

California Regional Water Quality Control Board,  
San Diego Region

Preliminary List  
Proposed Project Descriptions  
For the 2018 Triennial Review of the  
Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin  
(Basin Plan)

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## Introduction

The *Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin* (Basin Plan) designates beneficial uses for water bodies in the San Diego Region and establishes water quality objectives and implementation plans to protect those beneficial uses. State and federal laws require periodic review of the Basin Plan.<sup>1</sup> Because federal law requires a review every three years, the Basin Plan review is also referred to as the “triennial review.”

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board) is initiating its 2018 triennial review of the Basin Plan (Triennial Review). The purpose of the review is to identify needed updates and revisions to water quality standards and other elements of the Basin Plan. The triennial review assists the San Diego Water Board to identify priority issues that may be addressed through subsequent Basin Plan amendment projects. It also reaffirms those portions of the Basin Plan where no potential changes are identified.

In this document, the San Diego Water Board identifies a preliminary list of proposed basin planning projects (preliminary projects) for consideration in the 2018 Triennial Review. The preliminary projects represent the San Diego Water Board’s most important basin planning issues that also support the goals of the San Diego Water Board’s [Practical Vision](#).

The purpose of identifying these preliminary projects is to solicit input from interested persons that will help the San Diego Water Board prioritize Basin Plan amendment projects that will best address the water quality needs of the San Diego Region. Additional projects may be identified during the public process.

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act requires water quality control plans such as the Basin Plan be both protective and reasonable [Water Code §13241]. Thus, the preliminary projects are categorized as focusing on the following three areas:

- **Protection (P)**  
P projects are intended to make the Basin Plan more protective of water quality and/or beneficial uses.
- **Reasonableness (R)**  
R projects are intended to make the Basin Plan goals more reasonable or attainable while being protective.

<sup>1</sup> State law requires basin plans to be periodically reviewed [Water Code §13240]. Federal law requires water quality standards to be reviewed every three years [Clean Water Act §303(c)(1)].

- **Housekeeping (H)**

H projects are mainly editorial in nature intended to make clarifications, updates, and corrections to the Basin Plan where needed. The H category also includes some obligatory Basin Plan updates triggered by state or federal actions. H category changes have no regulatory effect.

## **San Diego Water Board Practical Vision – Healthy Waters, Healthy People**

The Practical Vision is a strategy adopted in 2013 to focus the San Diego Water Board's limited resources to achieve our region's highest priorities and goals for healthy water over a seven-year period. The Practical Vision furthers our agency's mission to protect, enhance and restore the quality of California waters in the San Diego Region so that our communities can use and enjoy these waters. It sets a plan to achieve healthy waters through collaboration, reliance on the latest science, prioritization of issues and actions, and prudent use of our authorities in service to the people of California.

The Practical Vision identifies critical factors necessary to achieve healthy waters throughout the San Diego Region using our core values of leadership, stewardship, communication, and transparency. The San Diego Water Board will prioritize Basin Plan amendment projects that align with our values and the Practical Vision.

The Practical Vision includes five chapters focused on water quality issues. Each of the proposed project descriptions indicate which of the Practical Vision chapter(s) that it supports. Additional information on the San Diego Water Board's Practical Vision can be found at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water\\_issues/Practical\\_Vision](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/Practical_Vision).

### **Basin Plan Triennial Review Process**

Federal law requires a review of water quality standards at least once every three years. Water quality standards consist of beneficial use designations, water quality criteria (referred to as water quality objectives in California) necessary to protect those uses, and an anti-degradation policy. In addition, state law requires Basin Plans be periodically reviewed and revised if needed. The last Basin Plan Triennial Review was conducted in [2014](#).

To identify the most important issues to be addressed, the Basin Plan triennial review process includes a workshop, a comment period, and a hearing. The San Diego Water Board must adopt a resolution approving the review and a prioritized list of proposed Basin Plan projects at a hearing to conclude the process. Placing a project on the priority list will prompt San Diego Water Board staff to investigate the need and appropriateness for a Basin Plan amendment to meet agency goals. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, a Basin Plan amendment may or may not be developed and adopted.

