

## **Program Review Report**

### **Ventura Countywide Storm Water Quality Urban Impact Mitigation Plan (SQUIMP) Evaluation for the Cities of Camarillo, Buena Ventura and Thousand Oaks (Board Order No. 00-108; NPDES Permit No. CAS004002)**

#### **Executive Summary**

In mid- September 2004, staff from the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board conducted a program evaluation of the Development Planning Storm Water Program of the Cities of Camarillo (September 13), Buena Ventura (September 20), and Thousand Oaks (September 22). The evaluation started with Regional Board staff providing an overview of the municipal permit and state and federal expectations, the process of conditioning projects, plan, maintenance and database reviews, and an afternoon field visit.

The purpose of the program evaluation was to determine each City's compliance with SQUIMP requirements contained in the Ventura County Municipal Storm Water National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit.

The NPDES Permit was issued on July 27, 2000, and is scheduled to expire on July 27, 2005. This is the second Permit issued to the co-permittees under the storm water Phase I regulations. Part 4.C. of the NPDES Permit contains the requirements for Planning and Land Development Programs.

This program evaluation report describes project review and conditioning processes, and maintenance plans and practices. It identifies areas that need improvement and positive attributes.

Some areas that need improvement apply to some degree to all 12 co-permittees, and the following are examples:

- The permittees need to develop systems for tracking the status of SQUIMP projects and BMPs. (In order to correct this deficiency, or

enhance current tracking systems, all co-permittees are to put in place by November 15, 2004 a tracking system that will consist of the following at a minimum: BMP location, type of device, maintenance frequency, last maintenance date, responsible party for BMP, and type of SQUIMP project).

- The permittees need to begin to collect data to determine the effectiveness of BMPs approved under the SQUIMP requirements.
- The permittees need to focus more on matching BMPs with pollutants of concern.
- The permittees need to identify which projects subject to the State's Construction General Permit are also on the list of projects subject to SQUIMP requirements

Program areas for future additional review or focused emphasis include an evaluation of each permittee's legal authority for implementing SQUIMP requirements, and the permittee's application of SQUIMP requirements for projects in or adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs).

## **1. City of Camarillo**

Positive Attribute:

### Project Review Process

The design advisory committee, composed of relevant city departments, meets with an applicant with a SQUIMP project between 4-6 weeks from the time the project proponent submits an application. At this meeting, the storm water representative provides the applicant with a package to help the project proponent submit a completed SQUIMP project. The package includes state and federal requirements, control measure selection matrix for SQUIMP projects, treatment device access and maintenance agreement, a copy of SWPCP, and minimum maintenance requirements for BMPs.

The planning director may view minor projects while major projects go to planning commissions. In all the cities we evaluated, building tracts go to city councils for a hearing.

Tetra Tech, a consultant, helps the City of Camarillo with engineering calculations of SQUIMP designs and hydrology designs. A City staff person

facilitates this process. Staff and the consultant review approximately 3 projects a day. In the last 1-½ years, the City reports to have reviewed about 220 projects. The City has approved a good mix of BMPs, with catch basin inserts making half of all BMPs.

The City sends out letters to responsible parties to file with the City BMP maintenance records by October of each year. The City maintains an adequate spreadsheet system to track SQUIMP projects. The City maintains a log of training for its relevant staff.

#### Areas needing improvement:

- The City may need to notify developers to let the City know when construction of BMPs is completed for inspection and approval. Currently the system appears to rely on chance inspections.
- Focused attempt to match BMPs with pollutants of concern may be needed, especially at “shell” commercial buildings either prior to occupancy, or later because the type of use cannot be determined at the time of plan approval.
- A summary sheet showing calculations for flow and volume based BMPs is needed to clearly show how numerical criteria in permit requirements are met.
- A field visit at a gas station raised questions among Regional Board staff if the project’s designed grass swale can sufficiently handle all the water quality design runoff from the site, and small pooled water was observed near an inlet on the swale indicating inadequate maintenance.

## **2. City of Buenaventura**

#### Positive Attributes:

## Project Review Process

A no-fee pre-application meeting starts the process where different departments lay out their requirements to the developer. Not all developers take advantage of this process. This meeting is followed by a formal application proposal to the planning department. Project categories include tract subdivisions, land divisions, planned developments, and conditional use permit. To formalize project conditions, a meeting of the development advisory committee is held, culminating in the City's planning commission passing a resolution consisting of applicable conditions to the project. As in Camarillo, tract subdivisions routinely go before a city council for approval.

The Principal Civil Engineer of the Land Development group assigns projects to engineers for SQUIP conditioning. The Wastewater Division reviews and comments on commercial and industrial projects. The assigned engineer checks calculations and appropriateness of BMPs before a grading permit is issued. Incomplete plans are returned to applicant with corrections or with requests for completeness. Proposed devices are reviewed for approval and rejected for potential for vector breeding; for requiring excessive maintenance; high flow may re-suspend sediment; accessibility for maintenance, and if proposed BMP is not included in the Technical Guidance.

The City attempts to anticipate occupancy in shell commercial buildings, and identify prospective tenants and requires separate industrial wastewater lines extending outside for possible future connections. The City sends out letters to responsible parties directing them to either submit proof of BMP maintenance, or to incur inspection costs for City staff to verify maintenance.

