



# Media Release

## San Diego Water Board Approves Updated Storm Water Runoff Regulations

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The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board), approved a regional municipal separate storm water sewer system (MS4) permit on May 8 designed to prevent pollutants such as trash, metals, bacteria, chemicals, and pesticides from being washed into storm drains and into creeks, rivers and the ocean.

Called a Regional MS4 Permit, it is a region-wide (MS4) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit that will regulate MS4 discharges to inland surface waters, bays and estuaries and coastal waters throughout the three counties within the San Diego Region.

The Regional MS4 Permit will jointly cover 39 municipal, county government, and special district entities (referred to jointly as Copermittees) located in Southern Orange County, Southwestern Riverside County, and San Diego County who own and operate large MS4s which discharge storm water (wet weather) runoff and non-storm water (dry weather) runoff to surface waters throughout the San Diego Region. The Copermittees will be covered by the new Regional MS4 Permit in a phased a manner as their current MS4 permits expire or upon request for earlier coverage prior to permit expiration.

Storm water runoff is a major state-wide water quality problem, posing a threat to human health and water ecosystems. In the San Diego Region, pollutants in urban runoff have caused beach closings, impairment of streams, creeks, and bays, fish consumption warnings, reduced habitat for threatened and endangered species and unsightly accumulations of trash and debris in surface waters of San Diego, Riverside and Orange counties. The dimensions of the urban runoff problem clearly highlight the need for a shift at this time to the innovative and more adaptive regulatory approach offered by the Regional MS4 Permit.

“Clean water is vitally important for human, environmental, and economic health in the San Diego Region,” said San Diego Water Board Executive Officer David Gibson. “The new storm water permit is designed to give municipalities the flexibility to implement a watershed based approach to restoring and maintaining the health of our waters in the most affordable, effective, and measureable way.”

Gibson explained the watershed approach is necessary to uniformly regulate storm water runoff in all three counties in the region and provide the community based approach most likely

to achieve lasting improvements in water quality. “San Diegans from all walks of life have dedicated countless thousands of volunteer hours in cleaning up trash and other wastes discharged into our creeks, rivers, bays, lagoons and beaches from our storm drain systems. We all must use the approach of this storm water permit so that one day soon that will no longer be necessary.”

A key feature of the Regional MS4 Permit is that it provides a flexible and adaptive process for the Copermitees to select and address the highest priority water quality issues. The process also allows the Copermitees to build upon their efforts to achieve goals that will yield the greatest water quality improvements. The regional approach also offers the opportunity to better achieve regulatory consistency as well as maximum efficiency and economy of resources for both the San Diego Water Board and the Copermitees.

The Regional MS4 Permit requires cities and towns in the regional board jurisdiction to develop a plan to reduce the pollutants in storm water, to prevent non-storm water discharges, and to monitor the results and take corrective action when goals are not met.

Storm water discharge permit holders have a wide range of strategies available under the new permit to reduce pollution including public education of residents for activities like car washing and pesticide use, retrofitting of existing areas with permeable materials to remove pollutants, and requiring engineering practices that allow for storm water capture and re-use.

For more information on the Regional MS4 Permit, visit

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb9/water\\_issues/programs/stormwater/index.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb9/water_issues/programs/stormwater/index.shtml)

To learn more about the San Diego Water Board, please visit:

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/>

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