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## State Water Resources Control Board

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### Permitting Fees for Discharges of Dredge and Fill Material Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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The Discharges of Dredge and Fill Material program issues permits for activities that place fill material into, or remove material from, California’s surface waters. The Water Board assesses fees to permit applicants to fund Water Board programs, including staff time needed to review, issue, and track permits. This FAQ document answers common questions about how fees are set, billed, and paid.

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### Contents

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Fee Determination.....</b>                                                                                                                 | <b>3</b> |
| 1. How do I know if I need a Discharges of Dredge or Fill Materials Permit? .....                                                             | 3        |
| 2. How is the fee determined?.....                                                                                                            | 3        |
| 3. Which fee schedule applies to my project? .....                                                                                            | 3        |
| 4. What is the purpose of the new tier-and-points fee methodology for fill and excavation projects, and why is it being implemented now?..... | 3        |
| 5. Why was Category E (Low Impact Discharges) removed from the FY 26-27 fee schedule? .....                                                   | 4        |
| 6. How do I know if I need to use Category A? .....                                                                                           | 4        |
| 7. What are the factors used to determine the fee tier for Category A Projects?.....                                                          | 4        |
| 8. How do I determine my project’s fee tier? .....                                                                                            | 4        |
| 9. How do I calculate my final fee amount?.....                                                                                               | 5        |
| 10. Can I just pay the application fee and have staff determine the fee tier? .....                                                           | 5        |
| 11. What if staff determines I need an Alternatives Analysis after I initially submit my application? .....                                   | 5        |
| 12. What if the impact acreage changes during the application review process? .....                                                           | 5        |
| 13. Will I receive an additional annual invoice if my project fee hits the maximum fee amount?.....                                           | 5        |
| 14. What is the difference between an application fee and a project fee? .....                                                                | 5        |
| 15. My project involves both fill/excavation and dredging. Which fee category applies?.....                                                   | 5        |
| 16. How do I know if I qualify for a Project Activity-Specific Fee Category?.....                                                             | 5        |
| 17. Do I pay a fee for requesting an amendment? .....                                                                                         | 6        |

|                                                                                |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Annual Invoicing</b>                                                        | <b>6</b> |
| 18. Why did I get an invoice? .....                                            | 6        |
| 19. How long will I be billed? .....                                           | 6        |
| 20. Why is my annual fee different from last year? .....                       | 6        |
| 21. Why is the annual fee amount different from the fee schedule amount? ..... | 7        |
| 22. If I stop discharging mid-year, will my fee be prorated? .....             | 7        |
| 23. I sold my facility. Who is responsible for the invoice? .....              | 7        |
| 24. How do I stop annual fees? .....                                           | 7        |
| 25. My project is complete. Why did I get an invoice? .....                    | 7        |
| 26. My permit expired. Why did I get an invoice? .....                         | 7        |
| <b>Payments</b>                                                                | <b>7</b> |
| 27. Are different payment forms (credit card, transfer, check) accepted? ..... | 7        |
| 28. What happens if I do not pay my invoice? .....                             | 8        |
| 29. How do I confirm my payment was received? .....                            | 8        |
| 30. Who can I contact for more information? .....                              | 8        |
| 31. What is the State Water Board's Taxpayer ID number? .....                  | 8        |

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## Fee Determination

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### 1. How do I know if I need a Discharges of Dredge or Fill Materials Permit?

If your project may result in a discharge of dredged or fill material to waters of the state, submit an application with the State or Regional Water Board. Discharges of dredged or fill material often occur when work is conducted in waters. Examples include, but are not limited to, development projects that fill in a water, dredging to maintain channel capacity, and activities that change the volume, grade, or capacity of an aquatic resource. The type of dredge or fill permit you need depends on whether the project impacts waters within Clean Water Act jurisdiction or exclusively state waters:

- **State-only permit (Waste Discharge Requirements, or WDRs):** Issued when the project affects waters not covered by the federal Clean Water Act. These waters are protected under California's Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act.
- **State/Federal permit (Water Quality Certification, or WQC):** Issued when the project affects waters covered by the federal Clean Water Act, also called "waters of the U.S." This permit, under section 401 of the Clean Water Act, is required before an applicant can receive a section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or other federal permit.

