

Practical Vision and Program Accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

The Practical Vision is a tool used to focus limited resources on the region's highest priorities. Twenty-six projects were undertaken during Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (FY 25-26) to implement the Practical Vision. The Board's adoption of the FY 25-26 Operational Plan in September 2025 allocated budget resources and allowed for project implementation, assignment of project teams, and establishment of project milestones and schedules.

Along with the work of the Practical Vision, San Diego Water Board staff attend to day-to-day programmatic work. This work falls into four broad categories: planning, permitting, compliance assessment, and enforcement. Every year, San Diego Water Board staff prepare programmatic work plans that include performance measure commitments tracked by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and reported to the legislature. Although some Practical Vision projects overlap with program performance measure commitments, there is a large body of work beyond the Practical Vision priorities that staff must complete each year to meet the Board's programmatic responsibilities.

This report describes Practical Vision projects and core program accomplishments in FY 25-26. The projects and accomplishments are categorized into Practical Vision chapters or core program work.

Chapter 1. Healthy Waters

Tijuana River Border Pollution Control Efforts

San Diego Water Board staff prepared a successful budget change proposal (BCP) to establish the Border Water Quality Protection Unit (Border Unit) to address cross-border pollution from Mexico and support the protection of human health, water quality, and beneficial uses associated with the Tijuana River and Estuary, and near-shore Pacific Ocean. The Border Unit addresses the San Diego Water Board's long-standing need for additional dedicated staff to manage the heavy permitting workload in the Tijuana River watershed, where insufficient staffing has delayed National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR), and 401 Water Quality Certification actions for more than a decade. By securing funding for four permanent positions, the BCP enables the Board to process permits efficiently, maintain regulatory focus on cross-border pollution control, and restore capacity in other affected programs.

Wastewater Permit Plume Tracking

As NPDES permits have been reissued, the San Diego Water Board has required the owners of publicly owned treatment works (POTWs) that dispose of wastewater to the Pacific Ocean to determine where their plumes are and how they behave in typical and atypical oceanographic conditions. The seven ocean outfalls within the San Diego Water Board's jurisdiction are called the Aliso Creek, Encina, Oceanside, Point Loma,

San Elijo, San Juan Creek, and South Bay. Several POTWs have already submitted plume tracking reports. The Board required plume tracking studies when it reissued the NPDES permit for the City of San Diego E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant on March 11, 2026.

Enforcement actions led to habitat improvement and community engagement

Board staff documented the successful completion of a supplemental environmental project (SEP) that increased wetlands in the region and engaged the community through a variety of hands-on wetland experiences. [Ocean Connectors](#), a local nonprofit program that connects underserved communities with coastal ecosystems, completed a habitat restoration and education program using approximately \$1 million in SEP funds from an [administrative civil liability settlement](#) adopted by the Board in 2023. The SEP funded the restoration of 6.5 acres of degraded habitat in Sweetwater Marsh, South San Diego Bay, and Paradise Creek to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, and a community resource. The project paired on-the-ground ecological restoration with extensive environmental education and outreach. It expanded Ocean Connectors' reach to all K–12 students in the National City School District and engaged nearly 22,000 students through instruction, field trips, kayak cleanups, and e-learning. The SEP also created a robust community component by offering 40 free kayak cleanup tours per year to underserved communities in the area. See [June 2026 EOR](#).

Chapter 2. Monitoring and Assessment

Sediment Quality Assessment for Tijuana River Valley and Estuary

In March 2026 the San Diego Water Board received a one-time allocation of \$1.4 million from the State Water Resources Control Board Cleanup and Abatement Account to conduct a Sediment Quality Assessment in the Tijuana River Valley and Estuary (TRVE). This Sediment Quality Assessment would determine the extent and magnitude of impacts of transboundary sewage and industrial waste flows on key beneficial uses, including Warm Fresh Water Habitat; Shellfish Harvesting; Marine Habitat; Spawning, Reproduction, and/or Early Development; Estuarine Habitat; Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species; Commercial and Sportfishing; and Wildlife Habitat. The proposed monitoring is expected to begin in summer 2027 and will help assess the merit of the County of San Diego's proposed Superfund designation.

The project will complement water quality monitoring underway by the United States section of the International Boundary and Water Commission. The results of the sediment quality assessment will be used to identify additional investigations needed for cleanup or remediation efforts and to regulate river modification (e.g. Tijuana River Saturn Ave. "hotspot" removal) or estuary restoration projects (e.g. Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Project). Finally, the results of the investigation will also be used to prioritize remediation of contaminated sediments and inform sediment re-use proposals of these and other projects for beach sand replenishment and dune restoration.

