

Water Quality Certification Fee Schedule Proposal

Fee Stakeholder Meeting
May 6, 2026



Division of Water Quality, Wetland Permitting

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Water Quality Certification Fee Schedule Proposal
(Attachment 1)
3. Water Quality Certification Fee Proposal Data Summary
(Attachment 2)
4. Open Discussion
5. Next Steps

Water Quality Certification Fee Stakeholder Meeting Purpose

- Review the revised methodology with placeholder cost amounts.
- Discuss potential cost impacts using anonymized example projects.
- Share modeled data to show how points are distributed across historical permits.
- Collect feedback on the revised methodology.

Stakeholder Concerns Not Addressed Through This Proposal

- Environmental Restoration and Enhancement Project Fees.
- Maximum Flood Control Project Fees.
- Draft Utility Wildfire General Order Fees.
- Emergency Project Fees.

Prior Stakeholder Meetings

- May 7, 2025: Introduced the proposed fee methodology.
- December 8, 2025: Staff presented an updated proposal. Stakeholders requested additional detail on fee cost impacts, supporting data, and other revisions to activity specific fee categories that are outside the scope of the existing proposal.

Fee Methodology Over and Factors

Merge existing Fee Categories A and E into a single category with five tiers. Tier placement would be determined by point values based on project characteristics, including potential water quality risk and other factors that impact staff workload.

Proposed Evaluation Factors

1. Impacts to waters, both permanent and temporary.
2. Permit type: general order, individual certification, or Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR).
3. Applicable Dredge or Fill Procedures' alternatives analysis tier.

Fee Tier Determination

The evaluation criteria are assigned a point value proportionate to resources and impacts. Point totals determines tier placement, which is grouped into 20th percentile groupings modeled on historical permit data.

- **Tier 1 Baseline:** Analysis and staff processing time is minimal.
- **Tiers 2 Minimal, 3 Moderate, 4 Significant:** Tiers increase with the level of risk and complexity associated with each criterion.
- **Tier 5 Major:** High risk, high complexity projects, that typically require more extensive analysis.

Fee Schedule Mock-Up

Points Calculator			
Fee Factor	Do these criteria apply to your project?	Check if Yes	Points
Permanent Impacts	Up to 0.01 acre	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	Greater than 0.01 acre and up to 0.5 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
	Greater than 0.5 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
Temporary Impacts	Less than 0.1 acre	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Greater than 0.1 and up to 0.2 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	Greater than 0.2 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Permit Type	Qualifies for enrollment in a General Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Individual Certification	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	Individual WDR	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Alternatives Analysis	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Tier 1 Alternatives Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Tier 2 Alternatives Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	Tier 3 Alternatives Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
		Total Points:	

Fee Calculation

Dollar values are illustrative only

Fee Tier Determination					
Fee Tiers:	(1) Baseline	(2) Minimal	(3) Moderate	(4) Significant	(5) Major
Point Ranges:	1	2	3	4-5	≥ 6

- Using the factors in calculator mock-up, the fee tier is determined using the point ranges in the table above.
- The fee tier is then weighted by total impact size to determine the final fee amount.

Fee Tier	Fee Calculation
1 Baseline <i>(1 point)</i>	\$2,500 (Flat fee)
2 Minimal <i>(2 Points)</i>	Total Impact Acres * \$23,000
3 Moderate <i>(3 Points)</i>	\$2,500 + Total Impact Acres * \$23,000 * 1.25
4 Significant <i>(4-5 Points)</i>	\$2,500 + Total Impact Acres * \$23,000 * 1.5
5 Major <i>(6 or more Points)</i>	\$2,500 + Total Impact Acres * \$23,000 * 2

Example

An applicant proposes to construct a moderate sized apartment complex over a wetland.

