

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
May 11, 2022**

ITEM 4

SUBJECT

San Diego River Watershed Update Part 1: Mission Valley United States Postal Service (USPS) Annex Property Multi-Agency Clean-Up Effort (*Dave Gibson, Laurie Walsh*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Informational item only; no recommendation.

KEY ISSUE

This item is an opportunity for the San Diego Water Board and members of the public to learn about the collaborative approach used to assist the USPS with cleanup of trash and other waste associated with homeless encampments situated on its Mission Valley Postal Annex property located along the San Diego River.

PRACTICAL VISION

Chapter 8 of the Practical Vision, *Provide Effective Community Engagement and Communication*, is focused on implementing the core values of leadership, communication, and transparency. This item provides an opportunity for the San Diego Water Board and the public to learn how collaboration and communication facilitated an expedited cleanup of trash and other waste on USPS property along the San Diego River.

DISCUSSION

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. Trash, large debris, and other solid waste find their way into the San Diego River through several pathways including transport via stormwater runoff from neighborhoods during rain events, littering directly into the river, and discarding of waste within homeless encampments in a manner that permits the transportation of waste into the river (e.g., during storm events or high flows).

Trash is harmful to California'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. Human bacteriological waste discharged from homeless encampments mobilize and impact recreational beneficial uses downstream at the San Diego River mouth and beaches when fecal indicator bacteria levels exceed water quality standards supportive of recreational beneficial uses.

The San Diego Water Board's *Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin* (Basin

Plan) 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. Compliance with the Basin Plan can often include cleaning of the municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s), street and highway sweeping, and public outreach efforts such as San Diego River clean up events. At times, these efforts aren't enough or can't address waste deposited on private property or hard to reach areas of the riverbed. Homeless encampments within the San Diego River present the largest challenge for trash abatement for both the municipal stormwater Copermittees, Caltrans, and private landowners such as the USPS.

In February 2022, a voluntary effort to address cleanup of trash pollution in the San Diego River was successful in removing approximately 12,000 pounds of trash and 450 pounds of electronic and medical waste which had accumulated near active and inactive transient encampment sites on the USPS Riverfront Carrier Annex Property located along the San Diego River in Mission Valley at 2600 Camino del Rio North. The USPS, San Diego River Park Foundation, Caltrans, City of San Diego, Metropolitan Transit District, and the San Diego Water Board employed collaboration and communication techniques to facilitate the USPS efforts to clean-up the trash deposited on their Riverfront Carrier Annex property significantly improving the physical, chemical, and biological conditions of the San Diego River. The USPS is assessing options to sustain the debris free condition of their property to prevent the accumulation and deposition of trash at this location in the future.

LEGAL CONCERNS

None.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None.