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9 **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
10 **STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD**

11 In the Matter of Petition of:

12 City of Sierra Madre from California
13 Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los
14 Angeles Region, Waste Discharge
15 Requirements for Municipal Separate Storm
16 Sewer System (MS4) Discharges within the
17 Coastal Watersheds of Los Angeles County,
18 Except Those Discharges Originating from
19 the City of Long Beach MS4, Order NO. R4-
20 2012-0175, NPDES Permit No. CAS004001.

SWRCB FILES A-2236(A) THROUGH (KK)

PETITIONER CITY OF SIERRA
MADRE'S OPPOSITION TO NRDC'S
PETITION CHALLENGING 2012 LOS
ANGELES MUNICIPAL SEPARATE
STORM SEWER SYSTEM PERMIT (NO.
R4-2012-0175)

19 **I. Introduction**

20 In adopting the Waste Discharge Requirements for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer
21 System ("MS4") Discharges within the Coastal Watersheds of Los Angeles County, Except
22 Those Discharges Originating from the City of Long Beach MS4, Order NO. R4-2012-0175,
23 NPDES Permit No. CAS004001 issued on November 8, 2012 ("2012 Permit"), the Los
24 Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board ("LARWQCB or Regional Board") created
25 unnecessary liability for Petitioner and the other Permittees (collectively "Permittees").
26 Incredibly, the National Resources Defense Council's Petition would have the State Water
27 Resources Control Board ("SWRCB") the Permit to impose even more draconian
28 requirements. The SWRCB should reject such efforts and instead modify the Permit to

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1 mandate compliance with the applicable water quality standards by Petitioner City of
2 Sierra Madre ("Petitioner") through an iterative process requiring continual adjustment to
3 implemented best management practices ("BMPs").

4 As explained below, the Clean Water Act explicitly recognizes that MS4s are
5 different than other point sources, such as chemical plant outfalls, and requires Permittees
6 to "reduce the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent practicable," not to absolute
7 zero. (33 U.S.C. section 1342 (p)(3)(B)(iii).) This provision reflects the reality of MS4s, which
8 collect stormwater from streets and gutters and runoff of urban land, convey it through
9 storm drains and discharge it to rivers. The Los Angeles County MS4, is an interconnected
10 system that spans the entire Los Angeles basin, incorporates the smaller MS4s of 84 Cities,
11 Los Angeles County, and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District ("Flood Control
12 District"). There is no physical separation among the MS4s maintained by each jurisdiction
13 and runoff flows freely from the upland cities, through the MS4s of the midland cities,
14 down to the Pacific Ocean via the larger flood control channels maintained by the Flood
15 Control District, which at times merge with the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers. In
16 short, the system is complex.

17 Yet, despite this complexity and the fact that the individual cities previously held a
18 rearguard role to the Flood Control District (the Principal Permittee), the 2012 Permit forces
19 every city in Los Angeles County, except Long Beach, to immediately comply with strict
20 numeric effluent limitations or else to complete a Watershed Management Plan ("WMP")
21 or Enhanced Watershed Management Plan ("EWMP"). The Petition challenging the 2012
22 Permit by the Natural Resources Defense Council ("NRDC") and other environmental
23 groups goes even further, and seeks the deletion of the interim compliance provided by the
24 WMP/EWMP process. These requirements, both the current RWL and the environmental
25 group's proposed adjustments, exceed what is allowable and what is reasonable. Cities
26 require time and an opportunity to comply with the 2012 Permit. It is impractical for
27 petitioner to comply instantly, without any time for city to review and adjust its
28 stormwater quality measures. Similarly, those cities, including Petitioner, which are

1 completing a WMP or EWMP require both the regulatory certainty inherent in the
2 WMP/EWMP process and sufficient time to develop and implement these plans. Failing to
3 do so will force cities to devote resources that would otherwise be used for water quality
4 improvements to litigation defending against third-party suits instead.

5 To avoid this unintended and unnecessary result, the 2012 Permit should be
6 modified as requested by Petitioner in its Petition, particularly by replacing the strict
7 numeric effluent limitations with non-numeric effluent limitations requiring adjustments of
8 BMPs if an exceedance occurs via an iterative process. The modifications the NRDC
9 requests, by contrast, should be rejected.