- Permanent Impacts: 0.11 acre (3 points)
- Temporary Impacts: 0 acre (0 points)
- Permit Type: Individual (1 points)
- Alternatives Analysis: Tier 2 Alternatives Analysis (1 points)

Total Points: 5; Fee Tier Determination: (4) Significant
Estimated Fee Under Proposal: \$6,295

Annual Fee Calculation

Under the proposal, annual fees would be based on current Category A and Category E fee schedule amounts:

- Impacts over one-tenth acre would pay the Category A annual fee.
- Impacts of one-tenth acre or less would pay the reduced Category E annual fee.

Annual Fee For All Fee Tiers:
Projects less than or equal to 0.10 acre: \$563 annually
Greater than 0.10 acre: \$3,540 annually for the first 5 years, then \$563 thereafter

Analysis Summary

This table compares the **average** fee under the current schedule to each tier of the revised methodology using modeled data based on the past five fiscal years (Fiscal year 2020-2021 through 2024-2025).

Tier	Projects (n)	Current Fee Method and Amount			Revised Method and Fee Amount			Difference (Average Revised Fee - Average Current Fee)
		Average	Min	Max	Average	Min	Max	
1 Baseline	581	\$4,212	\$4,212	\$4,212	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	(\$1,712)
2 Minimal	570	\$4,336	\$4,212	\$7,133	\$2,583	\$2,500	\$4,370	(\$1,752)
3 Moderate	340	\$16,575	\$4,212	\$365,465	\$14,721	\$2,788	\$365,465	(\$1,854)
4 Significant	971	\$18,924	\$4,212	\$365,465	\$19,342	\$2,845	\$365,465	\$418
5 Major	576	\$80,567	\$4,212	\$365,465	\$95,051	\$2,960	\$365,465	\$14,484

Analysis Summary (cont.)

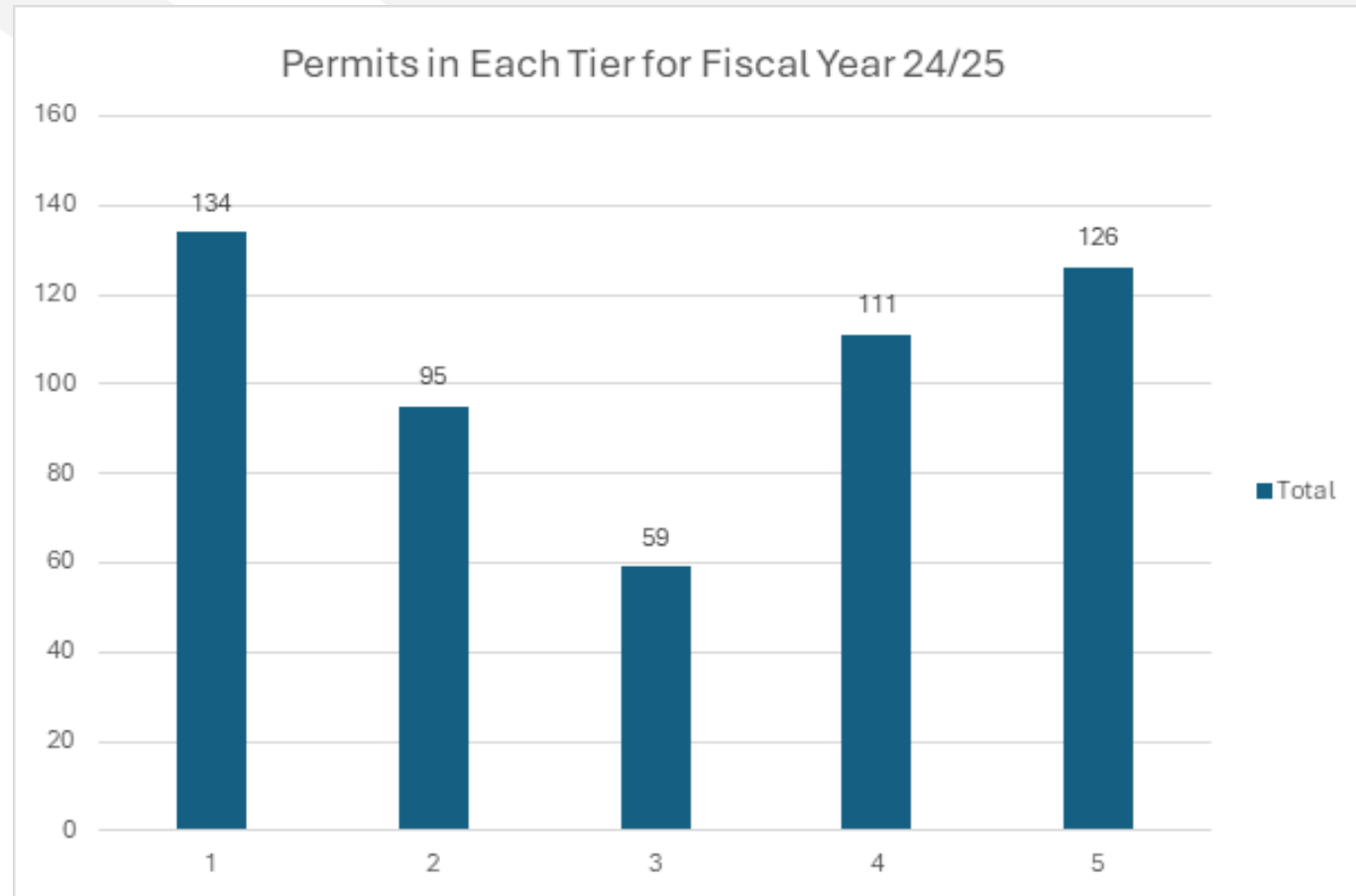
This table highlights an example existing project for each tier and shows the estimated associated fees calculated using the revised fee methodology, compared to the current fee schedule.

