REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
NOVEMBER 10, 2026

ITEM 6

SUBJECT
State of the Ocean Report from South Orange County Wastewater Authority, San Juan Creek Ocean Outfall and Aliso Creek Ocean Outfall. (*Joann Lim*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION
Informational item only; no recommendation.

KEY ISSUE
This item will provide the San Diego Water Board with information about the status of water quality in the coastal waters surrounding the San Juan Creek Ocean Outfall (SJCOO) and the Aliso Creek Ocean Outfall (ACOO). The South Orange County Wastewater Authority (SOCWA), Santa Margarita Water District, Moulton Niguel Water District, City of San Clemente, South Coast Water District, Irvine Ranch Water District, and El Toro Water District (collectively referred to as Dischargers) discharge through the SJCOO and ACOO to the Pacific Ocean. The Dischargers must report on the status of ocean water quality as required by their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits.[1] The status report is required once per permit term.

PRACTICAL VISION
This informational item is consistent with Chapter 2 of the Practical Vision, *Monitor and Assess*.[2] The purpose of the State of the Ocean Report is to transparently and effectively communicate findings and conclusions drawn from the Dischargers' ocean monitoring program to assess the impact of their discharges on the coastal marine environment.

DISCUSSION
Discharges to the SJCOO and ACOO are regulated under two separate NPDES permits. The two NPDES permits require extensive ocean monitoring to evaluate potential environmental effects associated with the discharge of treated wastewater and other wastes (e.g., reverse osmosis concentrate and filter backwash) from the Dischargers' domestic wastewater treatment plants and groundwater treatment plants to the Pacific Ocean through the SJCOO and ACOO. SOCWA is the owner and operator of SJCOO and ACOO.

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[1] The following orders require the Dischargers to present an oral report to the San Diego Water Board summarizing the conclusions of their receiving water monitoring report:
Order No. R9-2022-0005 as Amended by Order Nos. R9-2024-0005 and R9-2025-0001, NPDES No. CA0107417, *Waste Discharge Requirements for the South Orange County Wastewater Authority Discharge to the Pacific Ocean Through the San Juan Creek Ocean Outfall*.
Order No. R9-2022-0006 as Amended by Order No. R9-2024-0141, NPDES No. CA0107611, *Waste Discharge Requirements for the South Orange County Wastewater Authority Discharge to the Pacific Ocean Through the Aliso Creek Ocean Outfall*.

[2] https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/practical_vision/

Since SOCWA conducts the ocean monitoring program for both outfalls, the State of the Ocean Report will cover both outfalls. The ocean monitoring program for the two NPDES permits includes:

1. Requirements to participate in the Unified Regional Beach Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Program in south Orange County in collaboration with the South Orange County municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) Copermittees and Orange County Health Care Agency;
2. Nearshore and offshore water quality monitoring requirements (visual observations, bacterial indicators, temperature and depth, dissolved oxygen, light transmittance, pH, salinity, and colored dissolved organic matter);
3. Sediment assessment for physical and chemical properties (sediment grain size, total organic carbon, total nitrogen, sulfide, metals, and other pollutants of concern);
4. Sediment toxicity monitoring;
5. Benthic community condition assessment (number of species, number of individuals per species, and total numerical abundance present);
6. Fish and invertebrate monitoring (community structure and chemical analysis of the liver tissues);
7. Rig fishing (tissue analysis and chemical analysis of the muscle tissues); and
8. Plume tracking monitoring.

The main objectives of the ocean monitoring program are to 1) provide data that satisfy NPDES permit requirements, 2) determine if the receiving water is meeting the California Ocean Plan water quality objectives, 3) track movement and dispersion of the wastewater fields or plumes discharged through the outfall, and 4) identify any biological or chemical changes that may be associated with the wastewater discharge. These data are used to assess the potential impacts of the SJCOO and ACOO discharges, other anthropogenic influences (e.g., stormwater discharge, urban runoff), and natural phenomena (e.g., El Niño conditions) on coastal water quality, seafloor sediment conditions, and local marine organisms.

Supporting Document No. 1 shows the location of the nearshore, offshore, rig fishing, and trawl monitoring stations. The ACOO permit includes three diver survey stations.

The Dischargers' receiving water monitoring report will contain data files, detailed sample methodologies, and other pertinent information regarding the ocean monitoring program for the SJCOO and ACOO from May 2022 to September 2026. The report will be included in the Supplemental Agenda Package as **Supporting Document No. 2**.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. Receiving Water Monitoring Stations for the SJCOO and ACOO.
2. Receiving Water Monitoring Report, May 2022 through September 2026.