### Maintenance Assessment Districts (MADs):

In June 1997, the city council approved a code on MADs. The code provides for the establishment of MADs for levying assessments on property specially benefited by public improvements to fund the cost of operating and maintaining such improvements. Prior to Proposition 218, annexing developments to a citywide street light district funded on-going costs. Since 1997, separate assessment districts are formed for each development. Public improvements within these districts include street lighting, landscaping, hardscape, irrigation and detention basin improvements. Based on the

specific benefits of these improvements to property owners within the MADs, the annual assessment per lot is about \$725. The maintenance districts are formed by the City Council, and are recorded. Although storm water quality benefits appear to be ancillary, the MADs are generally beneficial.

Inspections: There is a dedicated land development inspector for post-construction BMPs. The wastewater division inspector conducts periodic site inspections of BMPs on private property, while maintenance services division inspects BMPs within the public right-of-way.

#### Areas Needing Improvement:

- The City needs to make available to developers a written set of development and SQUIMP conditions. For instance, the use of ineffective blue, clump grass as swale vegetative species at an auto dealership we visited, could have been avoided if it were in a written policy.
- The City needs to make a CEQA checklist readily available.
- While the City maintains a database with much information and accessible to relevant City staff, it needs to identify sites by waste discharge identification number (WDID) to help inspection coordination with Regional Board staff.
- In compact areas, such as the City's downtown, the City should consider payment of mitigation fees by developers to support a mitigation fund for regional BMPs rather than approving many small BMPs that will be mostly ineffective.
- The City needs to require segregating roof runoff from parking lot drainage by directing the roof runoff to pervious areas.
- The City needs to find an affirmative way to implement SQUIMP conditions on residential growth management plans (RGMPs) which usually apply to 4 or more units of housing, and go to the City Council fully designed by the developer and with very limited flexibility for City engineers to properly condition them to mitigate storm water pollution.

- The memo dated August 31, 2004 from the maintenance services manager is very helpful in clearly laying out the responsibilities of each department in implementing the Development Planning Program. However, we recommend that the first page of the memo that lists SQUIMP categories add construction projects equal to or greater than 1 acre pursuant to Los Angeles Regional Board Resolution No. R-00-02.

### 3. City of Thousand Oaks

Positive Attributes:

#### Project Review Process

A pre-application process is in place in the City. However, unlike in the City of Ventura, these are not no-cost sessions. The City charges a developer \$750.00 for a pre-application meeting. After formal application, the application is reviewed to determine if the project falls under SQUIMP. The planning commission or the city council approves the projects. Like the 2 cities of Ventura and Camarillo, the City Council here too approves tract developments. In addition, zone changes, tree removal, such as removing more than 3 oak trees also go before the council. The planning commission approves needed waivers and development conditions for hillside (25% or more slope) areas.

The City reports that it is 95% builtout. As a result, the City has many redevelopment projects but few new developments. Non-SQUIMP projects are also conditioned although there are no deed restrictions on them, which translates to no maintenance follow-up. City staff use  $Q_{100}$  for peak flow/flooding control and  $Q_{10}$  for water quality control. The City is proactive in ensuring properly designed outdoor material storage areas, loading docks and properly designed trash storage enclosures are in place.

The planning division has a weekly meeting where all relevant departments are represented. This large group discusses the Technical Guidance Manual.

The Senior Engineer occasionally provides comments on plans for corrective actions. Repeat reviews of plans are not uncommon. Tetra Tech consultants help the City with a review of some SQUIMP projects.

#### Areas needing Improvement

- The BMP database needs further refinement to include some important fields.
- The letter sent out to developers regarding maintenance of BMPs needs to reflect the 3 conditions of the Covenant and Deed Restriction that the City records. The letter needs to include a statement requiring the developer to send the City proof or statement that the BMPs were maintained.
- Although resource is a limiting factor as pointed out by the City, a robust post-construction BMP inspection program is a key to a successful storm water program.

#### **Conclusion**

The storm water program in Ventura County is now a little over a decade old. The issuance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> municipal permit is on the horizon.

The Development Planning Program has come a long way over the past ten years: SQUIMP projects have been identified; ordinances have been modified to take into account storm water issues; whenever a City's General Plan is updated, development issues take center stage; a peak flow control study has been completed; a Technical Guidance Manual has been prepared and is being widely used by developers, and environmentally sensitive areas have been identified and are being protected.

In light of these milestones, it is important for us to lay out the plan and expectations for the next 5 or ten years, specifically over the upcoming permit period. We need to take this program a few steps higher.

The guiding principles for SQUIMP implementation need to be better (low impact) site design first that incorporate source control measures, then traditional BMPs such as vegetated swales or detention features (“water gardens”), and only then proprietary treatment devices.

We need to push aggressively for source control measures, such as reducing imperviousness. Rather than the passive posture we are currently taking of approving submitted treatment BMPs, we have to work with landscape architects, engineers and developers to minimize imperviousness, and to make use of wide green strips and porous pavement. Instead of raised curbs, we need to require flat surfaces with green strips or pervious surfaces. Spaces between parking spaces should also be green strips, thus reducing the need to treat a large volume of water and instead making use of infiltration practices.

In addition, comprehensive city-wide integrated resources planning needs to be considered. Components of this plan need to include regional BMPs, multiple benefits such as groundwater recharge, water conservation, public recreation, and retrofits during redevelopment.

With these and similar measures, we can affirmatively affect and improve the quality of storm water runoff in our region.