Tier	Project Example	Current Fee Method and Amount	Revised Method; Significant Fee Change	Amount Difference
1 Baseline	Low impact road maintenance project	\$4,212	\$2,500	\$(1,712)
2 Minimal	Small flood control maintenance project	\$4,881	\$2,990	\$(1,891)
3 Moderate	Dock Improvement project in non-federal waters	\$7,058	\$7,963	\$905
4 Significant	Moderate apartment complex	\$4,212	\$6,295	\$2,083
5 Major	Large mixed use/residential development project	\$132,192	\$164,420	\$32,228

How many projects fall into each tier based on fiscal year 2024/2025 permit data?

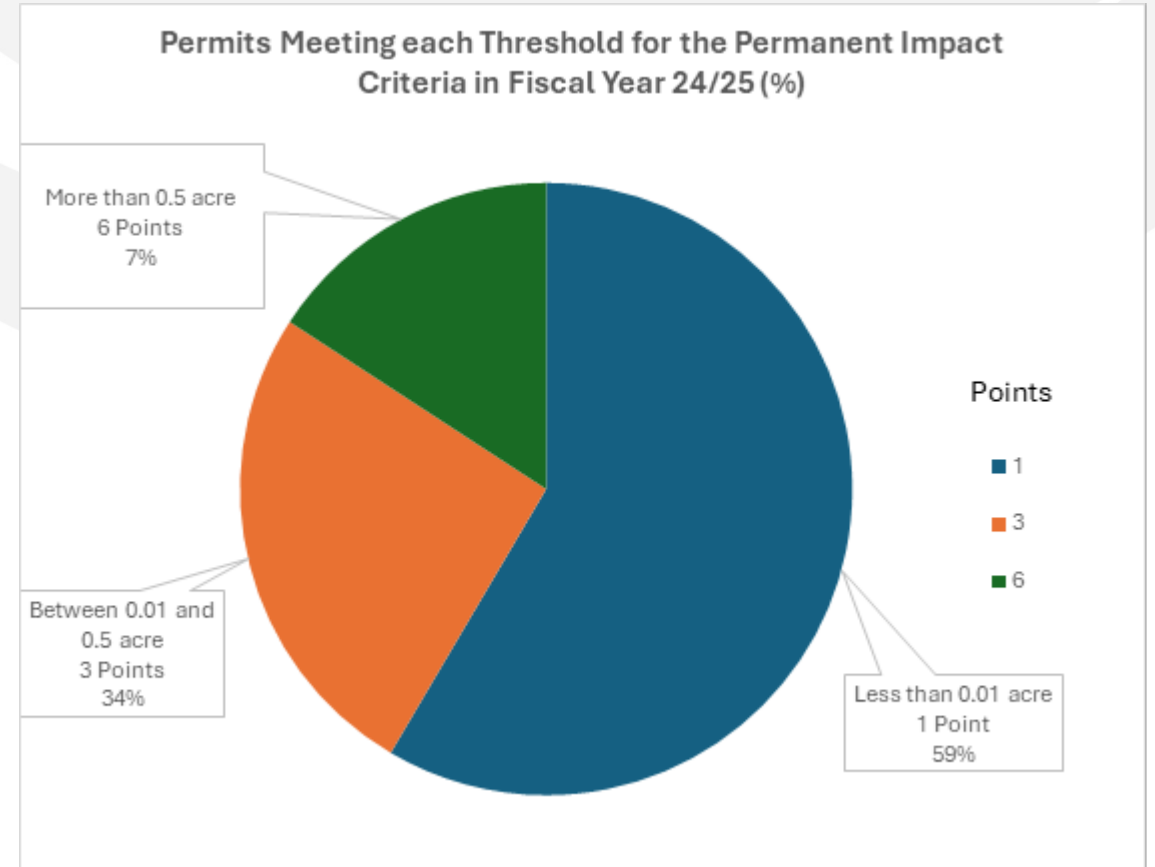
Tiers:

1. Baseline
2. Minimal
3. Moderate
4. Significant
5. Major



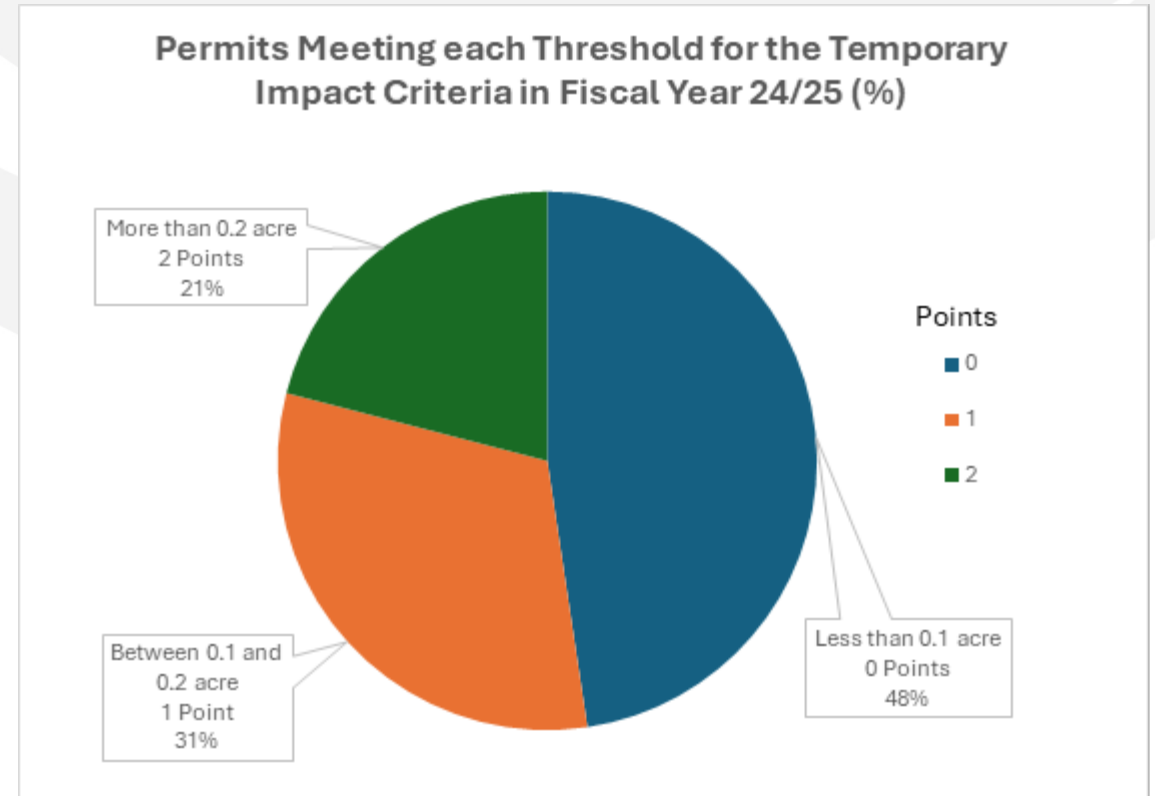
How many projects are within each threshold for the permanent impacts factor?

