
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

PERMITTING OF PROJECTS THAT ARE RESPONDING TO CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES (9/18/2020)

On August 16, 2020, a series of summertime thunderstorms triggered over 10,000 lightning strikes and ignited hundreds of wildfires across California and many fires continue to burn. The wildfires have destroyed hundreds of homes and structures and burned thousands of acres of land. The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) and its staff are committed to assisting the affected communities to recover from the fires.

Post-fire recovery projects may require Central Coast Water Board permits for activities associated with **construction, work in and around waters of the state, repairs to septic systems and wastewater treatment plants**, and the **handling and disposal of emergency-related waste material**. The Central Coast Water Board recognizes that post-fire cleanup is critical to communities and these activities are required to be done in a manner that is protective of water quality. The Central Coast Water Board offers the following information to assist in your determination on which activities require permits and how to obtain approval from the Central Coast Water Board in an expedited manner to implement the important recovery activities. Please note that some activities may require permitting by other local, state, and federal agencies. The information that follows is specific to Water Board specific permitting requirements for the Central Coast Region ([Region 3](#)).

Construction involving greater than one acre of land disturbance

Construction activities for post-fire recovery are anticipated to generally be smaller than an acre in size and won't need a stormwater permit from the Central Coast Water Board. However, post-fire construction projects an acre or more in size are required to enroll in the Construction General Permit. Large or small, recovery efforts will be needed to prepare for wet weather and potential soil loss and should incorporate sound practices to protect water quality. Rain events in burned areas have the potential to result significant erosion and debris movement.

Contact Information:

Central Coast Water Board: Mike Sandecki,
Michael.Sandecki@waterboards.ca.gov or 805-549-3372
or Michael Godwin,
MichaelD.Godwin@waterboards.ca.gov or 805-549-3886

Work within streams, rivers, riparian areas, and wetlands

The Central Coast Water Board regulates and issues permits for projects or other work occurring in rivers, streams, riparian areas, wetlands, and other water bodies. Some project examples include: replacement of road infrastructure and stream crossings including culverts and bridges, erosion control, and removal of sediment and debris. If you intend to conduct repairs or other work in a water body, please follow the process below to determine if you need a permit.

First contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: ([see U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contacts below](#)) to find out if you need authorization from them for the project. The project may be authorized as emergency maintenance and exempt from permitting; require a U.S Army Corps of Engineers Emergency Permit; or may require a different permit.

Next contact us at the Central Coast Water Board: ([see Central Coast Water Board contacts below](#)). We will help you get the appropriate Central Coast Water Board authorization, which in part depends on how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers authorizes the project. We may also be able to put you in contact with parties assisting with project permitting and implementation, such as the [Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County](#).

Then provide us information about the project: Fill out and submit to the Central Coast Water Board an emailed or paper [Fire Response and Emergency Project Application Form](#). Include documentation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' determination. Central Coast Water Board staff will determine the appropriate state authorization for your project based on the information you submit.

1. **Submittal.** The Fire Response and Emergency Project Application Form should be submitted as follows:
 - a. Emailed (preferred) to centralcoast@waterboards.ca.gov, Attn: 401 Program, or
 - b. Mailed hardcopy to Central Coast Water Board, Attn: 401 Program, 895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.
2. **Contact Information.**
 - a. Central Coast Water Board: Phil Hammer, Phillip.Hammer@waterboards.ca.gov or 805-549-3882
 - b. Army Corps of Engineers: Katerina Galacatos, katerina.galacatos@usace.army.mil or 415-503-6778
 - c. Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County: Kelli Camara, kcamara@rcdsantacruz.org or 831-464-2950 Ext.15
3. **Other Agencies.** Some projects in water bodies may require permitting by other state, federal, and local agencies, such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Division of Drinking Water, and municipalities. Prior to initiating such

projects, you should also contact these agencies to determine what requirements, if any, apply to you.

4. Resources.

- a. Fire Response and Emergency Application Form:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/401wqcert/docs/2020/fire_response_emergencyapp2.docx
- b. California Department of Fish and Wildlife general culvert, bridge, crossing guidance:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/water_quality_certification/pdf/CDFW_General_Culvert_Bridge_Crossing_Stabilization_Document.pdf
- c. Weaver and Hagans Guide to Forest and Ranch Roads:
<http://www.pacificwatershed.com/sites/default/files/RoadsEnglishBOOKApril2015b.pdf>
- d. Sonoma RCD website (guidance for erosion control following fires):
<https://sonomarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Protecting-Bare-soil-following-wildfire-by-Rich-Casale.pdf>

