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December 5, 2007

To: Members of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

From: Cheryl Filar, Environmental Programs Manager

Re: Tentative Addendum to Order R9-2007-0001:

The City of Escondido supports the Copermittees' request to extend the submission deadline by eight weeks for the regional, watershed and jurisdictional plans due to the wide-ranging impact of the 2007 firestorms—a disaster which not only involved municipal staff across the county in the initial response, but now involves the City's personnel from a wide range of departments and divisions in an ongoing effort to respond to the resulting health, safety, and environmental concerns of residents and businesses. In Escondido, these concerns have been identified by the City Council as a matter of primary and critical importance in terms of dedicating staff time and resources to respond to the community's needs—needs that include the proper demolition and disposal of debris from the 36 homes that were completely destroyed by the fire, as well as the 20 structures, such as garages, decks, fences, and outbuildings, that sustained significant damage.

To adequately respond to its residents' needs, the City established an internal coordinating fire management team involving many departments and divisions, including the City Manager's and Attorney's Offices, Fire, Police, Engineering, Community Services, Maintenance, Housing, Building, Code Enforcement, Utilities, Storm Water, and Planning. Since the fire, this team has met, at a minimum, on a weekly basis to assess and implement cleanup efforts, as well as to facilitate the rebuilding process as quickly as possible. As with all San Diego County jurisdictions and agencies impacted by the 2007 disaster, the City takes pride in the role it has been able to play in effectively responding to the fire and its aftermath, including environmental issues, such as removing significant deposits of ash and debris from City streets, implementing erosion and sediment control in areas now devoid of vegetation, as well as disposing of hazardous waste at destroyed or damaged properties.

However, all of these efforts take time—time that would have been focused on other pressing projects and deadlines, such as the development and completion of the 2007 Regional, Watershed, and Jurisdictional Plans. Because the City and other agencies have been and will continue to be focused on fire issues that require significant staff time and resources to sustain an effective response, the City of Escondido respectfully requests and supports an eight-week extension of the Regional, Watershed, and Jurisdictional Plan submission deadlines. Thank you for your consideration of this request.