



Media Release

State Water Board Adopts Statewide Water Quality Objective for Trash and Implementation Requirements

For Immediate Release

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) yesterday adopted a statewide water quality objective aimed at reducing the amount of trash that finds its way into rivers, lakes and the ocean, threatening aquatic life and public health.

While several regional water quality control boards already have trash control plans or permits in place, the State Water Board adopted the Trash Amendments to provide statewide consistency in efforts to protect aquatic life and public health, and reduce trash in state waters. A central element of the Trash Amendments is a land use-based compliance approach that targets high trash generating areas.

“Trash in our lakes, streams, and the ocean pose a serious threat to fish and wildlife as well as harming the public’s ability to enjoy our precious beaches and waterways. Fortunately, this problem is entirely preventable and many communities have already stepped up to meet the challenge,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “As a result, this policy mandates those tried-and-true, common sense approaches to ensure we get trash removed early when it enters our storm water system.

“It also allows flexibility for communities to come up with approaches that work best for them. With 15 Total Maximum Daily Loads for trash, Los Angeles is significantly reducing the amount of trash reaching the waterways. The Bay Area is starting to see similar gains. Their experiences serve as examples that we can be equally effective in tackling visible trash in waterways for the rest of the state.”

Trash includes items such as cigarette butts, fast food containers, plastic grocery bags, cans and bottles, used diapers, construction site debris, old tires, and appliances. Trash discarded on land frequently ends up in waterways and the ocean as rainstorms wash it into gutters and storm drains, and then into creeks and rivers.

The State Water Board’s mandate is to protect beneficial uses of the state’s water resources; trash threatens virtually all of those uses. Aquatic life and wildlife can be endangered from ingestion, entanglement and habitat degradation from trash. Trash can also jeopardize public health and safety, and poses a hindrance to recreational, navigational, and commercial activities. Additionally, trash can serve as a transport medium for pollutants and act as a hiding place and breeding ground for invasive species.



Trash in surface waters, specifically coastal and marine waters, is a common problem in California. According to California's [2008-10 Integrated Report](#), there are 73 water bodies listed as having impaired water quality due to the presence of large amounts of trash. Trash discarded on land is frequently transported through storm drains to waterways and the ocean.

Just as there are many kinds of trash, there are many methods to prevent it from fouling our waterways. For example, municipalities can increase street sweeping, conduct public education programs on littering, and install trash-catching devices on storm drains. Industries and construction sites can closely monitor materials to make sure they don't leave the site.

State Water Board staff studied the pros and cons of various methods and gathered feedback from municipal, industrial and environmental stakeholders on the best and most effective methods to cutoff trash at the source when developing the amendments. The Trash Amendments underwent an extensive stakeholder engagement process with formation of a Public Advisory Group, focused stakeholder meetings, peer review, a public workshop and public hearing.

Specifically, the State Water Board's action includes an [amendment](#) to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Ocean Waters of California to Control Trash and Part 1 Trash Provisions of the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of California. The [Ocean Standards](#) Unit in the Division of Water Quality is responsible for the development and updating of statewide water quality control plans, policies, and standards involving marine waters.

The Board Item is [here](#).

A fact sheet on the Trash Amendments is [here](#).

More information is available on this program [here](#).

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