

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN COMMENTS

on Tentative Order for
Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District Wastewater Treatment Plant
22675 8th Street East, Sonoma, Sonoma County

The Regional Water Board received written comments from Ms. Anna Gomez on a tentative order distributed in February 2014 for public comment. Ms. Gomez's comments are summarized below in *italics*, followed by the Regional Water Board staff response. For the full content and context of her comments, refer to the comment letter.

This document also contains staff-initiated revisions. All revisions are shown with underline text for additions and strikethrough ~~text~~ for deletions.

MS. GOMEZ

Comments: *Ms. Gomez is concerned about the deteriorating condition of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District's collection system and how service expansion plans could affect the already overburdened system. She asserts that the leaking collection system threatens human health and the environment and violates the permit. She requests that the permit prohibit collection system discharges and require the District to fix its collection system. She specifically requests that the Regional Water Board ban new hookups to the system until repairs are made (except possibly for hardship cases involving owner-occupied single-family dwellings).*

Ms. Gomez notes that developers are adding projects to the collection system with the District's approval, and that these projects will make the problem worse. She claims the District had imposed a prohibition against annexing new service areas until the system is fixed, but now is working with developers to annex new areas.

Ms. Gomez points to a 2002 District report that identifies \$45 million of repairs needed immediately to fix the system, and \$40 million more needed for future repairs.

Ms. Gomez states that fines the Regional Water Board imposes are sent to the Cleanup and Abatement Account and used to clean up pollution from unknown dischargers and financially disadvantaged communities. She says these fines do nothing to clean up pollution from the dischargers that receive the fines.

Ms. Gomez says the Regional Water Board ignores millions of gallons of sewage spills. She says she is collecting names of like-minded individuals and may consider a class action lawsuit.

Response: We agree that the permit should prohibit sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) or any discharge from the collection system. Prohibition III.E of the tentative order currently states, "Any sanitary sewer overflow that results in a discharge of untreated or partially-treated wastewater to waters of the United States is prohibited." We also agree that the District should

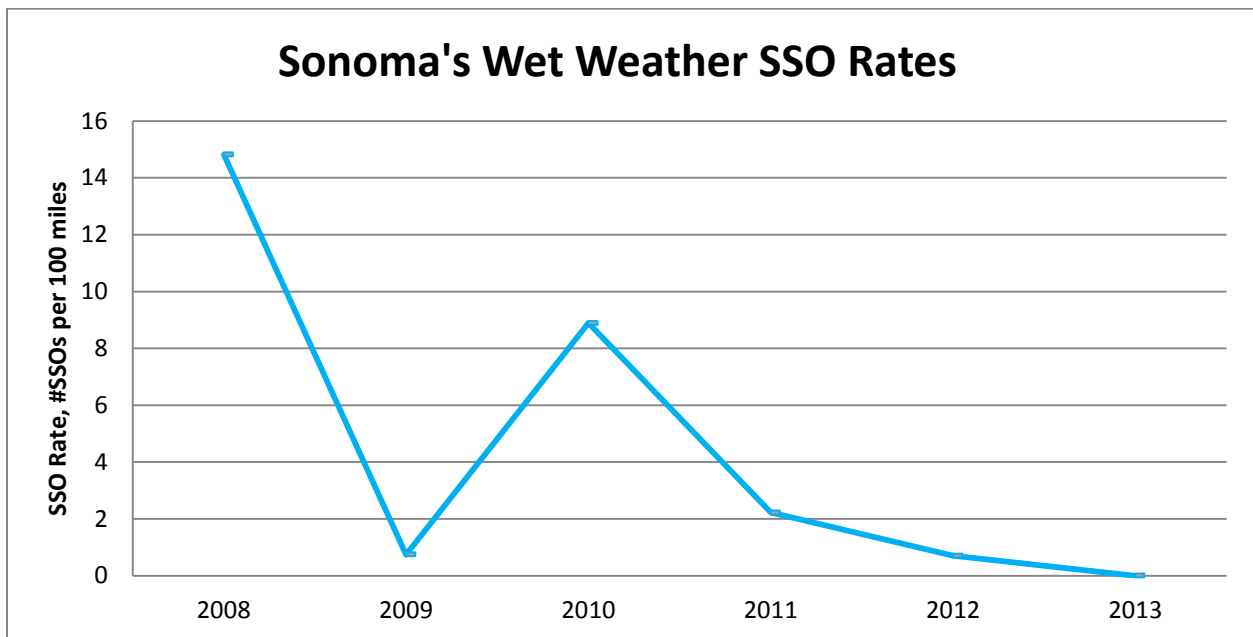
properly maintain its collection system. Provision VI.C.4.b of the tentative order currently states, “The Discharger shall properly operate and maintain its entire collection system (see Attachment D, section I.D). The Discharger shall report any noncompliance (see Attachment D, sections V.E.1 and V.E.2) and mitigate any discharge from its collection system that violates this Order (see Attachment D, section I.C).” Based this current language, we do not see a need to revise the tentative order.

