

State of California
Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Diego Region

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
May 14, 2014

ITEM: 5

SUBJECT: Information Item: Status Report on the Development of Amendments to Statewide Water Quality Control Plans to Reduce the Impact of Trash on Surface Waters and Efforts to Abate Trash in the San Diego River Watershed (*Christina Arias*).

PURPOSE: This is an information item to update the San Diego Water Board on efforts that are underway to reduce and prevent the accumulation of trash in surface waters of the State through 1) the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) development of proposed amendments to Statewide Water Quality Control Plans mandating implementation of stringent trash capture controls by dischargers; and 2) the trash abatement efforts of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the San Diego County Municipal Storm Water Copermittees located in the San Diego River Watershed.

RECOMMENDATION: There is no recommendation as this is an information item and the Board will take no action.

ISSUE: The accumulation of trash in surface waters is a statewide issue of concern and poses a significant threat to human health, aquatic life and aquatic dependent wildlife beneficial uses.

DISCUSSION: This item provides an opportunity for the State Water Board, and various entities in the San Diego River Watershed, including Caltrans and San Diego County Municipal Storm Water Copermittees, to present information and provide perspective on the various statewide and local efforts that are underway to reduce and control the accumulation of trash in surface waters. The term "trash" encompasses all improperly discarded solid material from any production, manufacturing, or processing operation including, but not limited to, products, product packaging or containers constructed of plastic, steel, aluminum, glass, paper, or other

synthetic or natural materials. Trash enters surface waters through three primary pathways:

- Storm drains – trash deposited throughout the watershed is transported during and after rain events to surface waters through storm water conveyance systems;
- Wind – wind blows trash into surface waters; and
- Direct disposal – trash is dumped or otherwise discarded directly into surface waters.

Trash is harmful to the State's water resources, impairs surface water beneficial uses and violates water quality objectives. Trash is unsightly, destroys sensitive habitat, harms aquatic life and wildlife at all levels in the food web, spreads contagion that threatens human health, creates obstructions, and poses swimming hazards. Types of trash generated by human activity that frequently pollute waterways include cigarette butts, paper, fast food containers, and plastic grocery bags, as well as large objects such as used tires and furniture.

The San Diego Water Board Basin Plan, similar to other Regional Water Board Basin Plans, contains various prohibitions and narrative water quality objectives that prohibit the presence in surface waters of floatable, solid, suspended, and settleable materials in amounts that adversely affect beneficial uses. Moreover, the State and Regional Water Boards focused on reducing pollutants (including trash) in storm water runoff through technology and water quality based controls in NPDES permits for over 20 years. Despite these controls and efforts, trash continues to be an ongoing problem across the State and particularly in the San Diego River watershed.

State Water Board Efforts

To provide statewide consistency regarding the control and prevention of trash discharges, the State Water Board is developing amendments to both the *California Ocean Plan* and the *Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries Plan* to include the following elements pertaining to trash: (1) a narrative water quality objective, (2) a prohibition of discharge, (3) implementation requirements for permitted storm water and other discharges, (4) a compliance schedule, and (5) monitoring and reporting requirements. A

Fact Sheet describing the proposed Trash Amendments is included as **Supporting Document No. 1**. The State Water Board anticipates adoption of the Trash Amendments will provide needed statewide consistency and improvements to regulatory controls to reduce and prevent discharges of trash, and will ultimately result in cleaner and healthier waterways.

The development of the proposed Trash Amendments has included a public review process with a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Scoping Meeting in October 2010 and several subsequent stakeholder meetings. A State Water Board public hearing is scheduled for spring 2014 on the proposed Trash Amendments. A representative from the State Water Board will provide an overview at today's meeting of the proposed Trash Amendments, including a timeline for adoption.

San Diego River Watershed Efforts

At the December 11, 2013 San Diego Water Board meeting, the Board heard an update regarding pollutant issues in the San Diego River from Rob Hutsel, Executive Director of the San Diego River Park Foundation. The Executive Officer Report for this item can be accessed in Part B.5 of the December 11, 2013 Executive Officer's Report at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/publications_forms/publications/docs/executive_officer_reports/2013/EOR_12-11-13.pdf. At the December meeting, Mr. Hutsel explained that accumulation of trash in the San Diego River is an ongoing dilemma. Particularly challenging is the large number of homeless (transient) encampments that generate trash in the San Diego River.

The municipal storm water Copermittees located in the San Diego River Watershed (the Cities of San Diego, La Mesa, Santee, El Cajon, and County of San Diego) along with Caltrans, regularly implement a variety of program activities to collect and dispose of trash and thereby prevent it from entering the San Diego River. This includes cleaning of the municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s), street and highway cleaning, and public education/outreach efforts such as San Diego River clean up events. Recently, the City of San Diego took steps to work with Qualcomm Stadium staff to improve best management practices (BMPs) implemented at the Stadium, to further ensure that trash generated by stadium activities is controlled and does not

result in subsequent discharge of trash into the San Diego River. The improved structural and nonstructural BMPs have resulted in better trash abatement following stadium events. A February 7, 2014 letter from Kris MacFadden, City of San Diego, discussing these efforts as well as the City's system for responding to complaints of illegal trash dumping is included as **Supporting Document No. 2**.

Transient encampments within the San Diego River present the largest challenge for trash abatement for both the municipal storm water Copermittees and Caltrans. Specific and lengthy procedures must be followed to assist and disperse identified transient populations and post notices of abatement and intent to cleanup sites prior to initiation of trash removal at these sites. At today's meeting, representatives from Caltrans and the municipal storm water Copermittees will provide an overview of their trash abatement activities and describe their challenges.

**SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:**

1. State Water Board Fact Sheet – Control of Trash Entering Waterways in California
2. February 7, 2014 Letter with Attachments from Kris McFadden, City of San Diego on Qualcomm Stadium Trash Issues

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in the Meeting Notice and Agenda for the May 14, 2014 Board meeting.