Reach out to the appropriate Regional Board (see contact list linked below) to determine what type of permit is required for your project or to schedule a pre-filing meeting.

### 2. How is the fee determined?

Fees are assessed based on criteria specific to each type of discharge, according to the [fee schedule](#) for the current fiscal year (July 1—June 30). The fee schedule is available at:

(<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/fees/stakeholder/docs/2026/fy2627-wq-feeschedule.pdf>)

Common fee categories in the current fee schedule include:

- **Fill & Excavation Discharges (Category A):** Flat application fee, project fee calculated using a points-and-tiers evaluation system, and an annual fee.
- **Dredging Discharges (Category B):** Flat application fee and an annual fee based on volume of material dredged the previous year.
- **Sand Mining, Ecological Restoration, Emergency (Categories C, D, and F):** Flat application and an annual fee as specified.

This [Fee Calculator](#) may be used to estimate fees:

([https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/fees/water\\_quality/docs/dredgefillcalculator.xls](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/fees/water_quality/docs/dredgefillcalculator.xls))

### 3. Which fee schedule applies to my project?

The fee schedule is updated annually. Application and project fees (paid before permit issuance) are based on the fee schedule in effect when your application is submitted. If issuance extends beyond one year after initial application, contact Water Board staff to confirm which schedule applies.

Annual fees are based on the fee schedule in effect at the time of annual billing.

### 4. What is the purpose of the new tier-and-points fee methodology for fill and excavation projects, and why is it being implemented now?

The State Water Board adopted a fee schedule for fiscal year 26-27 that includes a new points-and-tiers methodology for Fill and Excavation Discharges to aquatic resources to better align permitting fees with a project's threat to water quality and required staff resources.

## **5. Why was Category E (Low Impact Discharges) removed from the FY 26-27 fee schedule?**

In the fiscal year 26-27 fee schedule, Category E (Low Impact Discharges) was combined with Category A to simplify the number of categories that consider impact quantities. Most projects that would have fallen under Category E under prior fee schedules (less than 0.1 acre or 300 linear feet of impact or for dredging, 25 cubic yards) will now fall within the lowest Category A fee tier (Baseline).

## **6. How do I know if I need to use Category A?**

If your project includes discharge of fill or excavation material in aquatic resources and does not qualify for a special fee category, use Category A and calculate the appropriate fee tier for your project.

## **7. What are the factors used to determine the fee tier for Category A Projects?**

### **Aquatic Resource Impacts (acres):**

- Permanent Impacts – Generally will permanently change an aquatic resource to a non-aquatic habitat type, permanently changes the bottom elevation of an aquatic resource, or converts a resource from one aquatic resource type to another (e.g., type conversion). Permanent impacts can result in physical loss of area, loss of aquatic function, and ecological degradation.
- Temporary Impacts – Generally temporary aquatic resource impacts are impacts that temporarily cause a physical loss, loss of aquatic function or ecological degradation of an aquatic resource. Temporary impacts are restored to pre-project conditions through natural ecological processes or active restoration.

### **Permit Types:**

- Individual Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification – Projects that discharge dredge or fill materials into waters of the United States for which the Project requires a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and there is not an applicable general certification.
- Individual Waste Discharge Requirements – Projects that discharge exclusively to waters of the state and do not require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and there are not applicable general waste discharge requirements.
- General Order Enrollee or Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements – Projects meet the conditions for enrollment under a General Order, such as the Nationwide Permit General Order, Regional Board General Permits, and Waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements.

### **Alternatives Analysis:**

- An alternatives analysis is the process of analyzing project alternatives, including the proposed project, to identify the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative.
- Where required, the Dredge or Fill Procedures identify three levels of effort (Tiers 1-3) for alternatives analyses based on the amount of impact, the presence of sensitive resources, and the possibility of siting the project in an alternative location. For more information, refer to section IV.A.1.h of The State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State ([https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/cwa401/docs/2021/procedures.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cwa401/docs/2021/procedures.pdf)).

## **8. How do I determine my project's fee tier?**

Review the thresholds in Table A1 in the fee schedule and assign points for each factor applicable to your project. Next, sum the points for each factor to determine your project's total points. Use Table A2 to identify the corresponding fee tier. Refer to the current fee schedule described in Question 2, "How is the fee determined?".

