undertake the work.

A municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) is a publicly owned system of conveyances (ditches, curbs, catch basins, underground pipes, etc.) used for collecting or conveying stormwater that discharges to surface waters.

More information about [MS4 permits](#) is available on the Los Angeles Water Board website.

With approximately 10 million residents, Los Angeles is the most densely populated region in the state. It encompasses all the coastal watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura counties. Land use varies considerably. In Ventura County, agriculture and open space exist alongside urban, residential and commercial areas. In northern Los Angeles County, open space is steadily being transformed into residential communities. In the southern part of the county, land uses include urban, residential and industrial.