The priority list will include an estimate of staff resources needed to investigate the proposed project and, if appropriate, amend the Basin Plan. The San Diego Water Board is allocated limited personnel years (PYs)<sup>2</sup> annually from the General Fund to administer the Basin Plan program, which includes implementing Triennial Review projects. The projects will be prioritized into two groups. The Tier 1 projects will be first to receive the resource allocations scheduled for the next three-year period. The Tier 2 projects will be considered for development if resources and readiness allow.

## **Public Participation and Basin Plan Review Schedule**

Public participation is an important part of each Basin Plan Triennial Review. It promotes San Diego Water Board values of transparency and communication. Interested persons will have an opportunity to provide comments during a public workshop, comment period, and hearing. The purpose of the workshop is to facilitate discussion on the preliminary list of issues, identify any issues from all interested persons to add to the preliminary list for consideration, and solicit comments from interested persons regarding the Basin Plan Triennial Review.

Interested persons also have an opportunity to submit written comments during the 54-day comment period. Staff will assess written comments and incorporate them, where appropriate, into the final report prepared for San Diego Water Board approval at a subsequent public hearing.

Written comments on this document must be submitted by May 16, 2018 to [sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov) with "Triennial Review Comment: CW845836" in the subject line.

The schedule for the 2018 Basin Plan Triennial Review is:

Public comment period begins:	<a href="#">March 23, 2018</a>
Public Workshop on preliminary list:	May 9, 2018
Public comment period ends:	May 16, 2018
Public Hearing on final priority list:	September 12, 2018

<sup>2</sup> A personnel-year (PY) is equivalent to one staff member working full time for one year.

The San Diego Water Board encourages input from interested persons. Persons interested in receiving announcements about the 2018 Basin Plan Triennial Review may subscribe to the “Basin Planning Issues” electronic mailing list at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email\\_subscriptions/reg9\\_subscribe.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg9_subscribe.shtml).

You do not need to re-subscribe to the electronic mailing list if you already are subscribed to the previous Triennial Review e-mail list for the San Diego Region.

Written comments must be submitted via email to: [sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov) with the following subject line “Triennial Review Comment: CW-845836.”

## **Evaluation of Proposed Projects**

Given that the number of potential Basin Plan amendment projects identified will almost certainly exceed available personnel resources, the San Diego Water Board will use its Practical Vision as guidance when evaluating projects. In addition, the following criteria, at a minimum, will be taken into consideration when evaluating proposed projects:

- Protection and Restoration – The project advances the mission of protecting and restoring healthy waters in the San Diego Region.
- Reasonable and Efficient – The Water Board has or can leverage resources (e.g., expertise, technology, and data) that are able to achieve the project goals within the timeframe. The project advances the San Diego Water Board’s goal of ensuring limited resources are put to the best possible use.
- Community Involvement – The project is of high public interest and is appropriately addressed through a Basin Plan amendment.

Interested persons submitting comments should consider the above criteria when identifying any new issues that are not already on the preliminary list in the next section.

## **Proposed Project Descriptions for 2018 Basin Plan Review**

The San Diego Water Board has prepared the following preliminary list of projects for consideration in the 2018 Basin Plan Review. They are organized by applicable Practical Vision Chapter and do not represent a priority ranking. In developing this list, staff considered projects identified in the 2013 Practical Vision, projects previously identified during the 2014 Basin Plan Triennial Review, and projects that address challenges, obstacles, or opportunities arising since the 2014 review. The preliminary list represents water quality issues that are important to the San Diego Water Board and consistent with the Practical Vision. Interested persons are encouraged to comment on these projects and submit proposals on other Basin Plan issues to be investigated.

## **PRELIMINARY LIST WITH PROPOSED PROJECT SUMMARIES ORGANIZED BY APPLICABLE PRACTICAL VISION CHAPTER(S)**

### **Project: Contact Water Recreation (REC-1) Water Quality Objectives**

#### **Type of Action:**

Review Water Quality Objectives and/or Implementation Plan.

