



Fact Sheet

Control of Trash Entering Waterways in California

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) is considering the adoption of amendments to the Water Quality Control Plans for Ocean Waters of California and for the Inland Surface Water, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California for Trash (Trash Amendments). The Trash Amendments will reduce human-generated debris from entering streams, rivers, lakes, and the ocean.

The State Water Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (collaboratively Water Boards) have been focused for more than 20 years in the area of storm water quality management and regulation. While progress has been made in storm water management, the efficiencies of our urban storm water systems serve as an effective conveyance to transport trash and other contaminants swiftly and easily into area waterways.

The Water Boards have attempted to control trash through permits. The Los Angeles Regional Water Board led the way with effective trash management strategies with the Los Angeles River Watershed Trash TMDL. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board is following this lead with trash components in their Municipal Regional Storm Water NPDES Permit. These approaches are not entirely consistent, and there are still ongoing trash problems across the state. There is a strong need for a statewide consistency governing trash.

Why Is Trash Management In Waterways A Priority?

The State Water Board's mandate is to protect beneficial uses of the state's water resources; trash threatens virtually all of those uses. It destroys habitat, harms wildlife, spreads contagion, creates obstructions and poses swimming hazards.

What Does The State Water Board Consider To Be Trash?

Trash is the junk or rubbish generated by human activity that frequently winds up in waterways. Trash can include cigarette butts, paper, fast food containers, plastic grocery bags, cans and bottles, used diapers, construction site debris, industrial plastic pellets, old tires and appliances.

How Does It Get Into The Water?

Trash discarded on land frequently winds up in waterways and the ocean as rain washes it into storm drains and from there into creeks and rivers. Some trash is blown into the water on gusty days; some is deliberately dumped in the water.

Trash Is Everywhere. How Can It Be Kept Out Of The Water?

Just as there are many kinds of trash, there are many methods to prevent it from fouling our waterways. For example: Municipalities can increase street sweeping, launch consumer



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education programs on littering, install trash-catching devices on storm drains, and ban the use of products like single-use plastic bags and polystyrene food containers. Industries and construction sites can closely monitor materials to make sure they don't leave the site.

Water Board staff is studying the pros and cons of various methods and getting feedback from municipal, industrial and environmental stakeholders on the best and most effective methods to cutoff trash at the source.

How Has The State Water Board Gone About Formulating The Trash Amendments?

The State Water Board posted a Scoping Notice in September 2010, alerting potential stakeholders of the intent to draft an amendment. Scoping meetings were held on October 7 and 10, 2010, which lead to the formation of a Public Advisory Group of diverse stakeholders. The Public Advisory Group has convened six times since 2011 to assist with amendment development.

What Happens Next?

A draft Staff Report including Substitute Environmental Documentation will be released for public comment within the next few months. A public hearing and workshop will be held, written comments accepted, and the draft Staff Report will be revised. The final draft will be presented to the State Water Board for consideration in 2014.

For more information, visit our Web site: www.waterboards.ca.gov/trash

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