



CITY OF SANTA MARIA  
UTILITIES DEPARTMENT  
Business Services • Regulatory Compliance  
Solid Waste Services • Water Resources

2065 EAST MAIN STREET • SANTA MARIA, CALIFORNIA 93454-8026 • 805-925-0951, EXT. 7270 • FAX 805-928-7240

August 4, 2014

VIA E-MAIL [commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov]

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



**SUBJECT: COMMENT LETTER - TRASH AMENDMENTS TO THE OCEAN PLAN  
AND THE INLAND SURFACE WATERS, ENCLOSED BAYS AND  
ESTUARIES PLAN**

Dear Ms. Townsend:

The City of Santa Maria ("Santa Maria" or "City") appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed Trash Amendments to the Ocean Plan and the Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays and Estuaries Plan. Trash is a significant issue of concern in certain areas of Santa Maria, and the City believes that an appropriate State Board policy on trash will support its ongoing efforts to address trash within the Santa Maria community. These comments are intended to help improve the proposed Trash Amendments so that they might serve as a more useful tool to support the City's efforts.

Santa Maria supports the State Board staff's decision to use a narrative water quality objective for trash. The narrative objective provides a clear standard that all can understand and that the City can use to prioritize its programs. The City agrees with State Board staff's recommendation not to use a numeric objective of "zero trash". While the City can and will continue to control and address many sources of trash, there are many sources that even the best program cannot control in all cases. A numeric objective is therefore not feasible in this situation, and Santa Maria urges the State Board to support staff's recommendation on this important question.

Santa Maria generally supports the focus in the proposed Trash Amendments on priority land uses as a means of identifying key areas within the City where limited resources should be allocated to achieve maximum control benefit. The City believes that this approach should be refined and improved, but State Board staff's recommendation to focus trash controls on areas with high trash generation rates is the correct one and Santa Maria hopes the State Board supports it.

To build off of these core issues which the City supports, and to help improve the value of the proposed Trash Amendments to the City's existing program, Santa Maria makes the following specific comments and suggestions:

## **I. Discharge Prohibition and Receiving Water Limitation**

As proposed, the Trash Amendments provide that the City could achieve compliance with the prohibition on the discharge of trash by implementing either Track 1 or Track 2. The clarity of this path to compliance with the discharge prohibition is appreciated and welcomed by the City. To provide similar clarity with regard to achieving compliance with the receiving water limitations language contained in the City's MS4 permit, which has been interpreted to require strict compliance with water quality objectives, the State Board should include a provision in the Trash Amendments that links compliance with the discharge prohibition to compliance with the narrative water quality objective. This level of regulatory certainty is important to support the City's ability to make the large capital investment that will be required to address trash under either Track 1 or Track 2.

If implementation of either Track 1 or Track 2 results in compliance with the discharge prohibition, such compliance should also result in achievement of the water quality objective and compliance with the receiving water limitations language in the City's MS4 permit.

## **II. Accommodation of Watershed-Based/Integrated Planning Approaches**

Many municipalities in California are currently moving toward a watershed-based approach to achieving water quality requirements. There appears to be a scientific and regulatory consensus that a watershed-based approach that involves multiple stakeholders represents a better way to address water quality problems, as opposed to a narrow jurisdictional focus. Santa Maria is currently developing an Integrated Plan that is designed to look at all of the City's water quality obligations in a watershed-based context that will put the City in the best position to achieve all of its obligations through a consolidated approach.

The concern with the Trash Amendments is that it prioritizes trash as a water quality concern above other sources of water quality impairment that may be more pressing on a watershed basis. Therefore, the City requests that the State Board consider adding language to the Trash Amendments that would allow for prioritizing issues for each watershed, through efforts such as the City's Integrated Plan or other similar approaches.

## **III. Flexibility in Designating Priority Land Use Types**

Santa Maria supports the use of prioritized land uses to focus efforts in areas with the greatest contribution of trash. However, the proposed Trash Amendments should allow the City to determine at the local level which land uses contribute the greatest amount of trash in Santa Maria. While the Trash Amendments allow the City to identify additional land use types that should be prioritized, the document does not appear to allow the City to *remove* prioritized land use types.

The Trash Amendments should establish a process to both add and delete prioritized land use types so that localized efforts can focus on the areas with the greatest contribution of trash.

#### **IV. Implementation Schedule**

The Trash Amendment as proposed would establish a 10- to 15-year implementation timeline (10 years after the next permit adoption or 15 years, whichever occurs first). Implementation of either Track 1 or Track 2 will take time and a large capital investment. As with any large-scale public works project, it will take time for the City to plan, design, fund, and install the devices needed to implement the program. In addition, it will take time for the City to educate its community and change community norms regarding trash. A time horizon of 15-20 years would better reflect the implementation challenges the City will face.

#### **V. Future TMDLs and Listings**

Because the Trash Amendment seeks to establish a statewide policy and approach to addressing trash, the Trash Amendment should specify that the policy and implementation approach replaces the need to develop local TMDLs for trash. Since the Trash Amendments are designed to establish compliance with the water quality objective for trash over the compliance period, it would appear to negate the need for local TMDLs or additional listing of impairment of trash.

#### **VI. Conclusion**

The City thanks the State Board for its consideration of these comments. The City supports the State Board's general approach and looks forward to revisions to the proposed Trash Amendment that will make it a more useful tool for the City to use to continue to address this important issue.

Sincerely,



**RICHARD G. SWEET, P.E.**  
Director of Utilities