#### **Category:**

Protective and Reasonable.

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

Pursue recommendations from the 2014 Triennial Review project to improve evaluation, protection, and restoration of the REC-1 beneficial use.

#### **Discussion:**

The first phase of this project was identified as a Tier 1 Issue in the 2014 Triennial Review. The goal was to determine whether and to what extent data supports amending the REC-1 water quality objectives, implementation provisions for applicable Indicator Bacteria TMDLs, or the TMDLs themselves. During the first phase of the project, the San Diego Water Board participated in stakeholder workgroups, various special studies, and conducted public outreach. Information collected was used to develop recommendations, some of which involve the Basin Plan and can be implemented between 2018-2021.

The recommendations aim to develop a comprehensive solution that brings together various regulatory programs within the San Diego Water Board to focus efforts on human sources of waste affecting the REC-1 beneficial use. Potential action items that may require a Basin Plan amendment include revising REC-1 water quality objectives and/or how they are assessed, and amending the REC-1 TMDLs and/or their implementation plan.

#### **Practical Vision:**

- Chapter 1 – [Strategizing for Healthy Waters](#)
- Chapter 2 – [Monitoring and Assessment](#)
- Chapter 3 – [Recovery of Stream, Wetlands, and Riparian Systems](#)
- Chapter 4 – [Proactive Public Outreach and Communication](#)
- Chapter 5 – [Strategy for Achieving a Sustainable Local Water Supply](#)

## **Project: Climate Change Readiness**

### **Type of Action:**

Identify need for Basin Plan amendments.

### **Category:**

Protective.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Review Basin Plan to identify existing obstacles to addressing climate change issues and recommend Basin Plan amendments.

### **Discussion:**

The proposed project is to review the Basin Plan and identify existing obstacles to achieve the San Diego Water Board's climate change priorities for protecting beneficial uses and, if necessary, to identify and develop recommendations for Basin Plan amendments. The direct and indirect affects and broad-reaching implications of climate change has on the San Diego Water Board's mission to protect and restore uses of water. The San Diego Water Board must be prepared to confront the local impacts of climate change, including how climate change will fundamentally alter biological communities, how it will disrupt sensitive ecological areas, and how it will shift societal attitudes about how aquatic resources should be managed and used.

The San Diego Water Board is tentatively scheduled to consider Resolution No. R9-2018-0051 supporting specific priorities and/or actions to protect beneficial uses from adverse direct and indirect effects of climate change to key beneficial uses on May 9, 2018. This project will support addressing the climate change priorities.

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## **Project: Tijuana River Valley Water Quality Restoration**

### **Type of Action:**

Develop Total Daily Maximum Loads (TMDLs) with implementation plans for REC-1 and solid waste.

### **Category:**

Protective.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Develop TMDLs to restore impaired waters in the Tijuana River Valley.

### **Discussion:**

The proposed project is to advance the restoration of water quality for impaired waters in the Tijuana River Valley. Although the Tijuana River and its estuary are impaired for many pollutants, implementation plans for REC-1 and solid waste are likely to also address many other pollutants. The primary focus will likely be elimination of human waste and human health risks to those working or living in or near the stream banks.

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## **Project: Biological Objectives for Water Bodies in the San Diego Region**

### **Type of Action:**

Review Water Quality Objectives and Implementation/Policy.

### **Category:**

Protective and Reasonable.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Continue to develop targeted biological water quality objectives for the attainment of beneficial uses of surface waters.

### **Discussion:**

This project is to complete the 2014 Triennial Review priority project to develop biological objectives for wadeable streams and then develop a second phase to identify additional water body types for which available science would support biological objectives. The focus of the second phase will be to develop biological objectives for the dry phase of highly intermittent and ephemeral streams.