Fecal Indicator Bacteria Public Dashboard

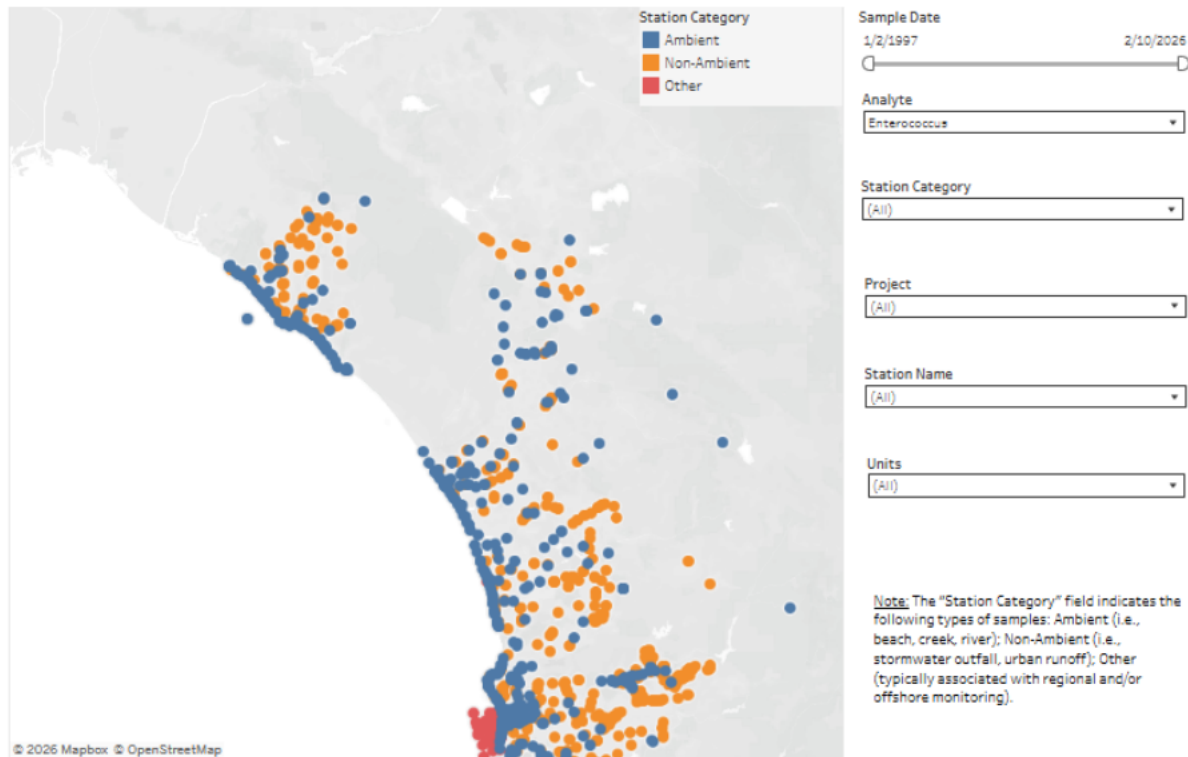
Staff from the San Diego Water Board and the State Water Board's Office of Information Management and Analysis published the [Fecal Indicator Bacteria \(FIB\) Data Summary Dashboard](#) on the Board's website in April 2026. The dashboard consolidates FIB data uploaded by local governments, public health agencies, environmental organizations, and other partners. The dashboard shows concentrations of enterococcus and E.coli, which are the water quality objectives used to protect the key beneficial uses associated swimming, surfing, and wading recreation uses. Users can adjust dashboard filters for date, analyte, project, or station to easily visualize and download data.¹ The dashboard was created to produce information that supports the protection and restoration of water quality resources, communicates resource conditions, and provides information to evaluate success.

Fecal Indicator Bacteria Data Summary Dashboard



Fecal Indicator Bacteria (FIB) data is collected to assess water quality and public health risk in swimmable waters. The purpose of the dashboard is to provide quick and easy access to FIB data collected in the San Diego Region, including southern portions of Orange County. Please refer to How to Use and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) webpages for more information.

Disclaimer: This map is currently under development and does not represent the final product. Data, features, and functionality are subject to change. This map is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as the sole basis for making decisions about water contact activities. Always follow local advisories and guidelines when engaging in recreational activities in natural water bodies. The data can change at any time and should not be used for any particular purpose other than general reference.



