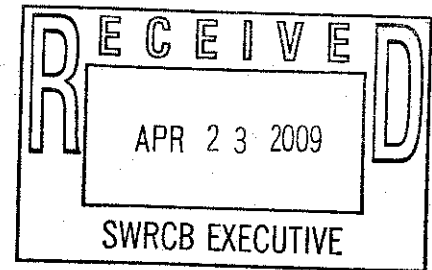




South Orange County Wastewater Authority

April 23, 2009

Jeanine Townsend
Acting Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento CA 95812-0200



Re: Comment Letter – General Waste Discharge Requirements for Landscape Irrigation
Uses of Municipal Recycled Water (General Permit)

Dear Ms. Townsend:

The South Orange County Wastewater Authority (SOCWA) would like to thank the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for the opportunity to provide written comments on the General Permit.

For over forty years SOCWA and its member agencies have successfully produced and provided recycled water for landscape irrigation in the southern portion of Orange County. The SOCWA service area has very little underlying potable quality groundwater and the groundwater is naturally salty due to soil geology and proximity to the ocean. Fully 95 % of our region's potable water is imported water from either the State Water Project or the Colorado River. Collectively, SOCWA and its member agencies produced and distribute over 12,000 acre feet of recycled water in 2008 for irrigation at nearly 2000 separate use sites and are regulated by two master Waste Discharge Requirement Orders issued by two separate Regional Water Quality Control Boards.

Given the layers on highly prescriptive documentation required for individual use sites our agency would not seek coverage under this General Permit. We are very concerned with the prospect that this version of the General Permit could be used as a template by individual Regional Water Quality Control Boards to craft future Recycle Water Waste Discharge Requirements. Operating under this version of the General Permit would require that agencies that purvey recycled water would need to double or triple their current field staff to comply with the layer upon layer use site tracking requirements. The General Permit's use site requirements will create huge expenditures for agencies, while creating no improvement to water quality. In fact, the General Permit requirements seem to be written on the premise that recycled water is the key contributor to all surface and groundwater problems faced by our State. The State Board should clearly outline how this General Permit would affect existing individual and master reclamation permits

SOCWA is strongly opposed to the following Prohibitions and Requirements contained in the proposed General Permit:

- o Prohibition 5 C of the General Permit requires an intensive amount of documentation and reporting related to the creation of individual use sites plans

which is inconsistent with the Recycled Water Policy which specifies that a plan may apply to multiple sites.

- o Prohibition 8 should be removed for the General Permit. Prohibiting recycled water use based solely on the California Department of Public Health's concerns over possible effects Constituents of Emerging Concern (CEC) moves far ahead of the science related to CECs. With respect to CECs the General Permit should defer to the science based process initiated through the Recycled Water Policy.
- o Prohibition 11 would prohibit the use of recycled water within 50 feet of any surface water. Many of the State's surface waters pass through or adjacent to; golf courses, parks, bike/pedestrian trails and landscaped areas with existing recycled water irrigation systems. This prohibition would lead to the unnecessary loss of valuable resources and would result in the expenditure of millions of dollars to retrofit existing recycled water irrigation systems.

Many of the prohibitions contained in the General Permit appear to be based on the premise that Best Management Practices are either not currently in place or are not effective or that recycled water is a significant contributor to the surface and groundwater problems faced by our State. The State Board has offered no rational basis for creating these onerous use site prohibitions.

Please understand that while we stand ready to support a General Permit that promotes the use of recycled water and is effective in protecting the beneficial uses of the local water basins and the waters of the State, we do not support the General Permit as it is currently drafted. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. If you require additional information please contact Brennon Flahive at (949) 234-5419.

Sincerely,

SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY WASTEWATER AUTHORITY



Tom Rosales
General Manager

TR/bf