The San Diego Water Board released an administrative draft technical report and proposed Basin Plan amendment to incorporate biological objectives for wadeable streams in January, 2018 and held a public workshop on February 14, 2018. A formal public comment period, external peer review, and a public hearing are tentatively scheduled to occur between May and October 2018. Additional necessary actions for the 2014 Triennial Review project include approvals from the State Water Board, Office of Administrative Law, and USEPA.

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## **Project: Editorial Revisions, Minor Clarifications or Corrections**

### **Type of Action:**

Implement Editorial Updates.

### **Category:**

Housekeeping.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Identify necessary non-regulatory or mandated revisions to the Basin Plan.

### **Discussion:**

The proposed project is to amend and make editorial non-regulatory changes that clarify, update, or eliminate outdated paragraphs, tables, figures, references to outdated policies, and correct other minor errors in the Basin Plan. These changes are necessary for clarity, and to ensure that the public is informed about the latest requirements to protect water quality. Corrections, clarifications, and general formatting changes are changes without regulatory effect. They do not alter or impose any new requirements on the regulated community. They simply improve the overall readability and utility of the Basin Plan.

The Basin Plan is a dynamic, rather than fixed, document. It requires periodic updates to maintain and ensure that the information in it is current. The Basin Plan should also be amended to include obligatory Basin Plan updates triggered by State or federal actions.

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## **Project: Water Quality Objectives for Total Dissolved Solids in San Diego Region Groundwater**

### **Type of Action:**

Review Water Quality Objectives and/or Implementation Plan.

### **Category:**

Reasonable.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Evaluate and possibly revise the Basin Plan water quality objectives (WQOs) for total dissolved solids (TDS) in groundwater basins where recycled water uses for landscape irrigation is likely to replace irrigation with potable supplies.

### **Discussion:**

The proposed project is to evaluate and possibly revise WQOs (Chapter 3) for TDS (where reasonable to do so) in groundwater basins in the San Diego County and/or South Orange County to continue and expand recycled water use. The project may also result in necessary policy related updates to the Recycled Water (Water Reclamation) requirements in Chapter 4 of the Basin Plan.

For San Diego County, the San Diego Water Board previously endorsed the concept for at least 19 specific basins, described in the "[Guidelines for Salinity / Nutrient Planning in the San Diego Region](#)" ([Resolution No. R9-2010-0125](#)) on [November 10, 2010](#).

Additionally, the proposed project could evaluate data provided by the South Orange County Wastewater Authority (SOCWA) for a Basin Plan amendment to raise the groundwater WQOs for TDS in the Upper and Middle Trabuco, and Middle San Juan hydrologic subareas (HSAs). The proposed WQOs would facilitate the continued (since at least 1997) reuses of recycled water in those HSAs. The groundwater concentrations of TDS in some of the HSAs may already be above the existing WQOs, so they may not have available assimilative capacity for TDS.

Increasing the Region's local water supply and expanding recycled water use will become increasingly important to offset climate change scenarios that may include more periods of drought. Stringent WQOs for TDS can hinder the expansion of recycled water use due to high costs associated with treatments used to remove salts.

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## **Project: Beneficial Uses and Water Quality Objectives Related to Reservoirs**

### **Type of Action:**

Review Beneficial Uses and Water Quality Objectives.

### **Category:**

Reasonable.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Review Basin Plan for necessary changes to facilitate drinking water production and/or the safe storage of recycled water.

### **Discussion:**

This proposed project will review beneficial uses and water quality objectives and, if necessary, develop recommendations to achieve mutually beneficial goals of the Practical Vision and the local operators of water supply reservoirs. Potential issues include facilitating safe storage of recycled water, eliminating uncertainty with respect to applicability of beneficial uses in reservoirs, increasing transparency regarding implementation of water quality objectives for dissolved oxygen, nutrients, secondary maximum contaminant levels, and other constituents.

During the 2014 Triennial Review, the Water Board identified as a Tier 2 project a proposal from the San Diego County Water Authority to focus on reservoir maintenance and operations. However, due to time constraints staff was unable to make any significant progress on that project

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