Water Quality Report Card

Sediment Quality Objectives in the San Diego River Estuary

Regional Water Board: San Diego, Region 9

Beneficial Uses Affected: Estuarine Habitat, Marine Habitat

Implemented Through: NPDES Stormwater Phase I

Effective Date: n/a

Attainment Date: n/a

STATUS **Improvement Needed** (1 station)
Targets Achieved (5 stations)

Pollutant Type: To Be Determined

Pollutant Source: To Be Determined

Water Quality Improvement Strategy

The San Diego River Estuary provides critical habitat for numerous bird species and other wildlife. In 2009 the State Water Resources Control Board adopted Sediment Quality Objectives (SQOs) for enclosed bays and estuaries throughout California. The SQOs require dischargers to monitor the subtidal sediments using a triad approach featuring 3 lines of evidence: sediment chemistry, sediment toxicity, and sediment benthic community. Results from each line of evidence are combined to provide an overall assessment of sediment quality at monitoring stations.

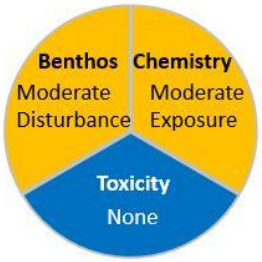
In the San Diego Region, the Phase I Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) NPDES permit requires permittees conduct SQO monitoring at least once every five years or participate in a regional SQO monitoring program.

To date MS4 permittees have carried out SQO monitoring under the Southern California BIGHT Regional Monitoring Program. The most recent data for SQOs under BIGHT were collected in 2013 and 2018, with a total of 6 stations sampled. Two stations were sampled in both 2013 and 2018.

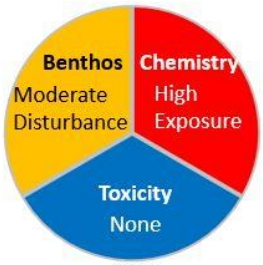
Water Quality

Most stations were identified as unimpacted or likely unimpacted, indicating the SQOs are protected for those locations within the estuary. However, one station was identified as possibly impacted in 2013, and resampling in 2018 confirmed that the site was likely impacted (see right). Under the SQOs, when a location is identified as likely impacted, further steps, such as stressor identification, need to be initiated. Currently, this additional step of stressor identification has not been undertaken.

SQO Assessment for Likely Impacted Station

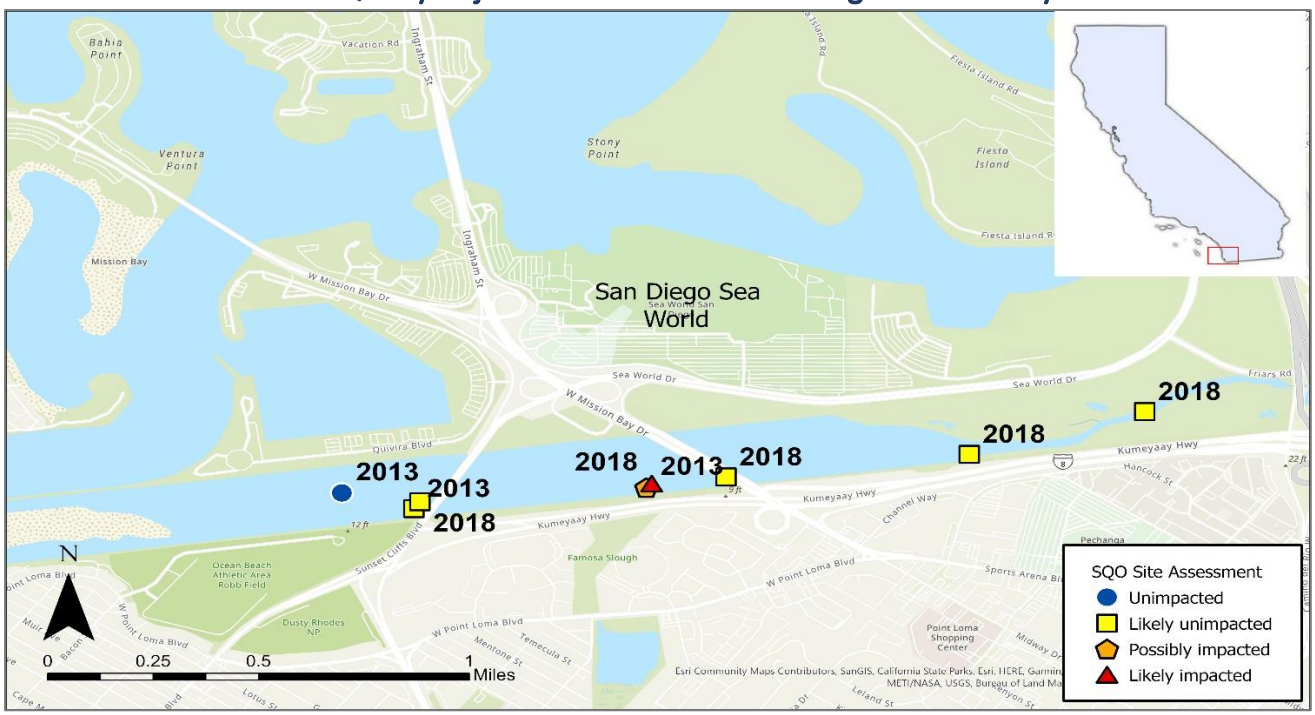


2013



2018

Sediment Quality Objective Scores for the San Diego River Estuary



Released September 2023