

# FACT SHEET # 2

## TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR NITROGEN COMPOUNDS AND ORTHOPHOSPHATE IN STREAMS OF THE LOWER SALINAS RIVER AND RECLAMATION CANAL BASIN AND THE MORO COJO SLOUGH SUBWATERSHED

*Approved and Effective as of May 7, 2014*

### What is a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)?

Simply put, TMDLs are strategies or plans to restore clean water. The Clean Water Act requires every state to evaluate its waterbodies and maintain a list of waters that are considered “impaired” either because the water exceeds water quality standards or does not achieve its designated use. For each water on the Central Coast’s “303(d) Impaired Waters List,” the California Central Coast Water Board must develop and implement a plan to reduce pollutants so that the waterbody is no longer impaired and can be de-listed.

“Total Maximum Daily Load” (TMDL) is a term used to describe the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. A TMDL project identifies the probable sources of pollution, establishes the maximum amount of pollution a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards, and establishes a plan to rectify the water quality impairments.

### TDMLs Approved & Effective – May 7, 2014

The *Total Maximum Daily Loads for Nitrogen Compounds and Orthophosphate in the Lower Salinas River and Reclamation Canal Basin and the Moro Cojo Slough Subwatershed* were adopted by the Central Coast Water Board at the regularly scheduled meeting of March 14, 2013. The TMDLs became effective upon approval by the Office of Administrative Law on May 7, 2014.

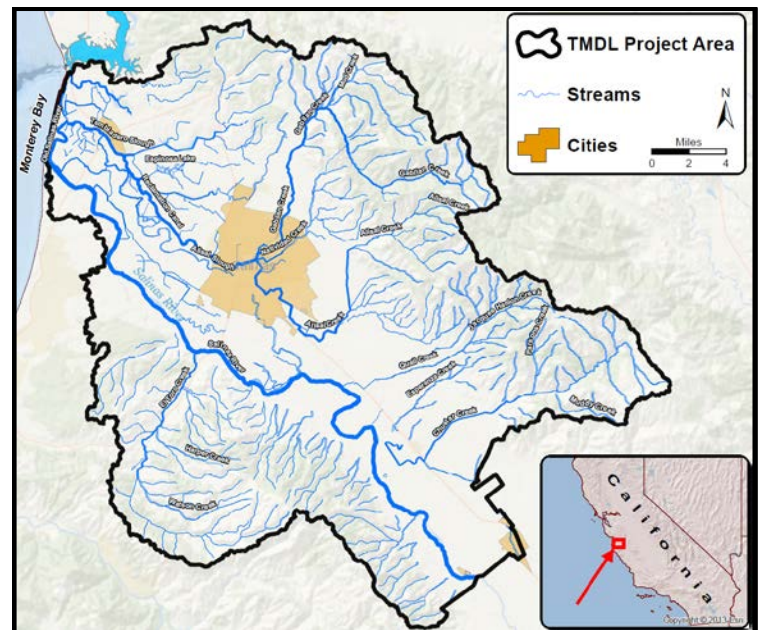
### Summary of the Water Quality Problem

Widespread surface water quality impairments in the lower Salinas Valley occur due to exceedances of water quality criteria for nitrate, unionized ammonia, and associated nutrient-related problems such as excessive orthophosphate, dissolved oxygen imbalances, toxicity, and excess algal biomass. As a result, a wide range of current or potential designated beneficial uses – including aquatic habitat, drinking water supply, groundwater recharge, agricultural supply, and water contact recreation - are not being supported locally in these waterbodies, and therefore these impairments constitute a serious water quality problem.

### What are the Sources of Nutrients?

Nutrient sources affecting surface waterbodies of the lower Salinas Valley include fertilizer application on irrigated cropland (major source), groundwater discharges to streams (major source), urban

storm sewer system discharges (minor source at basin-scale, but locally significant), manure from livestock (minor source and currently meeting pollutant load allocations), and natural background (minor source and meeting pollutant load allocations).



Lower Salinas Valley River Basin

### What Does the TMDL Expect of the Grower?

In general, TMDLs can result in additional or new regulatory measures; however this TMDL does not result in additional regulatory compliance requirements above and beyond what growers of the lower Salinas Valley are currently obligated to comply with. Current regulation (Agricultural Order R3-2012-0011) of irrigated agriculture operations and ongoing implementation practices required by existing regulation are anticipated to minimize the risk of controllable nutrient loading and mitigate anthropogenic nutrient loading to streams to the extent feasible. In short, at this

time compliance with Order R3-2012-0011 (the "Ag Order") is deemed to be a sufficient demonstration that owners/operators of irrigated lands are implementing these TMDLs.

Application of fertilizers or irrigation water which contains elevated levels of nutrients could potentially contribute increased levels of nutrients locally to soils, surficial sediments, and stream waters within the lower Salinas Valley. The Ag Order requires growers to develop and implement a farm water quality management plan. Growers should update their farm water quality management plan to control or minimize nutrient discharges. It should be noted that the Central Coast Water Board recognizes that there are quite a few growers who are proactively improving nutrient control measures, or are investigating the use of constructed wetlands and vegetative treatment systems, and these persons should be commended for their proactive efforts to help improve water quality.

### What Does the TMDL Expect of City & County MS4 Entities?

Nutrient discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) are relatively minor at the scale of TMDL project area river basin, but this source can potentially have significant localized effects. Waste load allocations will be incorporated into NPDES MS4 stormwater permits. Nutrient pollution discharged from MS4s will be addressed by regulating the MS4 entities under the provisions of an individual municipal stormwater permit or by SWRCB General Permit for the Discharges of Storm Water from Small MS4s (General Permit). The Central Coast Water Board recognizes and appreciates the improvements to riparian and stream health the City of Salinas and local citizens have implemented at Natividad Creek and Carr Lake.

### What Does the TMDL Expect of Owners/Operators of Livestock & Domestic Animals?

The water quality data available to staff from stream reaches that exclusively drain grazing lands, or lands where livestock and farm animals can be expected to occur, indicate the identified nutrient water quality targets, and thus load allocations, are being met in these reaches. As such, new regulatory requirements are not deemed necessary at this time. To maintain existing water quality and prevent any further water quality degradation, owners and operators of livestock and domestic animals should continue, or begin, to self-monitor and self-assess consistent with technical guidance from rangeland water quality management plans or manure management strategies. The Central Coast Water Board appreciates those ranchers and livestock owners who practice good land management and manure management practices for improved water quality protection.

### Financial & Technical Assistance

An approved TMDL can expand opportunities for available grant funding to implementing parties, such as growers, to improve nonpoint source pollution control. State and federal water quality grants programs are often directed to watersheds that have approved TMDLs. Central Coast Water Board grant staff is available to answer questions about the grant application and approval process, please contact Katie McNeill Central Coast Water Board environmental scientist at (805) 549-3336, or [katie.mcneill@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:katie.mcneill@waterboards.ca.gov). Resource professionals at the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County or at the local U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service center are also available to partner with growers and other implementing parties in providing technical assistance or with obtaining grant funding.



*Tembladero Slough @ Monterey Dunes Way  
(Photo credit: Mary Hamilton, CCRWQCB)*

### For More Information

For additional information regarding these TMDLs, please refer to the Water Board's Lower Salinas River Watershed Nutrient TMDL webpage by clicking the hyperlink shown below:

[Lower Salinas River Watershed Nutrient TMDLs](#)

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