

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions for obtaining coverage under the **VOC and Fuel General Permit** and **Groundwater General Permit**. These NPDES permits cover discharges of treated groundwater to surface waters and can be found on our [General Permits webpage](#).

## **Q.1. What does the VOC and Fuel General Permit cover?**

**A.1.** The VOC and Fuel General Permit covers discharges of contaminated groundwater originating from construction activities or active or closed cleanup sites. These discharges may be of any volume. Groundwater is considered contaminated when, prior to treatment, it contains volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, and fuel-related compounds at detectable concentrations, or metals at concentrations higher than the effluent limitations listed in Table 2 of the permit.

## **Q.2. What does the Groundwater General Permit cover?**

**A.2.** The Groundwater General Permit covers discharges to surface waters from aquifer reclamation program wells and associated reverse osmosis concentrate. It also covers structural dewatering discharges. Either way, prior to treatment, the groundwater must contain detectable concentrations of pollutants not covered by the VOC and Fuel General Permit, or metals at concentrations higher than the effluent limits in Table 3 of the permit. To qualify for coverage, discharge flow rates must be at least 10,000 gallons per day. The Groundwater General Permit does *not* cover discharges related to construction activities.

## **Q.3. I need to discharge groundwater to the storm drain or surface water for my construction dewatering project. Do I need an NPDES permit, and if so, which one?**

**A.3.** Yes, you need an NPDES permit. If the discharge meets the requirements for the VOC and Fuel General Permit as described above, you are required to obtain coverage under this permit. If the discharge does not qualify for coverage under this permit and is associated with a construction project, you may be able to enroll under the [Construction Stormwater General Permit](#), which covers some discharges of uncontaminated groundwater related to construction operations.

## **Q.4. The Groundwater General Permit states that it covers structural dewatering discharges of at least 10,000 gallons per day. Can I use this permit if my construction project will involve dewatering uncontaminated groundwater?**

**A.4.** No. The Groundwater General Permit *does not* cover discharges related to construction activities. You may be able to use the [Construction Stormwater General Permit](#) (email [r2stormwater@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:r2stormwater@waterboards.ca.gov), call (510) 622-2402, or refer to our [stormwater contacts webpage](#) for additional contacts to inquire if this permit applies to you) for discharges of uncontaminated groundwater.

## **Q.5. I need to discharge uncontaminated groundwater to surface waters, but at a rate less than 10,000 gallons per day. Can I enroll under the Groundwater General Permit?**

**A.5.** No, but you may have other options. One option is to contact a stormwater management agency (e.g., a city, district, or wastewater agency responsible for a storm drainage system).

The agency will likely require monitoring data showing that the groundwater does not contain pollutants. Another option is to route the discharge to a sanitary sewer.

**Q.6. Do I need an NPDES permit from the Water Board to discharge groundwater to the sanitary sewer?**

**A.6.** No. Sanitary sewer agencies get their own permits from the Water Board. Nevertheless, you should contact the sanitary sewer agency (e.g., the city or district responsible for sanitary sewer collection and treatment) to learn their specific requirements. The Water Board asks permit applicants to verify that they cannot discharge to a sanitary sewer before enrolling discharges under VOC and Fuel General Permit or Groundwater General Permit.

**Q.7. What do I need to do to enroll under the VOC and Fuel General Permit or Groundwater General Permit?**

**A.7.** You need to submit a complete application and application fee to the Water Board. The full application package consists of three components: the application form (Notice of Intent), an Engineering Certification Report, and the application fee. The Notice of Intent and instructions to complete it can be found in Attachment B of the corresponding general permit. A Word version of the Notice of Intent form can be accessed directly from our [General Permits webpage](#) (scroll until you find "VOC and Fuel General Permit"). Regarding the application fee, see below.

**Q.8. What are the fees for the VOC and Fuel General Permit and Groundwater General Permit?**

**A.8.** These permits require application and annual permit coverage fees. The application and annual fees for both permits are updated periodically and can be found in the latest [Water Quality Fee Schedule](#), Water Code section 2200(b)(10). For the VOC and Fuel General Permit, refer to the fees for Category 1 discharges. For the Groundwater General Permit, refer to the fees for Category 3 discharges.

**Q.9. How long does the Water Board take to review an application and issue an Authorization to Discharge under the VOC and Fuel General Permit or Groundwater General Permit?**

**A.9.** Typically, if the application is complete and the application fee is paid, we issue the Authorization to Discharge within about 30 calendar days.

**Q.10. Can I still enroll under one of the permits if it says it is expired?**

**A.10.** Yes, you can still enroll under the "expired" permit if it has not yet been reissued. NPDES permits are updated and reissued roughly every five years.

**Q.11. I have two or more sites that need dewatering simultaneously. Can I obtain permit coverage for more than one site with just one application?**

**A.11.** You may cover the dewatering discharges for more than one site with one application as long as the sites are adjacent to each other. Only one application fee is required. Otherwise, you must submit a separate application and application fee for each site.

**Q.12. I am about to enroll under an NPDES permit. What does the application fee payment cover?**

**A.12.** The application fee pays for the review of the application and permit coverage for the current fiscal year. The State Water Resources Control Board prorates payments based on the date of the Authorization to Discharge letter confirming coverage under the permit. The remainder of the fee is applied toward the next annual fee invoice if the discharge is still enrolled at the time of the invoice issuance.

**Q.13. I am a current permit enrollee. When are annual fee invoices issued and what is their coverage period?**

**A.13.** The State Water Resources Control Board issues annual fee invoices each year (every November or December) for the current fiscal year. The coverage period starts on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year.

**Q.14. What do I need to do to terminate permit coverage for my site?**

**A.14.** You need to complete Attachment C (Notice of Termination) of the applicable NPDES permit and submit it to the Water Board. A Word version of the Notice of Termination form can be accessed from our [General Permits webpage](#) (scroll until you find “Groundwater General Permit” or “VOC and Fuel General Permit,” depending on which permit you are enrolled under.) Typically, we will issue a Rescission of Authorization to Discharge letter to you within about 30 calendar days.

**Q.15. Can I get partial refund on my last annual fee payment since I’m ending my permit coverage before the end of the fiscal year?**

**A.15.** No. The State Water Resources Control Board does not refund any portion of the final annual fee.