Points	Threshold	Projects (number)
1	Less than 0.01	307
3	Between 0.01 and 0.5 acre	179
6	More than 0.5 acre	39



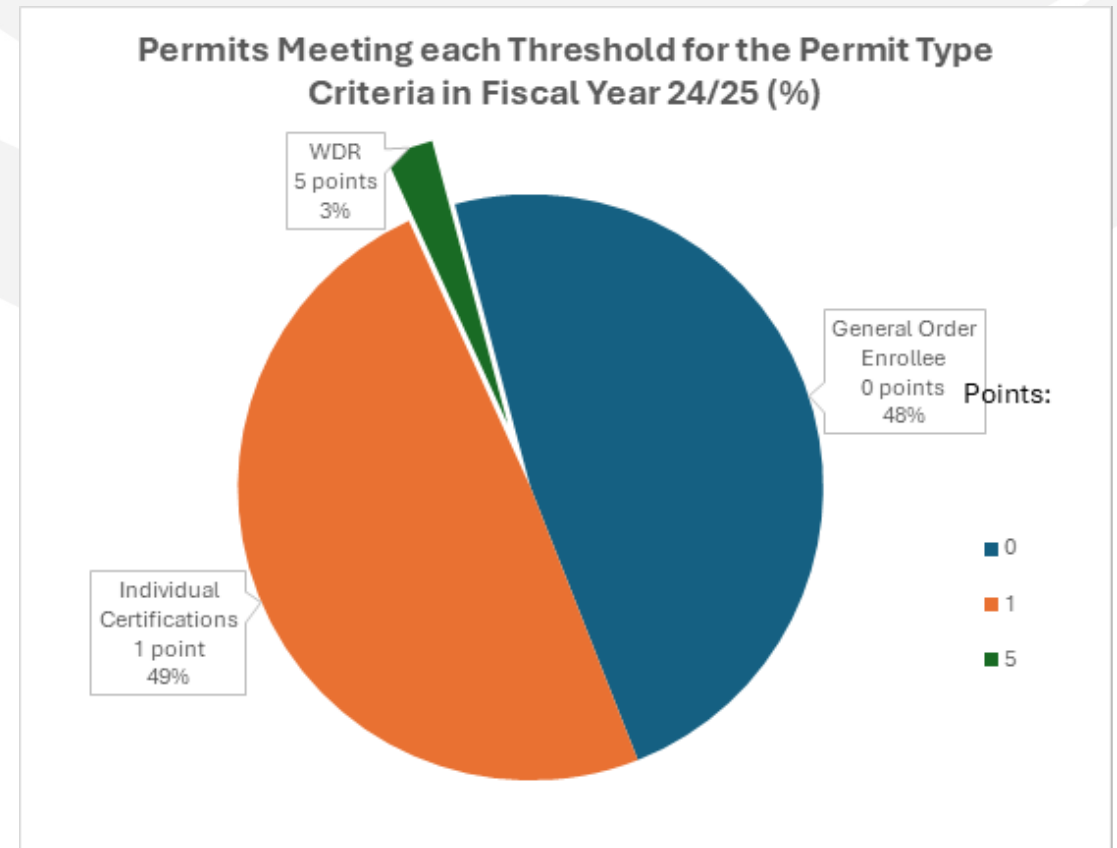
How many projects are within each threshold for the temporary impacts factor?