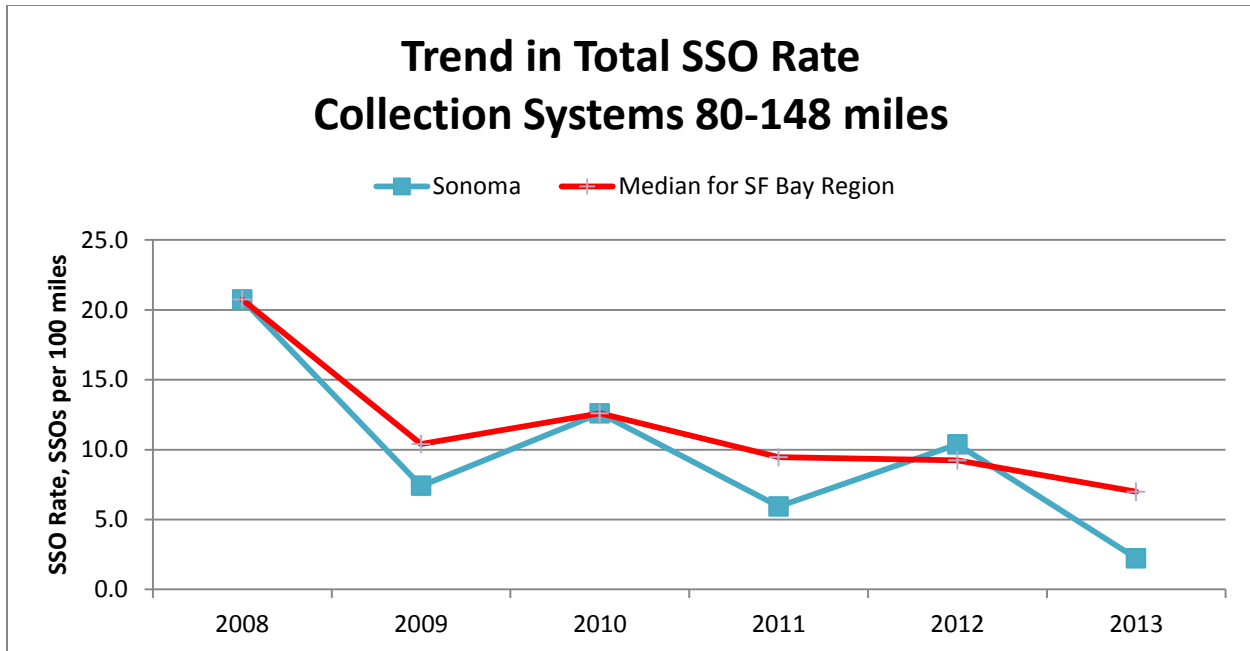
Based simply on the District’s record of SSOs, we disagree that a connection ban is warranted at this time. The treatment plant has adequate capacity to treat projected wastewater flows. A connection ban would be unrelated to SSOs, because many are caused by excessive inflow and infiltration through existing defective pipes during rains. New connections do not contribute to inflow and infiltration.

Further, Board actions on violations of permit requirements are enforcement matters and should not be tied to or delay Board actions on permit reissuance.

We share Ms. Gomez’s concerns about overflows, but the District’s collection system management challenges are not unique. Communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Region, the State, and the entire nation face similar challenges. As with other communities, the District’s collection system is aging, resulting in SSOs.

On the issue of past Regional Water Board enforcement actions, the District’s performance has improved and its SSOs have decreased since Board enforcement in 1997 and 2010. The Board imposed against the District in 1997 an \$83,000 penalty for 62 overflows between 1994 and 1997 and in 2010 a \$200,000 penalty for 37 overflows between 2007 and 2010. The figures below show reductions in wet weather-related and total overflows in recent years.





STAFF-INITIATED CHANGES

In addition to making minor editorial and formatting changes, we made the following changes:

We revised MRP Table E-3 footnote 6 as follows to clarify that the discharge to Schell Slough may be discontinued after the start of a toxicity test:

^[6] Monitoring is only required when discharging to Discharge Point No. 001. Discharge to Discharge Point No. 001 may be discontinued at any time after the start of the test.

We corrected a typographical error in MRP section VII.A as follows:

A. General Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

The Discharger shall comply with all Standard Provisions (Attachments D and G) related to monitoring, reporting, and recordkeeping, with modifications shown in section VIII IX, below.

We revised Fact Sheet section I.D as follows to add the recently-adopted nutrient permit as a permit that governs the discharge:

D. The discharge is also regulated under NPDES Permit Nos. CA0038849 and CA0038873, which establishes requirements on mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and nutrients from wastewater discharges to San Francisco Bay. This Order does not affect those mercury and PCBs permits.

We revised Fact Sheet section II.B.5 as follows to correct a factual error and to further describe how the 3.5 mile pipeline will be used:

6. **Discharge Point Nos. 006 and 007.** Recycled water may be discharged at Discharge Point Nos. 006 and 007 to Fly Bay or to a constructed mixing chamber for the restoration of 9,460 acres of saline ponds in the Napa River Unit of the Napa-Sonoma Marsh Wildlife Area. The ~~California Coastal Commission~~, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are implementing a project to reduce salinity in the ponds and to restore a mosaic of habitats, including tidal marshes and managed ponds. ... A portion of the recycled water delivered through the 3.5 mile pipeline may be routed to off-channel vineyard storage ponds for agricultural use.

We corrected a typographical error in Fact Sheet section VII.A.2 as follows:

2. **Effluent Monitoring.** Effluent flow monitoring is necessary to evaluate compliance with Prohibition III.~~DE~~ (average dry weather flow) and to understand Facility operations. ...

We corrected a typographical error in Fact Sheet Table F-8 as follows:

Table F-8. Monitoring Requirements Summary

Parameter	Influent INF-001	Effluent EFF-001	Effluent EFF-002	Effluent EFF-005 through EFF-007	Receiving Water RSW-001 through RSW-006
⋮					
Chronic Toxicity		2/Year			
Ammonia		1/Month Quarter			1/Quarter
Copper		1/Month			
⋮					