



Fact Sheet

The Review of State Water Quality Control Plans and State Policies for Water Quality Control

What is the Role of the Water Boards?

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards), collectively known as the Water Boards are dedicated to a single vision: abundant clean water for human uses and environmental protection to sustain California's future. The State Water Board protects the quality of the state's waters through the development, revision, and implementation of state water quality control plans and state policies for water quality control (State Plans and Policies).

What are State Water Quality Control Plans and State Policies for Water Quality Control?

State Water Quality Control Plans are established by the State Water Board to preserve and enhance California's waters to protect human health, aquatic life and ecosystem health, and other beneficial uses of water. State Water Quality Control Plans identify and designate beneficial uses, incorporate the beneficial use designations in the Regional Water Boards' basin plans, establish water quality objectives, and include implementation programs to achieve those objectives.

State Policies for Water Quality Control contain general water quality principles and guidelines for long-range water resource planning, water quality objectives at key locations for planning and for water quality control activities, and other principles and guidelines the State Water Board deems essential for water quality control.

These State Plans and Policies address water quality issues that cross Regional Water Board boundaries or have significant statewide application. For more information about each state plan and policy, please visit the State Water Board's [Plans and Policies webpage](https://waterboards.ca.gov/plans_policies/) at https://waterboards.ca.gov/plans_policies/.

What are Federally Promulgated Water Quality Standards for California and Clean Water Act section 304(a) Recommended Criteria?

To address the problems of toxics in waterways, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) established water quality standards for priority toxic pollutants under U.S. EPA's 1992 National Toxic Rule and the 2000 California Toxics



Rule.¹ The U.S. EPA also publishes national recommended water quality criteria under Clean Water Act section 304(a) for approximately 150 pollutants to provide guidance for states and tribes to establish water quality standards for surface waters that protect aquatic life and human health.

What are Periodic Reviews and Triennial Reviews?

The State Water Board conducts periodic reviews of state plans and policies, as required by the California Water Code.² The State Water Board also conducts triennial reviews consistent with the Federal Clean Water Act section 303(c)(1) and (c)(2)³ and the implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. 131.20. The purpose of these reviews is to assess the adequacy of the state plans and policies, as well as applicable water quality standards, to determine if future revisions are appropriate.

During these reviews, the State Water Board engages the public, interested persons, governmental agencies, and tribes to gather feedback and information to identify, inform, and prioritize future changes or additions to state plans and policies. These reviews typically result in a Staff Report and Work Plan, which includes a prioritized list of projects that help guide the State Water Board's priorities for future rule-making actions (e.g., amendments to state plans and policies).

The periodic or triennial review is a planning and prioritization process and not a rulemaking process. Each rulemaking project that is identified as a priority in the Staff Report and Work Plan will have its own public process and must comply with specific legal requirements, including applicable rulemaking requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act.

How is the Review of State Plans and Policies being Conducted?

For this Review of State Water Quality Control Plans and State Policies for Water Quality Control (Review of State Plans and Policies), the State Water Board is conducting its periodic and triennial reviews in a single combined proceeding. The scope of this review includes the 5 state plans and the 26 policies listed below. The Review of State Plans and Policies also includes review of the federally promulgated water quality standards for California and Clean Water Act section 304(a)

¹ 40 C.F.R. §§ 131.36 and 131.38. In addition, in 1995 U.S. EPA adopted aquatic habitat and migration criteria for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. (40 C.F.R. § 131.37.)

² Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, Wat. Code, §§ 13143, 13170, 13170.2, subd. (b), and 13240.

³ Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1313(c)(1) and (c)(2).

recommended criteria. Comparison tables have been developed to assist the public in comparing various federal water quality standards and criteria against existing state water quality objectives. The tables can be found [here](#).

The purpose of the Review of State Plans and Policies is to engage with the public, interested persons, governmental agencies, and tribes to identify potential changes or additions that will help to guide the State Water Board's priorities for future amendments to the State Plans and Policies.