Points	Threshold	Projects (number)
0	Less than 0.1	250
1	Between 0.1 and 0.2 acre	165
2	More than 0.2 acre	110



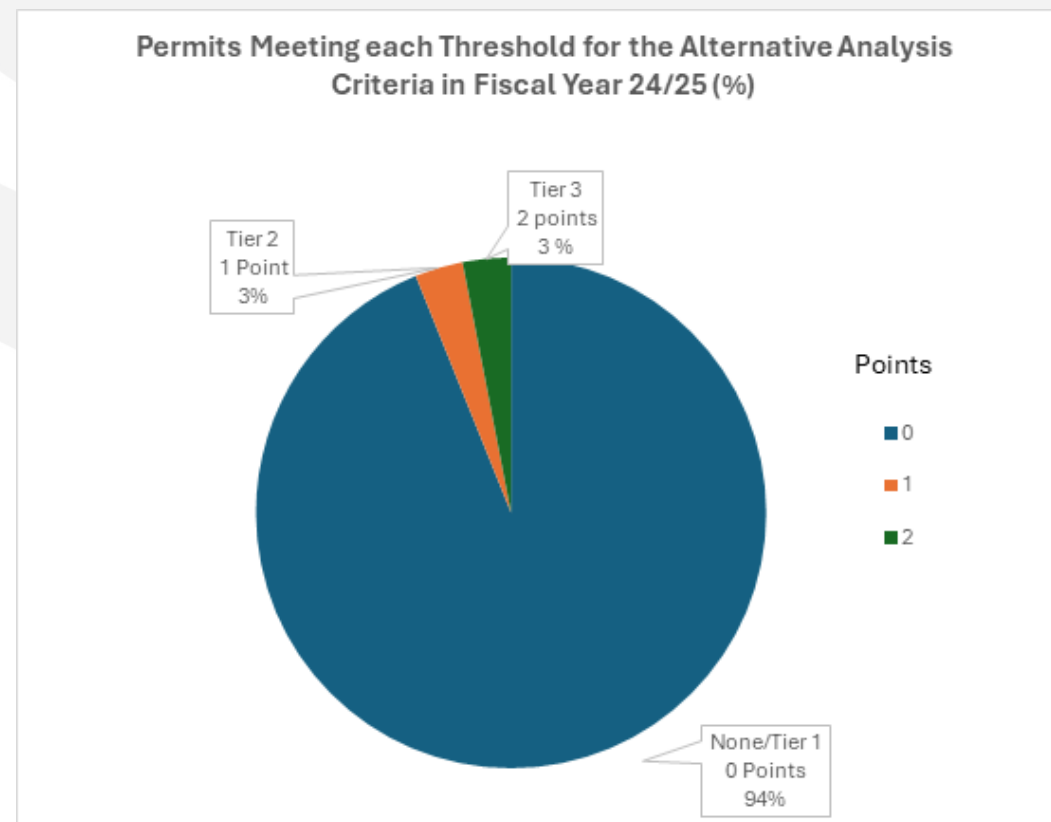
How many projects are within each threshold for the permit type factor?

Points	Threshold	Projects (number)
0	General Order Enrollee or Waiver	253
1	Individual Certification	258
5	Individual Waste Discharge Requirement	14



How many projects are within each threshold for the alternatives analysis factor?

Points	Threshold	Projects (number)
0	None/Tier 1	493
1	Tier 2	16
2	Tier 3	16



Discussion

- Please provide feedback on the revised methodology:
 - Clarity of proposal
 - Feasibility of implementation
 - Appropriateness of evaluation criteria

Contact:

Please email feebranch@waterboards.ca.gov with any additional questions or feedback by May 27, 2026