



Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program

Participating Agencies

October 2, 2015

Camarillo

County of Ventura

Fillmore

Moorpark

Ojai

Oxnard

Port Hueneme

San Buenaventura

Santa Paula

Simi Valley

Thousand Oaks

Ventura County
Watershed Protection
District

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region
320 W. 4th Street, Suite 200
Los Angeles, California 90013
Attn: Dr. Céline Gallon
*Via email: losangeles@waterboards.ca.gov,
Celine.Gallon@waterboards.ca.gov*

**SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON THE 2014-2016 TRIENNIAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT AND TENTATIVE BOARD
RESOLUTION**

Dear Dr. Gallon:

On behalf of Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program (Program), which includes the Watershed Protection District, the County of Ventura and the incorporated cities of Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks, thank you for the opportunity to provide stakeholder input on the 2014-2016 Triennial Review pursuant to Notice of Board Hearing dated November 5, 2015. Collectively, these agencies operate the municipal storm drain system in Ventura County and discharge stormwater and urban runoff pursuant to the Ventura Countywide 2010 NPDES Stormwater Permit. All 12 agencies are committed to working cooperatively to improve water quality in our local waterways and beaches.

The Triennial Review determines and prioritizes issues regarding water quality standards to be addressed by revisions to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region (Basin Plan) in the coming years. The Program commends the significant work Regional Water Board staff has conducted in completing of a number of priority projects during the 2011-2013 triennial period. While the Program did not submit comments during the July triennial review workshop, the Program has reviewed the 2014-2016 Triennial Review Staff Report and would like to take this opportunity to submit the following comments on projects of particular importance to Ventura County Permittees.



1. Prioritize High Flow Suspension of Recreational Beneficial Uses for Engineered Channels in Ventura County

In order to provide necessary levels of flood protection for Ventura residents and businesses, some of our rivers and streams in and around urban areas have been straightened, concrete-lined, or both. These channels are designed to support large volumes of water during wet weather events, consequently it is unsafe to swim or recreate in these channels during high-flow or high-velocity conditions. It is well accepted that high flows within highly modified channels can create life threatening conditions during and immediately following storm events; therefore, the unconditional application of REC uses 1 and 2 for these waterbody segments promotes unsafe conditions.

As identified in the Triennial Review Staff Report, work on establishing high flow suspension of recreational use in engineered channels in Ventura County has already begun. Following Resolution No. 2003-10, which established high flow suspension of water contact recreational uses for various engineered channels in Los Angeles County, development of a similar high flow suspension for engineered channels in Ventura County was added to the list of basin planning priorities for the 2011-2013 Triennial Review. Subsequently, Regional Water Board staff conducted several surveys to identify engineered channel segments in Ventura County where similar unsafe conditions may exist during high flow conditions, and a high flow suspension may be applicable.

The Program encourages the Regional Board move forward and complete this work as it remains a priority to Ventura County. Adoption of a high flow suspension Basin Plan Amendment would allow MS4 Permittees to focus resources on supporting and protecting recreational beneficial uses in appropriate conditions where water recreation is not considered to be inherently dangerous.

Request: Include High flow suspension on the list of projects to be prioritized in the time remaining for the 2014-2016 Triennial Review and change Table 7 in the 2014-2016 Triennial Review Staff Report to reflect that it remains a stakeholder issue.

2. Prioritize Developing Technical Guidance for Making Natural Source Determinations

The Program supports prioritizing the development of a technical guidance document for making natural source determinations. The Program recommends that this project be placed on the list of priority projects for the remainder for the 2014-2016 Triennial Review period.

When exceedances of water quality objectives of pollutants are solely or predominantly the result of natural sources, an appropriate regulatory mechanism is warranted which takes into account such natural conditions. For example, the Program regularly observes exceedances of MUN beneficial use water quality objective for total aluminum in wet weather water quality samples. An investigation into the cause(s) of such exceedances found that 100% of wet weather samples collected upstream from anthropogenic activities exceeded the objective for total aluminum¹. High background concentrations of total aluminum detected in runoff from undeveloped areas suggests that wet weather aluminum may routinely exceed water quality objectives regardless of Permittees efforts. While data evaluation is ongoing and the Program continues to evaluate implementation actions to limit such exceedances where possible, a regulatory mechanism for addressing impairments due to naturally occurring pollutants needs to be explored. Therefore, we encourage the Regional Board and State Board to develop regulatory mechanisms for addressing water quality impairments resulting from naturally occurring pollutants to better enable Permittees to use their limited resources most effectively.

Furthermore, the Program considers guidance for natural source determination a high priority project, and while there may not be enough time remaining in this triennial review period to complete the project, the Program suggests initiating this project as soon as possible. Similarly, the Program supports the Regional Board staff recommendation to give high priority to this project during the next triennial review period.

Request: Place development of a technical guidance document for making natural source determinations on the list of priority projects for the remainder for the 2014-2016 Triennial Review period.

3. Prioritization of projects during the remainder of triennial review period

Recognizing there is limited time remaining in this triennial review period, the Program encourages Regional Board staff to focus resources on completing existing Basin Planning activities and projects before commencing work on new issues as complex as a new surface water beneficial use. We are concerned that initiating such a substantial new project will take away significant Basin Planning staff resources from completing existing priorities. Projects carried over from previous Triennial Review periods should be given high priority and completed first.

The Program furthermore supports the inclusion of TMDL and Stormwater Permitting support to the list of priorities for the remainder of the 2014-2016 Triennial Review period as a number of modification to local TMDLs are needed. The next integrated report for the Los Angeles Region will be forthcoming in 2016, and delisting for

¹ Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program. January 2015. Report of Discharge, Appendix C. Aluminum Historical Data Analysis and Study Findings.

ammonia in Reach 3 is a high priority for the Santa Clara River Watershed stakeholders. In a letter dated June 4, 2015, County of Ventura, City of Fillmore and City of Santa Paula previously submitted comments to support the reassessment and request for delisting of Santa Clara River Reach 3 for ammonia and to demonstrate the absence of impairments for nitrogen compound in the Santa Clara River Reach 3². The analysis should additionally support the removal of the TMDL Wasteload Allocations from the upcoming MS4 permit reissuance to be initiated in early 2016.

Request: Complete existing Basin Planning activities and projects, such as TMDL and Stormwater Permitting support, before commencing work on new issues.

On behalf of the Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program, I thank you for your time and opportunity to submit these comments. The Program looks forward to working with Regional Board staff on the above priority projects and future revisions to the Basin Plan. If you have questions, please contact me at (805) 654-5051, or via email at Gerhardt.Hubner@ventura.org.

Sincerely,



Gerhardt J. Hubner
*On Behalf of the
Ventura Countywide Stormwater Management Program*

cc: Ventura County Stormwater Program Permittees

² Hubner, Gerhardt, Landeros, Rigo, and Brian Yanez, letter to Sam Unger, Executive Officer, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, 4 June 2015. Reassessment and delisting of ammonia and absence of impairment for other nitrogen compounds in the Santa Clara River Reach 3.