What State Plans and Policies are Included in the Review?

Statewide Water Quality Control Plans:

1. Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary
2. Water Quality Control Plan for Enclosed Bays and Estuaries: Sediment Quality Provisions
3. Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California
 - a. Part 1 Trash Provisions of the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California
 - b. Part 2 of the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California—Tribal and Subsistence Fishing Beneficial Uses and Mercury Provisions
 - c. Part 3 of the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California—Bacteria Provisions and a Water Quality Standards Variance Policy
 - d. State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Materials to Waters of the State
 - e. State Policy for Water Quality Control: Toxicity Provisions
4. Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California
5. Water Quality Control Plan for Control of Temperature in the Coastal and Interstate Waters and Enclosed Bays and Estuaries of California

State Policies for Water Quality Control:

1. Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California
2. Cannabis Cultivation Policy: Principles and Guidelines for Cannabis Cultivation

3. Policy for Compliance Schedules in National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permits
4. Water Quality Control Policy for Consolidated Toxic Hot Spots Cleanup Plan
5. State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Materials to Waters of the State
6. Water Quality Control Policy for the Enclosed Bays and Estuaries of California
7. Water Quality Control Policy for Guidance on Development of Regional Toxic Hot Spot Plans
8. Water Quality Control Policy for Addressing Impaired Waters: Regulatory Structure and Options
9. Policies and Procedures for Investigation and Cleanup and Abatement of Dischargers Under Water Code Section 13304 (Resolution 92-49)
10. Water Quality Control Policy for Developing California's Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List
11. Policy for Regulation of Discharges of Municipal Solid Waste
12. Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program
13. Policy for Maintaining Instream Flows in Northern California Coastal Streams
14. Water Quality Control Policy on the Use of Coastal and Estuarine Waters for Power Plant Cooling
15. Water Quality Control Policy on the Use and Disposal of Inland Waters Used for Powerplant Cooling
16. Pollutant Policy Document for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary
17. Water Quality Control Policy for Recycled Water
18. Policy on Supplemental Environmental Projects
19. Policy on the Disposal of Shredder Waste
20. Sources of Drinking Water Policy
21. Policy for Implementation of Toxics Standards for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California
22. State Policy for Water Quality Control
23. State Policy for Water Quality Control: Toxicity Provisions
24. Low-Threat Underground Storage Tank Closure Policy

- 25. Underground Storage Tank Pilot Program Policy
- 26. Policy with Respect to Water Reclamation in California

How Can the Public Get Involved and Stay Informed?

There are several opportunities to engage and provide input during this review.

The Draft Staff Report and Work Plan for the Review of State Plans and Policies is available for review and comment on the State Water Board's [Plans and Policies webpage](https://waterboards.ca.gov/plans_policies/) at https://waterboards.ca.gov/plans_policies/.

Written comments, including any data or other evidence that should be considered by the State Water Board, on the Draft Review of State Plans and Policies must be received by **12:00pm (noon) on September 1, 2026**.

The State Water Board will hold a public hearing to receive input at the following date and location:

Tuesday, August 18, 2026
Coastal Hearing Room – Second Floor
Joe Serna, Jr. – CalEPA Headquarters Building
1001 I Street, Second Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814
And via Video and Teleconference

See the Public Notice for more information on document availability, the public comment period, and the Board hearing.

Additional Resources

More information on this Project can be found at the [Review of State Plans and Policies](#) webpage. To learn more about the many opportunities to participate in decisions and activities that affect the state's water resources, please see the [Citizens Guide to working with the California Water Boards](#).

Any person desiring to receive future notices announcing relevant engagement opportunities must sign up for the email distribution list by accessing the [Email List Subscription Form](#) website. To subscribe, expand the "Water Quality" tab, and check the box for "Review of State Plans and Policies."

Questions may be directed to the Inland Planning, Standards, and Implementation Unit inbox at dwq-ipsi@waterboards.ca.gov.