



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

MAR 08 2016

Lisa Horowitz McCann
Interim Executive Officer
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Central Coast Region
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101
San Luis Obispo, California 93401-7906

Dear Ms. McCann:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's (Regional Board's) Basin Plan Amendment (BPA) for nitrogen compounds and orthophosphate Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) in the Lower Santa Maria River watershed and tributaries to Oso Flaco Lake in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, submitted on June 9, 2014. EPA finds that all the federal required elements are adequately addressed and approve the TMDLs pursuant to CWA section 303(d)(2). Upon complete implementation, the TMDLs will result in attainment of the applicable water quality standards for nitrate, toxicity associated with unionized ammonia, and the biostimulatory substances nitrate and orthophosphate for all waterbodies in the Lower Santa Maria River watershed and tributaries to Oso Flaco Lake. These TMDLs will also address listings for low dissolved oxygen.

The Regional Board, State Water Resources Control Board (State Board), and Office of Administrative Law (OAL) took action on the BPA on the following dates:

- Regional Board adoption on May 30, 2013 (Resolution No. R3-2013-0013)
- State Board adoption on February 4, 2014 (Resolution No. 2014-0009)
- OAL approval on May 22, 2014 (2014-04010-01S)
- Regional Board signed submittal letter to EPA, dated June 9, 2014, requesting approval of the TMDLs

The State has provided adequate opportunities for public review and comment, and demonstrated how public comments were considered for the final TMDLs. By including TMDLs for waterbodies that are not currently impaired as well as for those that are impaired, the TMDLs, numeric targets, load allocations, and waste load allocations appropriately employ an antidegradation approach to protecting beneficial uses in the identified waters. The TMDLs appropriately consider seasonal variation and critical conditions, and provide an adequate margin of safety.

The TMDL submittal contains the State's implementation strategy and schedule, which is a critical next step to realize improvements in water quality in the watershed. While EPA is not taking action on the implementation strategy, as EPA is not required by section 303(d) or its implementing regulations to approve or disapprove implementation plans submitted with TMDLs, EPA supports the State's proposed implementation approaches to protect and restore water quality. EPA encourages the Regional Board to continue its work with stakeholders to implement these strategies, consistent with California's Nonpoint Source Management Plan as approved by EPA under the Clean Water Act Section 319, when appropriate. EPA is available to provide support where possible to assist both the regulated community and the Regional Board in fostering ongoing watershed stewardship to achieve the TMDLs.

If you have any questions concerning this approval, please call me at (415) 972-3337, or Janet Hashimoto at (415) 972-3452.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Tomás Torres
Director, Water Division

cc: Rik Rasmussen, SWRCB
Jennifer Epp, CCRWQCB
Larry Harlan, CCRWQCB
Mary Hamilton, CCRWQCB