



**South Coast
Water District**

*Providing Quality Water and Wastewater
Services to the Coastal Communities*



South Orange County Wastewater Authority

April 6, 2015

VIA EMAIL (commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov)

Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814



Re: Comment letter – Desalination Amendments

Dear Ms. Townsend:

South Coast Water District ("SCWD") and South Orange County Wastewater Authority ("SOCWA") hereby provide the following comments on the draft Ocean Plan Amendments (issued on July 3, 2014 and as revised on March 20, 2015). We would like to join in the comments made by CalDesal and hereby incorporate those comments by reference.

First of all, we would like to express our appreciation for your efforts to address our point of compliance issue pertaining to the brine discharge from SCWD's groundwater recovery facility. It was a collaborative process and State Board staff was helpful and a pleasure to work with.

Second, given that is the intent of the State Board to address only desalination facilities using seawater with the Desalination Amendments as indicated in your response to comments, "chapter III.L does not apply to water recycling facilities, brackish groundwater desalination facilities, or any other desalination facility not using seawater as defined,"¹ we request that you further clarify this intent in the language of the Desalination Amendments. We suggest that you insert "only" to the first sentence of Section L.1.a.: "Chapter III.L applies only to desalination facilities* using seawater.*" Appendix A -Ocean Plan Proposed Desalination Amendment ("Amendments") at p. 28.

We are also concerned that a permit writer may be confused by Appendix III (Standard Monitoring Procedures) which under "Receiving Water* Characteristics" states:

"Salinity* must also be monitored by all point sources discharging desalination brine* as part of their core monitoring program. Desalination facilities* discharging brine* into ocean waters* shall monitor salinity as described in chapter III.L.4."

Amendments at p. 69. Here, there is no differentiation for desalination facilities using seawater so it may appear that Chapter II.L.4 could apply to other desalination facilities such as brackish groundwater treatment facilities. Without the qualification that "Chapter III.L applies only to

¹ Response to Comment 2.1 (see also Response to Comment 8.1)

Jeanine Townsend
April 6, 2015
Page 2 of 2

desalination facilities* using seawater," a permit writer could interpret Chapter III.L.4. to apply to other desalination facilities.

Alternatively, if the intent of the State Board is for portions of the Amendments to apply to all desalination facilities (i.e., Chapter III.L.3 (Receiving Water Limitations for Salinity)) to apply to all desalination facilities (including brackish groundwater facilities), we request that the State Board make this clear. However, as set forth in Chapter III.L.4, the monitoring and reporting requirements "would not apply to a wastewater facility discharging a positively buoyant commingled effluent through an existing wastewater outfall . . ." As such, the State Board should clarify in Appendix III that the Chapter III.L.4 (Monitoring and Reporting Programs) requirements apply only to negatively buoyant effluent.

We request that you modify the language in Appendix III as follows:

"Salinity* must also be monitored by all point sources discharging desalination brine* as part of their core monitoring program. Desalination facilities* discharging brine* resulting in a negatively buoyant effluent into ocean waters* shall monitor salinity as described in chapter III.L.4."

Third, with respect to future events which may trigger of a new Water Code section 13142.5(b) determination, we would request clarification of what constitutes "a reduction in the volume of wastewater available for the dilution of brine" pursuant to Section L.2.a.(5). Amendments at p. 31. Publicly owned treatment works ("POTWs") experience seasonal variations in the volume of wastewater and these variations should not, on their own, be triggering events. We would suggest that a better triggering event would be when a reduction in the volume of wastewater impacts the buoyancy of the plume.

Finally, we are concerned about the definition of "Natural Background Salinity" as applied to small POTWs like SOCWA. SOCWA does not have 20 years of historical salinity data, and the alternative determination involves "measuring salinity at the depth of proposed discharge for three years, on a weekly basis prior to a desalination facility* discharging brine,* and the mean monthly natural salinity* shall be used to determine natural background salinity." Amendments at p. 49. We request that there be some flexibility for determining background salinity, such as allowing the use of available nearby reference site data.

We thank you again for all the hard work put in by staff on the Ocean Plan Amendments, and for taking our prior comments into consideration.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.



Andrew Brunhart
General Manager
South Coast Water District

Sincerely,



Betty Burnett
General Manager
South Orange County Wastewater Authority

attachments

cc: Claire Waggoner (via email)