10 **II. Receiving Waters Limitations Language Creates Unnecessary Liability and**
11 **is Not Required by Federal or State Law**

12 The 2012 Permit's Receiving Waters Limitations Language ("RWL") should be
13 amended to allow an iterative process by which a city may implement BMPs without
14 unnecessary exposure to unwarranted third party or Regional Board enforcement actions.
15 The 2012 Permit's RWL language is virtually identical to the RWL language in the 2001
16 Permit for the MS4, also adopted by the LARWQCB. In a case brought by the Natural
17 Resources Defense Council against Los Angeles County and the Flood Control District
18 regarding exceedances of water quality standards detected at the County's monitoring
19 stations, the Ninth Circuit found that the 2001 Permit's RWL language imposes strict
20 numeric limits on Permittees. (*Natural Resources Defense Council, et al. v. County of Los*
21 *Angeles, Los Angeles County Flood Control District, et al.* (9th Cir. 2013) 725 F.3d 1194, 1206-
22 1207 [hereinafter *Natural Resources Defense Council*].)

23 In this decision, the Ninth Circuit found that the County was liable for
24 exceedances detected at monitoring stations in the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers,
25 although it left the determination of the appropriate remedy for the District Court. As
26 highlighted by this decision, if left unchanged, the RWL language in the 2012 Permit would
27 expose every individual city, including Petitioner, all of which are now Principal
28 Permittees under the 2012 Permit, to a risk of potential liability for any exceedances of

1 numeric water quality standards. Exposing Petitioner to this risk of potential liability,
2 including third party lawsuits, is unnecessary, deviates from established SWRCB
3 precedent, and fails to recognize the realities of the MS4 system. Petitioner has little control
4 over the sources of any pollutants that create the exceedances and thus should not be
5 subjected to liability for any given exceedance provided it otherwise engages in an
6 adaptive management approach and uses BMPs to address the exceedances.

7 **A. The Permit's RWL Language Defeats the Intent of SWRCB's**
8 **Precedential Order WQ 99-05, Requiring Compliance via an Iterative**
9 **Process**

10 The 2012 Permit deviates from the intent of the RWL language required by SWRCB
11 precedential Order WQ 99-05, promulgated in 1999. This order provided that future MS4
12 permits in California should include RWL, that require compliance with applicable water
13 quality standards "through timely implementation of control measures and other actions to
14 reduce pollutants in the discharges in accordance with the [Stormwater Management
15 Program] and other requirements of this permit and any modifications." The required
16 RWL language provides that, in the event of an exceedance of a water quality standard, a
17 permittee must assess its current BMPs, identify additional measures to be taken, and
18 devise an implementation schedule all of which are to be presented to the appropriate
19 Regional Board. Once the Regional Board approves or adjusts the submitted measures the
20 permittee must implement the additional BMPs. The intent of Order WQ 99-05 is plain; as
21 long as a permittee completes this iterative process and implements the required BMPs, it
22 will be deemed in compliance with the permit and not subject to potential liability from
23 third-party suits. If instead a permittee fails to engaging in the iterative process and
24 modifies its implemented BMPs to address an exceedance, then of course the permittee is
25 subject to potential liability from third-party suits.

26 While the 2012 Permit includes this language, it lacks the necessary additional
27 language to actually implement Order WQ 99-05. The Ninth Circuit determined that, the
28 2001 Permit imposed strict liability on a Permittee for any exceedance, regardless of

1 compliance with the iterative process requirement. (*Natural Resources Defense Council, supra*,
2 725 F.3d at 1206–1207.) The 2012 Permit suffers from the same defect in Part V.A because,
3 while it includes the standard RWL language in Part V.A.3, it fails to also specify in Parts
4 V.A.1–2 that compliance with the iterative process in the event of an exceedance or a
5 nuisance discharge constitutes compliance with the Permit. Without modification,
6 Petitioner and the other Permittees will be subject to potential liability in the event of an
7 exceedance, regardless of their implementation of additional BMPs via the iterative
8 process. This defeats the purpose of the iterative process..(SWRCB’s Order WQ 99-05.)
9 Moreover it serves no purpose other than to punish permittees who are using their best
10 effort to comply. Therefore, the SWRCB should modify the 2012 Permit by adding
11 language confirming that compliance with the iterative process in the event of an
12 exceedance constitutes compliance with the Permit.

