

State Water Resources Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 7, 2004
SWRCB 04-009

Contact: Beth Jines
916-341-5254

STATE WATER BOARD AWARDS ONE MILLION DOLLARS TO SANTA CRUZ TO CURB BEACH POLLUTION

Sacramento – The State Water Resources Control Board has approved a \$1 million grant to help keep urban runoff from polluting, and causing the closure of Santa Cruz beaches. The funds will be formally presented at a ceremony on October 7, at 10 a.m., at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf.

Terry Tamminen, Secretary for Environmental Protection and a strong proponent of the Clean Beaches Initiative observed, “Clean Beaches projects are construction projects which demonstrate sustained, long-term water quality protection benefits. These projects get to the causes of beach closures and use diversion, repairs and treatment to alleviate bacterial contamination and keep our beaches open.”

The grant, to the City’s Public Works Department, will complete the construction of five systems that divert water flowing in storm drains during dry weather to the sanitary sewer for treatment. “Flows in storm drains when there is no storm, often carry bacteria and other contaminants which cause the closure of Santa Cruz beaches,” said Gary Carlton, member of the State Water Resources Control Board. “The Water Boards are pleased to work with local agencies to improve coastal water quality.” “It benefits everyone,” continued Mr. Carlton.

A 1995-1997 study by the Santa Cruz Environmental Health Department found elevated bacteria levels in the storm drains and pump stations emptying into the San Lorenzo River during both summer and winter periods. This project is expected to reduce bacterial contamination in the San Lorenzo River Lagoon and the adjacent Main, Cowell, and Seabright Beaches.

“Our staff and Board were supportive of this project when it was first proposed. The City of Santa Cruz has a good handle on the sources of bacteria related to beach closures and continues to target their efforts to alleviate problems. Reduction of beach bacterial problems is a very important goal in our region. This grant will advance those efforts significantly,” added Jeffrey Young, Chair of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The City will also inspect, clean and line storm drain pipes that lead to these diversion systems to prevent ground water from entering the storm drain system and adding unnecessary flow to the diversion units.

The \$1 million grant, which goes to the City’s Public Works Department, is funded through the Clean Beaches Initiative, part of Proposition 40, The California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002. Passed by voters, the \$2.6 billion bond program funds projects that protect the State’s waterways, beaches, and drinking water. Proposition funds are not part of the State’s General Fund.

Construction of this project is expected to begin in July 2005 and be completed by December 2005.

-more-

Facts About CLEAN BEACHES

- Santa Cruz is a popular beach destination. California beachgoers contribute more than \$60 billion to California's economy in a single year.
- Santa Cruz County experiences a significant number of beach closures due to high concentrations of indicator bacteria.
- Urban runoff contains bacteria-laden animal waste, lawn & garden fertilizers, gas & oil from cars, and plastic trash.
- Health hazards from bacteria contamination can affect swimmers, surfers, and beach goers.
- When a beach is closed due to contamination, the economic effect can be devastating to local business owners.
- Diverting urban runoff to a wastewater treatment plant will help prevent this contamination.

Clean Beaches Initiative Grant Program

The California Water Boards have been tasked with the distribution of funds for the Clean Beaches Initiative Grant Program. The Budget Act of 2001 allocated \$32.3 million of Proposition 13 funds to implement projects to prevent bacterial contamination from causing the closure of California beaches. To further the effort, \$46 million from Proposition 40, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and

Coastal Protection Act of 2002 was appropriated to help organizations – local, public, and non-profit – implement projects that assist in coastal water quality protection.

Clean Beaches funding is used for the following types of projects:

- Diverting or treating urban runoff.
- Implementing Best Management Practices to reduce or eliminate sources.
- Implementing circulation improvements.
- Conducting studies to determine source(s) and evaluate alternative corrective actions followed by implementation of corrective actions.

The Clean Beaches Initiative (Propositions 13 and 40) have provided \$76 million for coastal cleanup projects throughout the state, to alleviate the health hazards and beach postings and closures caused by non-point source pollution. Non-point source pollution is urban runoff contaminated by pesticides, fertilizers, animal wastes, oil, grease, sediments, and other toxics used in our everyday lives.

For additional information on the CBI Grant Program, please visit the State Water Resources Control Board's website at

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/cwphome/beaches/index.html>.