Chapter 3. Recover Stream, Wetland, and Riparian Areas

401 Water Quality Certification Oversight and Enforcement

The dredge and fill program focused its efforts on the review, inspection, and enforcement of existing 401 Water Quality Certifications. The primary objective was to determine whether required compensatory mitigation measures had been properly implemented. Wetlands and Riparian Protection Unit staff discovered that several dredge and fill projects were notably out of compliance, with some instances of compensatory mitigation being implemented years after the required deadlines. Through the application of progressive enforcement procedures, these non-compliant projects were brought into compliance. Project owners were required to address the temporal loss resulting from delayed compensatory mitigation actions and to make improvements to affected habitats. This approach ensured Project owner fulfilled their compensatory mitigation obligations, and habitat quality was restored and enhanced as intended by the certification requirements.

Chapter 6. Strategize to Achieve Local Resilient Local Water Supply

Adoption of Permits for the East County Advanced Water Purification Project

The East County Advanced Water Purification Project (ECAWP Project) is an indirect potable reuse project that will produce advanced treated recycled water to 1) augment Lake Jennings, a drinking water reservoir and 2) maintain water levels in Santee Lakes, a recreational area. The ECAWP Joint Powers Authority is currently constructing facilities which make up the ECAWP Project. These facilities include the East County Water Recycling Facility (ECWR Facility) and the East County Advanced Water Purification Facility (ECAWP Facility). The ECAWP Project will be operational in late 2026.

The San Diego Water Board adopted Order Nos. R9-2025-0003 and R9-2025-0060 for the ECAWP Project on November 12, 2025. Order No. R9-2025-0003 establishes requirements for the discharge of advanced treated recycled water produced from the ECAWP Facility to Lake Jennings and Santee Lakes. Order No. R9-2025-0060 establishes requirements for the treatment of domestic wastewater and production of recycled water at ECWR Facility. Tertiary treated recycled water from the ECWR Facility will be used mainly for landscape irrigation.

The ECAWP Project will produce up to 30 percent of East San Diego County's water supply. Both Orders are the Board's effort to enhance sustainable, reliable supplies of fresh water through increased potable and non-potable reuse of recycled water.

Chapter 7. Mitigate Climate Change Impacts

Staff continued participation in several groups working to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. These efforts include:

- Monthly meetings with the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative (Climate Collaborative) and contributions to their Sea Level Rise and Policy and Adaptation Working Groups. The Climate Collaborative was established in 2011 as a network for public agencies to advance climate change solutions that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Providing input and perspective to multiple Climate Change adaptation plans. This included the City of San Diego's Coastal Resilience Master Plan and Caltrans District 11 Adaptation Planning efforts for State Route 75 and State Route 1.

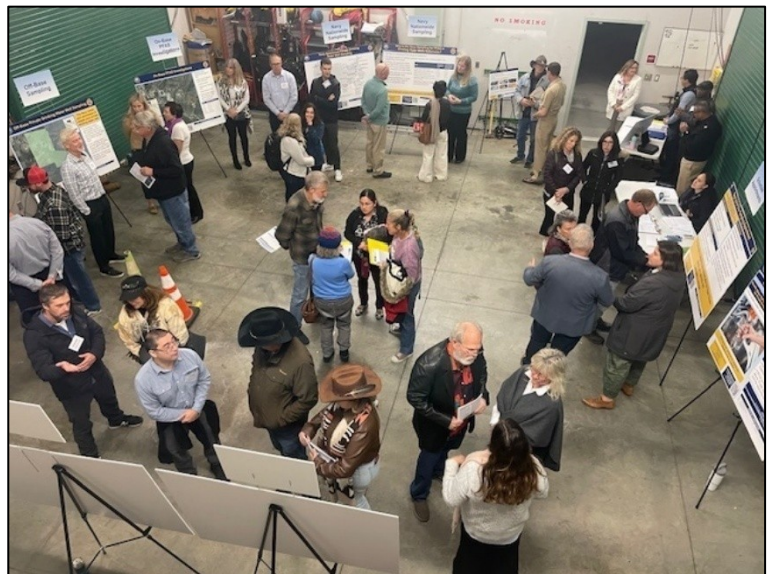
Staff also began implementing four projects identified as high-priority efforts to adapt to expected Climate Change impacts. These projects include Wetland Enhancement and Protection, developing a Position on Sea Level Rise, Best Management Practices, and better understanding Storm Dynamics. Actions were identified to advance the projects and presented to program leads and associated supervisors. Review of mitigation requirements for climate change considerations, incorporating hydrology predictions into BMP sizing and cataloging existing wetland area are a few of the actions initiated.