13 **B. Federal Law Allows an Iterative Process and Does Not Require**
14 **Strict Numeric Effluent Limitations**

15 The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 33 U.S.C. section 1251, *et seq.*, commonly
16 known as the Clean Water Act, generally prohibits discharge of any pollutant into waters
17 of the United States, unless authorized via an exception. (33 U.S.C. § 1311, subd. (a).) An
18 exception is a discharge authorized by an NPDES Permit, which are issued either by the
19 EPA or by a state under devolved jurisdiction. (33 U.S.C. § 1342.) The requirements of a
20 permit must generally be structured such that the permittee will achieve compliance with
21 applicable water quality standards. (*Communities for a Better Environment v. State Water*
22 *Resources Control Bd.* (2003) 109 Cal.App.4th 1089, 1093.)

23 Contrary to the contentions of the Petition of the NRDC, Heal the Bay, and Los
24 Angeles Waterkeeper, the Clean Water Act does not require that NPDES permits include
25 strict numeric effluent limitations, against which a permittee’s achievement of water
26 quality standards are measured. (See *Communities for a Better Environment, supra*, 109
27 Cal.App.4th at 1105 [Clean Water Act does not require water quality-based effluent
28 limitations to be numeric in NPDES Permit.]) This is particularly true for MS4 Permits,

1 which Congress authorized by a special section of the Clean Water Act. Specifically, 33
2 U.S.C. section 1342 (p)(3)(B) provides:

3 (B) Municipal discharges

4 Permits for discharges from municipal storm sewers—

5 (i) may be issued on a system or jurisdiction-wide basis;

6 (ii) shall include a requirement to effectively prohibit non-stormwater
7 discharges into the storm sewers; and

8 (iii) shall require controls to reduce the discharge of pollutants to
9 the maximum extent practicable, including management practices,
10 control techniques and system, design, and engineering methods,
11 and such other provisions as the Administrator or the State
12 determines appropriate for the control of such pollutants.

13 Thus, the Clean Water Act explicitly provides that MS4s Permits may require BMPs and
14 other engineered solutions to achieve compliance with water quality standards. It does not
15 require strict numeric effluent limitations.

16 In *Defenders of Wildlife v. Browner* (9th Cir. 1999) 191 F.3d 1159, 1165–1167, the Ninth
17 Circuit considered this section and held that Congress did not require NPDES Permits for
18 MS4s to require compliance with numeric effluent limitations; instead Congress required
19 municipal storm sewer discharges to reduce pollutant discharges to the maximum extent
20 practicable. The court found that the EPA or a state has the discretion to impose numeric
21 effluent limitations, but importantly concluded that numeric effluent limitations are not
22 required for MS4 permits, rejecting the very argument advanced by the National Resources
23 Defense Council, Heal the Bay and Los Angeles Waterkeeper. (*Id.* at 1166–1167.) Thus the
24 environmental petitioners’ contention here that the 2012 Permit must impose strict numeric
25 effluent limitations is false. The Clean Water Act simply does not require MS4 permits to
26 include strict numeric effluent limitations, and the Board has discretion to amend the
27 Permit to allow compliance through the iterative process.
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C. Collateral Estoppel Does Not Prevent Petitioner from Seeking Modifications to the 2012 Permit

The NRDC’s argument regarding collateral estoppel misses a fundamental point; each permit is a separate permit and the LARWQCB need not use the same language or the same approach for the 2012 Permit as it took in the 2001 Permit. Thus, litigation that upheld the 2001 Permit (See *County of Los Angeles, et al. v. California State Water Resources Control Board, et al.* (2006) 143 Cal.App.4th 985 does not estop Petitioner from advocating that the 2012 Permit must be modified to achieve compliance via an iterative process by deleting the strict numeric effluent limitations. [Note that Petitioner was not a party to this appeal of the Superior Court’s judgment upholding the 2001 Permit.].