## **9. How do I calculate my final fee amount?**

Once you know your fee tier, refer to Table A3 in the fee schedule to identify the associated fee calculation. For all tiers except Baseline, multiply total aquatic resource impacts (acres) by the fee tier multiplier to determine the amount due prior to issuance. Refer to the current fee schedule described in Question 2, "How is the fee determined?"

Additionally, the Fee Calculator described in Question 2 is provided as a tool to simplify this determination.

## **10. Can I just pay the application fee and have staff determine the fee tier?**

Yes. Pay the application fee when submitting your application. You may use the fee calculator to estimate project fees; staff will confirm the amount during review.

## **11. What if staff determines I need an Alternatives Analysis after I initially submit my application?**

Staff will reevaluate project factors, determine the appropriate fee tier, and notify you of any additional project fees due prior to the issuance of your permit.

## **12. What if the impact acreage changes during the application review process?**

Staff will reevaluate project factors, determine the appropriate fee tier, and notify you of any additional project fees due prior to the issuance of your permit.

## **13. Will I receive an additional annual invoice if my project fee hits the maximum fee amount?**

If your project has paid the maximum fee amount, you will not be subject to additional annual fees. If the fee maximum is raised in subsequent fiscal years, you may be subject to the increase based on the fee schedule in effect at invoicing.

## **14. What is the difference between an application fee and a project fee?**

The application fee must be submitted with your application and is required to determine the application complete. For Category A projects, any remaining project fee, based on the fee tier and the total impacts to waters, is due before a permit can be issued.

## **15. My project involves both fill/excavation and dredging. Which fee category applies?**

If a project includes both Category A and Category B discharges, the annual fee will be based on the higher of the two applicable categories (See footnote 10 in the Fee Schedule).

## **16. How do I know if I qualify for a Project Activity-Specific Fee Category?**

Project Activity-Specific fees are determined by Water Board staff during the application review. To qualify for an activity-specific fee category, the whole of a project must meet the fee category description as defined in the fee schedule. Below are categories that qualify for activity-specific fees. Refer to the current fee schedule described in Question 2, "How is the fee determined?":

- Sand Mining, In-Stream Gravel Mining and Beach Nourishment Discharges (Category C),
- Ecological Restoration and Enhancement Projects (EREP) (Category D),
- Emergency Projects Authorized by a Water Board General Order (Category F).

## 17. Do I pay a fee for requesting an amendment?

It depends on the type of amendment. Current fee regulations have additional information on Amended Order Fees (Category G):

- **Ecology Restoration and Enhancement Projects (Category D) or administrative amendments (changes that require no additional technical analysis or additional compensatory mitigation):**

No fee.

- **Changes to impact character, location, or volume of discharge; or time extension that results in temporal loss of resource function (less than 50% increase in impact, and no change to mitigated aquatic resource type):**

For Category A projects, amendment fees shall be calculated as a new project fee using the fee tier for the entirety of the project as amended, applied only to the incremental increase in impact acres. For all other project categories, the amendment fee shall equal the application fee. The combined original project and amendment fee shall not exceed the fee maximum.

- **Change requires supplemental CEQA analysis, or change in impact character, location, or volume of discharge, or time extension that results in a temporal loss of resource function (greater than 50% increase in impact, change in mitigated aquatic resource type):**

A new project fee applies based on the project discharge total. The minimum fee is the application fee associated with the fee category. The combined original project and amendment fees shall not exceed the fee maximum.

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## Annual Invoicing

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### 18. Why did I get an invoice?

Annual invoices are issued for all projects that are active during any part of the fiscal year and are typically sent out in fall/winter. If you have an active permit for any part of fiscal year, you are subject to annual invoice even if the project is closed prior to invoice issuance. A project is closed after all permit conditions, including monitoring, are satisfied and the Water Board issues a Notice of Project Complete Letter.

### 19. How long will I be billed?

You will be billed from the permit's effective date until the end of the billing cycle following project closeout. Invoices are mailed to the billing address on file. You can confirm your annual invoice will be sent to the correct address by contacting the Fee Branch Staff (contact information provided below). Please include your Waste Discharge Identification (WDID) number or an invoice number in your email.