California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment is a multi-year research effort led by the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation. The Fifth Assessment contributes to the scientific foundation for understanding climate-related vulnerability throughout California and supports on-the-ground implementation and decision making. Nine regional synthesis reports compile the best available science on climate change and other informational resources at the local scale to help develop informed responses to current and expected impacts. Staff from the Surface Water Branch participated by serving as full reviewer of the report. The San Diego Climate Assessment Synthesis Report is expected to be published in August 2026 followed by a regional webinar on September 9 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. [Webinar Registration](#).

Chapter 8. Provide Effective Community Engagement and Communication

Public Engagement

Petroleum and Military Site Restoration Unit staff engaged in 17 outreach efforts related unauthorized leaking underground storage tank sites. Outreach efforts included mailing unauthorized release information factsheets, corrective action implementation letters, and proposed closure notification letters to individual property owners, water districts, and city engineers that fall within the area impacted by the unauthorized release. Outreach efforts also included supporting military staff by attending public outreach meetings. Notably, staff participated in an open house public meeting with the Department of the Navy, County of San Diego Public Health Services, and the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment at CalFire Station No. 52 in Warner Springs. (See photo) This meeting provided information to the public about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and the Navy's offer to sample private drinking water wells near the Navy's Remote Training Site in Warner Springs. Meeting attendees asked questions and expressed considerable interest.



Public Workshops for Two Basin Plan Review Projects

Staff held two hybrid public workshops in 2025/26 to advance projects from the 2024/25 Triennial Water Quality Control Plan ([Basin Plan](#)) Review. The workshops represent efforts to engage in outreach to improve communication and transparency, create information sharing opportunities to both listen to and share with our communities, collaborate on development of mutually beneficial solutions to water quality issues, and inform the public about the goals of the Practical Vision.

- **Recreational Beneficial Use TMDLs:** In February 2026, staff conducted a CEQA Scoping meeting on a proposed Basin Plan amendment to update Fecal Indicator Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). The purpose of this workshop was to seek community input on the range of project actions and alternatives; reasonably foreseeable methods of compliance; and, if any, significant and cumulative impacts and mitigation measures to be analyzed prior to the decision-making process.

- **Healthy Ecosystems Beneficial Uses in Shelter Island Yacht Basin:** In May 2026, staff conducted a public workshop, hosted by the Port of San Diego, to discuss water quality and biological integrity in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin of San Diego Bay. The workshop was organized by a steering committee of staff from the Water Board, Port of San Diego, and the San Diego Working Waterfront. The public was invited to share their expectations and priorities for healthy aquatic habitats and ecosystems in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin. This is a step toward updating a 2004 TMDL for dissolved copper in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin. Staff will use the information to improve the focus of regulatory efforts on restoring and preserving the biological integrity of the Shelter Island Yacht Basin.

Safe To Swim

Surface Waters Branch staff participated in two innovative workshops advancing collective understanding of the management of human fecal waste to better protect waters designated as safe to swim.

- In January 2026, the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) launched the HF 183 Management Committee to identify a detection threshold and subsequent management actions. The goal of the project is to produce guidance that Stormwater Management Committee Member Agencies may rely on to better protect public health. This is not intended as a regulatory threshold, but rather a tool to help prioritize responses to detections of human fecal waste for which HF 183 is proxy. Meetings continue into FY 26-27.
- In February 2026, SCCWRP convened the first of its kind exfiltration workshop that convened stormwater and wastewater managers, academia and regulators. The goal was to identify the challenges to quantifying sanitary sewer system exfiltration and transport to receiving waters, and to identify projects to address these challenges. Three projects were chosen for further development: an intensive source study in a small watershed, investigation into subsurface transport, and development of an action plan for when exfiltration is discovered. In Fall 2026, staff will continue its participate as scopes of work for each project are developed.

Border Water Quality

San Diego Water Board staff continue to provide sustained, focused outreach on border water quality issues. Every month, staff prepare an executive officer report covering border water quality matters in the San Diego – Tijuana region, with key findings highlighted at Board meetings by Executive Officer David Gibson. Staff have also facilitated the following five information items at Board meetings throughout the fiscal year:

- August 13, 2025: United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) update regarding the status and progress upgrades to the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant and other infrastructure to prevent pollution from Mexico from entering the San Diego region.
- August 13, 2025: Scripps Institution of Oceanography presentation regarding Phase One of their Pathogen Forecast Model, released in July 2025.
- March 11, 2026: Program overview and discussion of local projects funded by the San Diego Foundation's Binational Resiliency Initiative.
- June 8, 2026: Division of Financial Assistance Update on Proposition 4 U.S.-Mexico Border Grant Program
- June 8, 2026: USIBWC update regarding Spill and Transboundary Flow Events, Influent Action Levels and Source Control Requirements, State of the Ocean, State of the Tijuana River Valley, and Expansion of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Outside of Board meetings, San Diego Water Board staff continue to participate in public outreach and engagement efforts related to border water quality, including the Marine Debris Leadership Coalition, SANDAG California-Baja California Border Resiliency Plan Workgroup, and Tijuana Verde's Green Ágora. This fiscal year, staff have also given presentations to the San Diego Air Pollution Control District's San Ysidro Community Group, 42nd Annual Industrial Environmental Association, and 2026 Association of Environmental Professionals.