First and foremost, the 2012 Permit is distinct from the 2001 Permit, and The SWRCB has the primary power to modify the 2012 Permit to provide that a city’s compliance with the iterative process constitutes compliance with the Permit. Second, 9th Circuit ruling does not preclude the LARWQCB or the SWRCB from imposing different language in the 2012 Permit, requiring compliance with non-numeric effluent limitations. The NRDC’s collateral estoppel contention would be relevant if Petitioner sought to challenge the 2001 Permit; but the Petition does not seek to do so. Instead, Petitioner seeks an order from the SWRCB requiring modifications to the new 2012 Permit and thus is not bound by the outcome of the litigation over the 2001 Permit as the permits are distinct. Collateral estoppel is also inappropriate in this context, as it is a doctrine which prevents re-litigating final judicial determinations, but does not prevent an administrative body from reevaluating a previous decision. The Petition seeks an order from the SWRCB modifying the language of the 2012 Permit. The 2012 Permit, while a renewal of the 2001 Permit, is a distinct permit. The outcome of the litigation on the 2001 Permit does not bind the LARWQCB in determining the terms of the 2012 Permit. Instead, the LARWQCB retains the discretion to impose reasonable and feasible permit terms, within the bounds of state and federal law. The Board’s discretion as to the appropriate permit terms is not limited by a prior judicial determination as to the meaning of the terms of the 2001 Permit. Similarly, the SRWCB retains plenary power to modify the terms of the 2012 Permit, regardless of previous determinations as to the meaning of the 2001 Permit’s terms.

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3 **III. The Permit Should be Modified to Allow Permittees to Achieve**
4 **Compliance via an Iterative Process, by deleting the Strict Numeric**
5 **Effluent Limitations**

6 Strict numeric effluent limitations, are infeasible here. The SWRCB should modify
7 the 2012 Permit by adjusting the RWL to provide instead that the Permittees will be in
8 compliance with the Permit in the event of an exceedance if they complete the iterative
9 process and adjust their implemented BMPs. This modification will ensure that the 2012
10 Permit complies with the Clean Water Act's requirement that MS4 permits "require
11 controls to reduce the discharge of pollutants to *the maximum extent practicable.*" (33 U.S.C. §
12 1342, subd. (p)(3)(B) [emphasis added].) Petitioner supports the proposed language to this
13 effect provided to the SWRCB by the California Stormwater Quality Association in its
14 comment letter dated August 15, 2013.

15 Strict numeric effluent limitations for MS4s, such as those imposed by the 2012
16 Permit, are infeasible. As recognized by the draft NPDES Permit for CalTrans, "storm
17 water discharges from MS4s are highly variable in frequency, intensity, and duration, and
18 it is difficult to characterize the amount of pollutants in the discharges." This is particularly
19 true for the LA County MS4 system, which is amalgam of 88 smaller MS4s run by
20 individual jurisdictions all of which are tied together.

21 "Each of these ms4s connects to the [LA County Flood Control]
22 District's substantially larger ms4, an extensive flood-control and storm-
23 sewer infrastructure consisting of approximately 500 miles of open channels
24 and 2,800 miles of storm drains. Because a comprehensive map of the County
25 Defendants' storm sewer system does not exist, no one knows the exact size
26 of the LA MS43 or the locations of all of its storm drain connections and
27 outfalls."

28 (*Natural Resources Defense Council, supra*, 725 F.3d 1194, 1197-1198.) From the larger portion

1 of the interconnected MS4 run by the LA County Flood Control District, stormwater then
2 drains into several rivers and ultimately the Pacific Ocean. (*Ibid.*) The system is complex
3 and not fully-understood, as the lack of a comprehensive map evidences. Yet, in the face of
4 this, the LARWQCB chose, without any requirement to do so, to require compliance with
5 strict numeric effluent limitations.

6 Compliance with strict numeric effluent limitations is not practicable on any
7 reasonable time-frame because the system is too complex and inadequately understood.
8 But, under the 2012 Permit's terms, Permittees must have *already* achieved compliance with
9 every numeric effluent limitation standard because the Permits requires strict compliance
10 with all numeric effluent limitation standard, despite any other actions of the Permittee. In
11 the decade since the LARWQCB adopted the 2001 Permit, the Flood Control District, acting
12 as the Principal Permittee, was unable to eliminate all exceedances of the applicable
13 numeric effluent limitations. Yet somehow, each of the 88 cities, have just been thrust into a
14 Permittee role for its own MS4s, and is now required to immediately achieve on its own
15 what the County was unable to do in a decade! This is simply infeasible and thus, is not
16 practicable and contrary to the mandate in section 1342(p)(3)(B).