### 20. Why is my annual fee different from last year?

The State Water Board adopts a fee schedule each year. Annual adjustments may be necessary to ensure revenue collected aligns with funding levels and staffing resources. (Wat. Code, § 13260, subd. (d)(1)(B).)

## **21. Why is the annual fee amount different from the fee schedule amount?**

Invoicing for projects begins in the fiscal year (July 1—June 30) after the certification is issued and continues annually thereafter. The original application fee covers the first twelve (12) consecutive months of the project's certification, which means that the first year's annual fee invoice could be prorated. Subsequent annual fee amounts will not be prorated. Proration does not apply to dredging discharges as annual active discharge amounts are determined based on actual volume dredged and are invoiced based on the prior fiscal year's dredged amount.

## **22. If I stop discharging mid-year, will my fee be prorated?**

No. The full annual fee applies to projects active for any portion of the fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). To prevent unnecessary invoices, request a Notice of Project Complete as soon as possible after permit requirements have been met.

## **23. I sold my facility. Who is responsible for the invoice?**

You remain responsible until the permit is officially transferred. Both you and the new owner must notify the Water Board in writing in accordance with the requirements set forth in your permit. Until the transfer is complete, invoices are sent to the original discharger.

## **24. How do I stop annual fees?**

If you are no longer discharging, and all permit conditions have been met, request a Notice of Project Complete letter from the Water Board. Once the Water Board approves project closeout, your permit will be terminated. If your project is closed out prior to issuance of that fiscal year's annual invoicing, you should expect one final invoice. Dredging permits will receive their final invoice in the following fiscal year after the permit is closed out since dredging invoices are based on the prior year's dredged amount.

## **25. My project is complete. Why did I get an invoice?**

Invoices continue until the Water Board issues a Notice of Project Complete Letter. Projects active for any portion of the fiscal year must pay an annual fee. Annual fees apply as long as you have authorization to discharge until all permit conditions are met (including restoration and mitigation requirements), even if you are not actively discharging. See the question above for how to request a Notice of Project Complete Letter.

## **26. My permit expired. Why did I get an invoice?**

All permit conditions remain applicable, including the requirement to pay an annual fee, until a Notice of Project Complete Letter is issued regardless of permit expiration. Submit a request and required documents to the appropriate Regional Board (see contact list linked below) to close your project.

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## **Payments**

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## **27. Are different payment forms (credit card, transfer, check) accepted?**

Yes. See the [WQC Payment Guidance Document](#) for details on how to make a payment. Options include:

- Credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover): Official Payments Corporation System: <https://www.officialpayments.com/>
- To make an Automated Clearing House (ACH) Debit payment visit the online EFT payment system: [www.govone.com/PAYCAL/SWRCB/Account](http://www.govone.com/PAYCAL/SWRCB/Account).

**To prevent delays, always include your application number and payment documentation with your application.**

## **28. What happens if I do not pay my invoice?**

- Invoices are delinquent after 30 days.
- Up to three late notices are sent if invoice is not paid.
- Balances that remain outstanding 90 days past the date of the original invoice may be sent to an external collection agency.

## **29. How do I confirm my payment was received?**

- Application/project fees: Email [401accountingreceipts@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:401accountingreceipts@waterboards.ca.gov) with project details.
- Annual invoices: Allow two weeks for processing. Check status at the [Invoice Search Site \(https://public3.waterboards.ca.gov/infofees/faces/invoiceSearch.xhtml\)](https://public3.waterboards.ca.gov/infofees/faces/invoiceSearch.xhtml)

## **30. Who can I contact for more information?**

For questions about the fee setting process or annual invoices, contact Fee Branch staff:

- Email: [FeeBranch@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:FeeBranch@waterboards.ca.gov)
- Phone: (916) 341-5247 FAX: (916) 341-5248
- Website: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/fees/>

For questions about your permit contact the staff person assigned to your project. If you do not have an assigned contact, reach out to the appropriate Regional Board:

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/cwa401/docs/wqc\\_staffdir.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cwa401/docs/wqc_staffdir.pdf)

## **31. What is the State Water Board's Taxpayer ID number?**

Tax ID: 68-0281986. The Fee Branch website has a signed W-9

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/fees/>.