5. Frequently Asked Questions.

- a. *How long will it take to get emergency authorization from the Central Coast Water Board?* We have made issuance of authorizations for fire related projects a priority. We will review project information in the order received and prioritize authorization. We anticipate being able to issue authorizations from within a couple of days to several weeks for the more complex projects.
- b. *What steps can I take to facilitate authorization of my project?* Projects are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Typically, projects that follow guidance and best management practices for protection of water quality, such as those outlined in the resources provided above, are authorized more quickly than those that solely rely on use of hardscape materials, such as rip rap. Permanent bank-hardening techniques such as gabion baskets, concrete, sakrete, or gunite, are generally not allowed.
- c. *What types of stream crossing repairs might be needed after a wildfire?* Plastic or polyvinyl chloride (PVC) culverts may be damaged during the fire and may need to be replaced, and post fire drainages will carry more sediment, debris, and water. If reconstruction is necessary, build a crossing that is adequately sized, allows passage of storm flows and debris without becoming obstructed, and allows for fish passage if appropriate and feasible.

Projects involving septic systems or other onsite wastewater treatment systems

See the information on the following webpage:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/septics/permits.html

*Note: for issues involving public drinking water systems, contact the Division of Drinking Water:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/programs/documents/ddwem/DDWdistrictofficesmap.pdf

Projects involving disaster-related waste disposal or temporary staging of disaster-related waste

1. **First contact your local landfill:** ([see landfill contacts below](#)) to find out if they are accepting emergency/disaster-related waste and if there are temporary staging areas. Disaster-related waste disposal at landfills or temporary staging areas may require enrollment in the State Water Board's General Waste Discharge Requirements for Disaster-Related Wastes (General Order for Disaster-Related Wastes, see below).
2. **Next contact us at the Central Coast Water Board:** ([see Central Coast Water Board contacts below](#)). We will help with any questions regarding the General Order Disaster-Related Wastes and may also be able to put you in contact with parties assisting with disaster-related waste disposal.
3. **Then provide us information about the project:** The General Order for Disaster-Related Wastes requires submittal of a notice of intent to the Central Coast Water Board within 30 days of landfills accepting disaster-related waste for disposal or implementing temporary staging areas for disaster-related waste. A notice of intent is essentially an application for coverage under the General Order for Disaster-Related Wastes.
4. **Additional information**
 - a. **Project types that are regulated.** The Central Coast Water Board regulates and issues waste discharge requirements for the disposal/handling/storage of waste. Landfills have waste discharge requirements but may be required to enroll in the General Order for Disaster-Related Wastes if the landfill will be accepting large amounts of disaster wastes. Community temporary staging areas would also require enrollment in the General Order for Disaster-Related Wastes to ensure that wastes are managed and stored appropriately until permanently disposed at an appropriate facility. If you are a landfill anticipating or planning to accept large amounts of disaster-related waste or an individual/agency intending to set up a temporary staging area for disaster-related wastes, please contact the Central Coast Water Board to determine if you need to enroll in the General Order for Disaster-Related Wastes.
 - b. **Notice of Intent.** The notice of intent should be:
 - i. Emailed to centralcoast@waterboards.ca.gov, Attn: Land Disposal Program, or
 - ii. Mailed hardcopy to Central Coast Water Board, Attn: Land Disposal Program, 895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

c. Contact Information.

- i. Central Coast Water Board: Ryan Lodge,
Ryan.Lodge@waterboards.ca.gov or 805-549-3506
- ii. City of Santa Cruz Landfill: Craig Pearson,
cpearson@cityofsantacruz.com or 831-420-6273
- iii. Buena Vista Landfill: Kasey Kolassa,
Kasey.Kolassa@santacruzcounty.us or 831-454-2377
- iv. Monterey Peninsula Landfill: Tim Brownell,
tbrownell@mrwmd.org or 831-264-6373?
- v. Johnson Canyon Landfill: Brian Kennedy,
briank@svswa.org or 831-775-3013
- vi. Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Services: John Ricker,
john.ricker@SantaCruzCounty.us or 831-454-2750
- vii. Monterey County Health Department: Maria Ferdin,
ferdinme@co.monterey.ca.us or 831-755-8915
- viii. San Benito County Health Department: Rhiannon Beltran,
rbeltran@cosb.us or 831-637-5367
- ix. CalRecycle: <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/disaster/wildfires>

d. Other Agencies. Disaster-related waste disposal at landfills or management of disaster-related wastes at temporary staging areas may require permitting by other state agencies, such as California's Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle); federal; and local agencies including the applicable county agencies or municipalities. Prior to initiating such projects, you should also contact these agencies (contact information is listed in 4.c above) to determine what requirements, if any, apply to you.

e. Resources.

- i. General Waste Discharge Requirements for Disaster-Related Wastes,
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/wqo20.html