17 The impracticability is true for all Permittees, but is particularly true especially so
18 for smaller Cities, such as Petitioner, which had a limited role under the 2001 Permit.
19 Under the 2001 Permit, the Flood Control District held the central planning and compliance
20 role with respect to the MS4, as it was the Principal Permittee. The Flood Control District
21 had the main responsibility for compliance with the permit's terms including from a
22 regional perspective. In many cases, the County and the Flood Control District undertook
23 compliance projects, with cooperation from the necessary cities, but the Flood Control
24 District had the staff and expertise necessary to identify, develop, and complete projects
25 designed to improve stormwater quality. Now, under the 2012 Permit, each city has been
26 made an equal Permittee and the Flood Control District has ceased to be the Principal
27 Permittee. Petitioner needs a meaningful opportunity to step into its new role as an equal
28 Permittee. Petitioner must develop new expertise in this realm, form new relationships

1 with its neighboring cities, and assume previously performed by the County. To succeed in
2 this new role and thus to achieve compliance requires that the LARWQCB give Petitioner
3 sufficient time to develop and implement adjustments to its current BMPs to improve the
4 stormwater quality in its own MS4. Yet, instead of providing Petitioner and the other new,
5 co-equal Permittees time to assess the status of each of their individual MS4s, the 2012
6 Permit effectively provides that every city is immediately out of compliance with the
7 Permit, unless it undertakes a Watershed Management Program (“WMP”) or Enhanced
8 Watershed Management Program (“EWMP”). In other lwords, Petitioner is arguably out of
9 compliance on Day 1.

10 The 2012 Permit’s RWL is also infeasible because it fails to provide Permittees with a
11 reasonable path to compliance. As discussed above, under the Permit’s current language,
12 any exceedance could be used as a basis for third-party litigation despite a Permittee’s
13 completion of the iterative process and potentially even despite its participation in a WMP
14 or EWMP. The 2012 Permit fails to provide Permittees the option to continue their existing
15 BMPS, then adjusting those BMPs as needed if exceedances occur. This approach, or a
16 similar approach, such as the strategic compliance program proposed by CASQA, can
17 transform the current infeasible Permit into a practicable one because it provides cities with
18 the certainty that their compliance efforts will actually constitute compliance. Providing a
19 reasonable and feasible compliance pathway ensures that cities will be able to actually
20 comply with the Permit, taking into account the limitations they face, and thereby meet the
21 Clean Water Act’s requirement to reduce pollutant discharges to the “maximum extent
22 practicable.”

23 Moreover, cities will not be able to escape their responsibilities under an iterative
24 process, as the Environmental Petitioners contend. Cities will still be required to respond to
25 any exceedances by evaluating their deployed BMPs and implementing new ones as
26 necessary. The lack of reasonable regulatory certainty renders the current 2012 Permit
27 infeasible because cities lack a way to bring themselves into compliance with its provisions.
28 Modifying the permit to provide for compliance via an iterative process provides Cities a

1 reasonable, feasible pathway to compliance.

2 Cites necessarily have limited resources, and severely limited options to raise
3 additional revenue consistent with the California constitutional limitations. Yet despite its
4 limited resources, Petitioner has devoted a portion of its revenues to improve stormwater
5 quality, including joining an EWMP group. Under the modified 2012 Permit as proposed
6 by Petitioner, Petitioner would be able to spend the entirety of the funds earmarked for
7 stormwater quality improvement to identify and implement BMPs, because it will not face
8 the threat of third-party litigation in the event of an exceedance. Under the current 2012
9 Permit, however, Petitioner faces the reality that, despite its compliance efforts, a risk of
10 third-party litigation in the event of an exceedance remains, in which case it would be
11 forced to devote its stormwater quality management resources to litigation instead of on-
12 the-ground improvements. Providing cities with the certainty inherent in the iterative
13 process ensures that cities can dedicate the entirety of the funds they have available for
14 stormwater management to actual improvements.

15 **A. Requiring Permittees to Complete an Iterative Process Does Not**
16 **Qualify as Backsliding or Degradation under the Clean Water Act**

17 As discussed above, both federal and state law allow the LARWQCB to require
18 permittees to comply with non-numeric effluent limitation standards to achieve
19 compliance with the applicable water quality standards. For example, compliance can be
20 achieved via non-numeric effluent limitation standard requiring specific BMPs as
21 determined through an iterative process. This approach ensures that Permittees will
22 respond to any exceedances to reduce discharges of pollutants to the maximum extent
23 practicable.