Additionally, Board staff maintain timely updates to the Border Water Quality webpage, which serves as a publicly accessible hub for news, reports, and engagement opportunities.

Core Program Accomplishments

NPDES Permit Reissuances

On November 12, 2025, the San Diego Water Board adopted the NPDES permit for the East County Advanced Water Purification Joint Powers Authority's discharge of advanced treated recycled water to Lake Jennings and Sycamore Creek from the East County Advanced Water Purification Facility. The discharges support the East County Advanced Water Purification Project, which is a potable reuse project to produce advanced treated water to augment Lake Jennings and to maintain water levels at Santee Lakes.

On March 11, 2026, the San Diego Water Board adopted the reissued NPDES permit for the City of San Diego E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant, which discharges to the Pacific Ocean via the Point Loma Ocean Outfall. The City of San Diego continues its commitment to implementing a comprehensive water reuse program called Pure Water San Diego, which results in an increase of potable water reuse and a reduction in the quantity of solids from wastewater effluent discharged into the marine environment. The Pure Water San Diego project aims to significantly reduce and improve the ocean discharge while producing water suitable for potable reuse. The

reissued permit outlines the City of San Diego's schedule for completing Pure Water San Diego Phase 1 and advancing Phase 2 during the term of the permit.

South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant Compliance

On August 27, 2025, the San Diego Water Board adopted Cease and Desist Order (CDO) No. R9-2025-0139 in response to USIBWC's planned 10-MGD accelerated incremental expansion of the SBIWTP. The CDO established interim effluent limitations for the discharge of up to 35 million gallons per day (MGD) of blended advanced primary- and secondary-treated effluent and required USIBWC to take remedial and preventative actions to protect the SBIWTP and receiving waters. On April 8, 2026, the San Diego Water Board adopted Order No. R9-2026-0005, amending USIBWC's NDPES Permit for the SBIWTP. This amendment authorized the advanced primary treatment of an additional 10 MGD of wastewater from Mexico. Order No. R9-2026-0005 also included: 1) updated performance goals and influent action levels to reflect the higher volume of flow being treated at the SBIWTP; 2) a requirement for USIBWC to submit a Treatment Optimization Report to the San Diego Water Board by December 1, 2026, that evaluates treatment optimization to reduce pollutants in the blended effluent; and 3) changes to USIBWC's Monitoring and Reporting Program to require weekly monitoring of fecal coliform and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) at Dairy Mart Bridge.

Pine Hill Egg Ranch and Pullet Farm Waste Discharge Requirements

The San Diego Water Board adopted Order No. R9-2025-0012 on October 8, 2025. Order No. R9-2025-0012 establishes waste discharge requirements for Demler Brothers LLC to 1) operate and maintain an onsite treatment and disposal system for process water from egg washing operations at Pine Hill Egg Ranch and 2) manage animal waste and chicken carcasses at Pine Hill Egg Ranch and Pullet Farm. Animal waste includes manure, soiled bedding, urine, eggs, and feathers generated from the Pine Hill Egg Ranch or the Pullet Farm.

Demler Brothers LLC owns and operates Pine Hill Egg Ranch and Pullet Farm, both located in Ramona, San Diego County. Pine Hill Egg Ranch occupies 362 acres, has the capacity to house up to two million chickens, and produces approximately 800,000 eggs per day. Pine Hill Egg Ranch also disposes of approximately 1,500 gallons per day of egg washing process water and generates approximately 375 tons of manure per week. The Pullet Farm occupies 200 acres, houses approximately 400,000 pullets (young chickens), and generates approximately 50 tons of manure per week.

Order No. R9-2025-0012 fulfills requirements contained in Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2023-1029 (CDO) adopted on November 8, 2023. The CDO required Demler Brothers LLC to immediately stop discharging waste at Pine Hine Egg Ranch and the Pullet Farm in violation of applicable State and federal requirements. The CDO also required Demler Brothers LLC to seek regulatory coverage for discharges of waste and stormwater; and implement best management practices and infrastructure improvements to comply with appropriate regulatory requirements. The requirements in Order No R9-2025-0012 support protection of groundwater basins that serve as domestic water sources for local communities.