

Water Words

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Objective:

Clearly defined, desired result (intended output) of executing/implementing an identified strategy that supports attainment of a higher-level goal or goals. Objectives are the shorter-term “goals” (interim steps taken) on which specified activities and resources are focused.

Ocean Discharge Waiver:

A variance from specified Clean Water Act requirements for discharges into marine waters. U.S. EPA may issue a permit for discharge to marine waters from a publicly owned treatment works (POTW) that is given less than full secondary treatment. The federal permit may only be issued with the concurrence of the state in which the discharge takes place. In California, that concurrence takes the form of WDRs that ensure compliance with state water quality standards.

Ocean Plan:

The water quality control plan for California’s near-coastal waters, first adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board in 1972 (See Water Quality Control Plan).

Ocean waters:

The territorial marine waters of the state that are outside of enclosed bays, estuaries and coastal lagoons.

Office of Administrative Law (OAL):

State agency charged with administering the California Administrative Procedures Act, reviewing and approving regulations for other state agencies that, once approved, become part of the California Code of Regulations.

Operator Certification Program:

A program administered by the State Water Resources Control Board to protect public health and the environment by providing certification for wastewater treatment plant operators.

Oil spill:

An accidental or intentional discharge of oil that reaches bodies of water. Spills from tanks and pipelines can occur away from water bodies, contaminating the soil, getting into sewer systems and threatening underground water sources.

Oligotrophic lakes:

Deep clear lakes with few nutrients, little organic matter and a high dissolved-oxygen level.

On-Scene Coordinator (OSC):

The predesignated U. S. EPA, Coast Guard, or Department of Defense official who coordinates and directs Superfund removal actions or Clean Water Act oil- or hazardous-spill response actions.

On-site sewage treatment:

Any individual residential sewage treatment and wastewater dispersal system (See Septic system).

Operable unit:

Term used by the Superfund program. An operable unit is a discrete action that comprises an incremental step toward comprehensively addressing site problems. The cleanup of a site can be divided into a number of operable units, depending on the complexity of the problems associated with the site. Operable units may address geographical portions of a site, specific site problems, or initial phases of an action, or may consist of any set of actions performed over time or any actions that are concurrent but located in different parts of a site. A typical operable unit would be removal of drums and tanks from the surface of a site.

Organism:

Any form of animal or plant life.

Organotins:

Chemical compounds used in antifoulant paints to protect the hulls of boats and ships, buoys, and pilings from marine organisms such as barnacles.

Osmosis:

The passage of a liquid from a weak solution to a more concentrated solution across a semi-permeable membrane that allows passage of the solvent (water) but not the dissolved solids.

Outcome:

Desired (expected/intended) or actual end result derived from outputs, activities, and inputs (i.e., the consequences carrying out a program, policy, project, function, process, etc. beyond the outputs).

Outfall:

The place where effluent from a point source is discharged into receiving waters.

Output:

Desired (expected/intended) or actual product created or service provided (for internal or external customers) as a result of undertaking activities/products and applying inputs.

Overdraft:

Pumping water from a groundwater basin or aquifer in excess of the supply flowing into the basin; results in a depletion or “mining” of the groundwater in the basin.

Overflow rate:

One of the guidelines for design of the settling tanks and clarifiers in a treatment plant; used by plant operators to determine if tanks and clarifiers are over- or under-used.

Overland flow:

A land application technique that cleanses wastewater by allowing it to flow over a sloped surface. As the water flows over the surface, contaminants are absorbed and the water is collected at the bottom of the slope for reuse.