24 Such an approach does not implicate federal and state prohibitions on degradation.
25 (See 40 CFR section 131.12; State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16.) These provisions
26 require that each new or renewed Permit maintain existing water quality, unless
27 degradation is justifying with the appropriate findings. Imposing non-numeric effluent
28 limitations which require compliance via an iterative process would not degrade existing

1 water quality, as Permittees would be required to maintain all existing BMPs and to adjust
2 and improve their BMPs if an exceedance occurs. Simply put, the 2012 Permit, as written
3 and as proposed to be modified, does not allow Petitioner, or any other Permittee, to
4 reduce their existing stormwater management activities, and thereby will not cause any
5 degradation in existing water quality.

6 The NRDC's Petition points to no evidence that the 2012 Permit has caused, or will
7 cause, any degradation in water quality. Rather, they assume degradation without any
8 proof of such. They have the temerity to suggest the Regional Board failed to meet its
9 burden to provide evidence to support degradations. The SWRCB should decline the
10 NRDC's invitation to flip the burden of proof and recognize the NRDC's argument for the
11 unsupported sophistry that it is.

12 Equally unavailing is the NRD's argument regarding back-sliding. Requiring
13 Permittees to continually adjust their implemented BMPs via an iterative process would
14 not constitute back-sliding. See, (33 U.S.C. § 1342(o).) The Federal anti-back sliding
15 requirement prohibits a renewed permit from imposing less stringent effluent limitations
16 than those in the previous permit. This does not prevent a regional board imposing
17 different, yet equally stringent effluent limitations. Imposing non-numeric effluent
18 limitations does not weaken effluent limitations, because Permittees would still be required
19 to comply with the underlying water quality standards in the event of any exceedances.
20 The only change is that Permittees would be offered a reasonable and feasible path to
21 compliance with the Permit via enforced compliance with non-numeric effluent limitations.
22 This approach is at least as strict as the 2001 Permit.

23 Moreover, while Petitioner does not concede that an iterative process non-numeric
24 effluent limitations constitutes back-sliding, to the extent such an argument is made, an
25 exception applies. Under the Clean Water Act, a renewed permit may impose less stringent
26 requirements if new information arises since the Regional Board issued the original permit.
27 In this case, when the Regional Board adopted the 2001 Permit, there were no TMDLs with
28 waste discharge load allocations to the LA County MS4. Now, the 2012 Permit incorporates

1 33 watershed-based TMDLs which have been adopted since 2001. Further, as noted above,
2 the 2001 Permit was structured with the Flood Control District as the Principal Permittee
3 and the cities acting in a secondary role; now the cities and the County are all equal
4 Permittees. In light of the changes in applicable TMDLs and the complete change in the
5 design of the Permit's regulatory scheme, modifications to the effluent limitations
6 standard, including both providing for an iterative process and the 2012 Permit's current
7 EWMP/WMP provisions are appropriate. Even if construed as less stringent, under this
8 exception non-numeric effluent limitation standards are permissible Exchanging numeric
9 for non-numeric effluent limitations recognizes the complexities of the MS4, the imperfect
10 and often non-existent data, and that water quality improvements are attainable via
11 appropriate BMPs, and that perfect compliance with strict numeric limits is infeasible for
12 the LA County MS4.

13 In short, the Clean Water Act does not require strict compliance with numeric
14 effluent limitations for MS4s, instead, it requires that MS4 Permittees reduce discharges of
15 pollutants to the "maximum extent practicable." Compliance with this standard is best
16 achieved by requiring an integrated, iterative process whereby cities continually refine and
17 adjust their implemented BMPs.

18 **IV. The Permit Leaves Permittees With Insufficient Time to Develop**
19 **WMPs/EWMPs or to Establish Compliance with RWL**

20 Permittees must be given time to comply with the Permit's RWL language, whether
21 modified as Petitioner requests to require compliance via an iterative process, or else via
22 the WMP/EWMP process. The NRDC contends that Permittees need not be given any time
23 to comply with the 2012 Permit, even via the WMP/EWMP process. Specifically, the NRDC
24 argues that providing Permittees a reasonable and feasible pathway to compliance,
25 provides an illegal safe harbor. This is false.

