

State Water Resources Control Board

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WATER BOARD TO HOLD PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON OCEAN PROTECTION

MONTEREY- The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will hold a workshop in Monterey on August 31, 2005 to hear comments from the public on protections for sensitive ocean waters. The California Ocean Plan, previously adopted by the State Water Board protects ocean water for beneficial uses by the public. Beneficial uses include swimming, fishing, recreational uses, water supply and other benefits and potential benefits of ocean water.

The California Ocean Plan lists 34 coastal marine areas designated by the State Water Board as Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). ASBS require particular protection of species or biological communities from alterations of natural water quality. Alterations of natural water quality may result from direct discharges, dry weather run off, storm water runoff, septic system drainage or other urban uses. In order to protect the natural water quality of these areas of special biological significance, the California Ocean Plan has prohibited discharges into these areas for more than two decades. However, in 2003, a survey of ASBS found that nearly 1,700 discharges, prohibited by the California Ocean Plan and the California Water Code, currently drain into these protected areas. Comments received at this workshop will help the State Water Board determine if discharges from activities such as from marine laboratories, aquariums or storm water should be allowed.

Vice Chair of the State Water Board and workshop leader, Pete Silva notes that, "The State Water Board is committed to protecting ASBS, while looking for practical solutions to issues such as storm water runoff that drain to these protected areas. The Ocean Plan does allow for exceptions to the discharge prohibition. We want to hear the public's views on ocean water protections and possible exceptions allowing discharges into ASBS in specific cases."

Information on the State Water Board's grant program to address discharges into ASBS will also be discussed.

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The workshop will be held from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon on Wednesday, August 31, 2005 at the Monterey Conference Center, Steinbeck Forum Theater, One Portola Plaza in Monterey.

Additional information regarding the State Water Board and this workshop can be found at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/plnspols/oplans/asbs.html>

Background

The State Water Resources Control Board is responsible for protecting water quality and allocating the rights to use surface water in California. The State Water Board's existing Ocean Plan has been approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The State Water Board established the ASBS Stakeholder Group to advise it on ASBS issues and protections. Current exceptions to the Ocean Plan prohibition against discharges include treated wastewater from the Carmel/Pebble Beach area (Carmel Bay ASBS) and marine lab, aquarium, and storm water from the University of San Diego, Scripps Institute of Oceanography (San Diego/Scripps ASBS).

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