26 As discussed above, the Clean Water Act allows for non-numeric effluent
27 limitations, such as Petitioner's desired iterative process compliance requirements.
28 Modifying the Permit to provide Permittees with sufficient time to bring their systems into

1 compliance with these provisions is thus consistent with the Clean Water Act. Moreover,
2 Permittees require regulatory certainty and protection from impossible requirements to be
3 able to devote resources to actual stormwater quality improvement projects, rather than
4 litigation. If the permit is structured, as the NRDC seeks, to provide that Petitioner, and
5 every other Permittee, is immediately out of compliance on the day the Permit is issued,
6 then a city has little incentive to complete the iterative process and improve its BMPs,
7 because doing so will not shield it from the risk of third-party lawsuits. If the Permit
8 instead provides that a city is in compliance with the Permit upon issuance, but only if it
9 begins timely implementation of the iterative process to respond to detected exceedances as
10 Petitioner seeks, or begins timely implementation of a WMP/EWMP, then a city has an
11 incentive to do so. Building in sufficient time to achieve compliance ensures that the
12 Permittees will be both willing and able to devote scarce resources to stormwater quality
13 improvements, rather than to litigation and risk management.

14 The time allowed for those participating in a WMP or EWMP remains inadequate.
15 Specifically, the 2012 Permit requires those cities, such as Petitioner, electing to implement
16 a EWMP to submit a final work plan for the program's completion within 18 months after
17 the Permit's effective date and to submit the final EWMP a mere 12 months later, 30
18 months after the Permit's effective date. Once submitted, the Regional Board has four
19 months to comment on a draft EWMP. The city or cities then have just three months to
20 submit a revised EWMP, after which the Regional Board has three months to approve or
21 deny the program. This timeline is too short.

22 Providing to submit the final work plan does not provide sufficient time for the
23 EWMP groups to complete the necessary scoping process, identify target pollutants within
24 the EWMP's watershed, and develop a comprehensive plan to address those pollutants and
25 improve the watershed's stormwater quality. This is particularly true given the
26 requirements for EWMP groups to work together across multiple jurisdictions and to
27 receive stakeholder input, including from the public in each city, while also developing and
28 implementing baseline modeling. The completion of these tasks by the cities in an EWMP

1 group, working together and largely in new roles given their now equal Permittee status,
2 requires more time than 12 months.

3 Similarly, the Cities need more than 12 months to revise and implement their final
4 work plan and to develop a complete EWMP. This task will require significant
5 coordination of effort on a regional basis and will require the unprecedented development
6 of a program to ensure onsite capture of all non-storm water runoff and all storm water
7 runoff at the 85th percentile of a 24-hour storm. A watershed management program at this
8 level requires an innovative storm water control measure development process to enable
9 the cities to be able to meet this level of capture. Developing such a program requires at
10 least 18 months after the completion of the final work plan.

11 **V. Conclusion**

12 For the foregoing reasons, Petitioner requests the Board review the 2012 Permit and
13 make the amendments specified in Section VI of the Petition and reject the modifications
14 sought via NRDC's Petition.

15
16 DATED: October 15, 2013

COLANTUONO & LEVIN, PC

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19 _____
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22 City of Sierra Madre
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PROOF OF SERVICE

*In re Petitions Challenging 2012 Los Angeles Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit
(Order No. R4-2012-0175)*

SWRCB Files A-2236(a) through (kk)

I, Matthew Summers, declare:

I am employed in the County of Los Angeles, State of California. I am over the age of 18 and not a party to the within action. My business address is 300 S. Grand Avenue, Suite 2700, Los Angeles, California 90071. On October 15, 2013, I served the document described as PETITIONER CITY OF SIERRA MADRE'S RESPONSE TO PETITIONS CHALLENGING 2012 LOS ANGELES MUNICIPAL SEPARATE STORM SEWER SYSTEM PERMIT on the interested parties in this action as follows:

By transmitting a true copy thereof of the foregoing document to the e-mail addresses set forth as stated below:

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Exhibit A
Petitioners & Their Council of Record Contact List

Exhibit B
MS4 Dischargers Mailing List

BY E-MAIL OR ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION: I caused the documents to be sent to the persons at the e-mail addresses listed above. I did not receive, within a reasonable time after the transmission, any electronic message or other indication that the transmission was unsuccessful.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the above is true and correct.

Executed on October 15, 2013, at Los Angeles, California.



[Signature]

**SWRCB/OCC FILE NOS. A-2236(a) through (kk)
PETITIONERS AND THEIR COUNSEL OF RECORD CONTACT LIST
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