



Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

September 15, 2025

Wicked Creations, Inc. 13832 West Street Garden Grove, CA 92843 (Via Certified Mail) CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Wicked Creations, Inc. sales@wicked-creations.com (Via Email)

Michael Boone – Owner, CEO, CFO Damian Smith – Owner Dorothy Ortega – Principal

TRANSMITTAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY COMPLAINT NO. R8-2025-0066, WICKED CREATIONS, INC.

Dear Messrs. Boone, Smith, and Ms. Ortega:

Enclosed is Administrative Civil Liability Complaint No. R8-2025-0066 (Complaint) issued to Wicked Creations, Inc. (hereafter referred to as Wicked Creations or Discharger) pursuant to California Water Code sections 13323 and 13385. The Complaint alleges that Wicked Creations has violated section 13376 by failing to file a report of waste discharge or enroll in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities, Order No. 2014-0057-DWQ as amended by Order No. 2015-0122-DWQ and Order No. 2018-0028-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000001 (General Permit) for the industrial facility located at 13832 West Street, in the city of Garden Grove.

This Complaint proposes that an administrative civil liability in the amount of **one hundred** and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) be imposed.

A public hearing on this matter is scheduled for the Santa Ana Water Board meeting on December 12, 2025. Pursuant to Water Code section 13323, the Discharger has the option to waive its right to a hearing, as described in detail in the attached Waiver Form, the Santa Ana Water Board may not hold a public hearing on this matter.

If Wicked Creations chooses to waive its right to a hearing, please sign and submit the enclosed Waiver Form. The Discharger may waive their right to a hearing and pay the proposed liability (Option #1), ask to enter settlement negotiations (Option #2), or request additional time including an explanation of need (Option #3).

KRIS MURRAY, CHAIR | ERIC LINDBERG, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Discharger should submit the attached Waiver to the Advisory Team by contacting Heraclio Pimentel via e-mail at Heraclio.Pimentel@waterboards.ca.gov or via phone at (916) 323-1677. Counsel for the Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team, Carson Capps, must be copied on that email at Carson.Capps@waterboards.ca.gov. The Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team reserves the right to object to the Discharger's request to pursue Option #2.

If the Discharger waives their right to a public hearing and pays the proposed liability, by selecting Option #1 and submitting full payment of the proposed liability as described in the Waiver, the December 12, 2025 hearing will not be held. Instead, this will be considered a tentative settlement of the alleged violations. The settlement will be brought before the Santa Ana Water Board or its delegee for approval following a 30-day public comment, starting from the day this Complaint is issued. Interested persons may submit comment on the proposed action during this period by submitting written comments to the Santa Ana Water Board staff via e-mail to Michelle.Beckwith@waterboards.ca.gov.

If Wicked Creations does not wish to waive its rights to a hearing, a pre-hearing meeting with the Prosecution Team is recommended. Should you wish to schedule a pre-hearing meeting, please submit your request to David Rosas via phone at (951) 394-9476 or via email to David.Rosas@waterboards.ca.gov prior to September 19, 2025.

Procedural questions should be directed to the Advisory Team by contacting Heraclio Pimentel at the contact information listed above. The Hearing Procedures governing this enforcement action are included as an attachment.

If you have any questions regarding the Complaint or the enclosed documents, please contact Carson Capps, attorney for the Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team, via email at Capps@waterboards.ca.gov or via phone at (916) 341-5273.

Sincerely,

Eric T. Lindberg, PG CHG

Executive Officer

enclosures: Administrative Civil Liability Complaint No. R8-2025-0066

Waiver Form

Hearing Procedure

cc: Alan Kuoch, Santa Ana Water Board Advisory Team

Heraclio Pimentel, Santa Ana Water Board Advisory Team Attorney Carson Capps, Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team Attorney Catherine Hawe, Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team Attorney

James Fortuna, Orange County, NPDES Coordinator Samuel Kim, City of Garden Grove, NPDES Coordinator





Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

IN THE MATTER OF:

Wicked Creations Inc.)	Complaint No. R8-2025-0066
13832 West Street)	for
Garden Grove, CA 92843)	Administrative Civil Liability

INTRODUCTION

This Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (Complaint) is issued to Wicked Creations, Inc. (hereafter referred to as Wicked Creations or Discharger) by the Executive Officer of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region (Santa Ana Water Board) on behalf of the Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team (collectively, the Parties) pursuant to California Water Code sections (Water Code) 13385 and 13323. This Complaint proposes to assess an administrative civil liability of \$150,000 based on evidence that the Discharger violated provisions of Water Code by failing to obtain appropriate regulatory coverage for its industrial operations under the *General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities, Order No. 2018-0028-DWQ, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. CAS000001* (General Permit) for the facility located at 13832 West Street, in the city of Garden Grove (Facility).

The Executive Officer of the Santa Ana Water Board alleges the following:

BACKGROUND

- 1. The Discharger operates a Facility which is identified as an industrial facility engaged in manufacturing hardware, not elsewhere classified. This industrial activity is described in SIC code 3429.
- 2. The Facility discharges into East Garden Grove Wintersburg Channel, a Water of the United States.
- 3. The Facility requires an NPDES permit to regulate its discharge of industrial pollutants in stormwater pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations section 122.26(b)(14).
- 4. Water Code section 13376, in relevant part, requires that "a person who discharges pollutants or proposes to discharge pollutants to navigable waters of

KRIS MURRAY, CHAIR | ERIC LINDBERG, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

the United States within the jurisdiction of this state ... shall file a report of the discharge in compliance with the procedures set forth in Section 13260."

- 5. For industrial facilities, this obligation is most easily satisfied through enrollment in the General Permit. Wicked Creations must obtain coverage under the General Permit, or otherwise satisfy the obligation of Water Code section 13376 by submitting a report of waste discharge (ROWD) and obtaining an alternative NPDES permit.
- 6. Santa Ana Water Board staff received the Discharger's information from the City of Garden Grove regarding two businesses, United Metal Concepts and Wicked Creations, operating at the same address without General Permit Coverage. Santa Ana Water Board staff made multiple attempts to access and inspect the Facility to confirm whether permit coverage was required. These efforts culminated in the issuance of two Notices of Non-Compliance pursuant to the Stormwater Enforcement Act (Water Code section 13399.25 et seq.), dated December 6, 2023 and January 4, 2024, a March 27, 2024 Conditional Settlement Offer (Order No. R8-2024-0038) and Mandatory Minimum Penalty Complaint No. R8-2024-0038, which was issued on July 29, 2024 (MMP Complaint).
- 7. The MMP Complaint alleged that the Discharger failed to obtain appropriate regulatory coverage under the General Permit after receiving two Notices of Noncompliance. On August 6, 2024, the Santa Ana Water Board Advisory Team issued Hearing Procedures to all parties to the MMP Complaint. The Discharger failed to submit evidence or raise arguments.
- 8. On October 25, 2024, the Santa Ana Water Board held a public hearing to hear evidence and comments on the allegations contained in the MMP Complaint. The Discharger did not appear.
- 9. On November 7, 2024, the Executive Officer of the Santa Ana Water Board certified Administrative Civil Liability Order No. R8-2024-0038, which required the Discharger to pay a total administrative civil liability of seven thousand three hundred seventy-six dollars (\$7,376).
- 10. To date, the Discharger has not obtained General Permit coverage, or otherwise satisfy the obligation of Water Code section 13376 by obtaining an NPDES permit, and continues to operate an industrial business which results in the discharge of polluted stormwater to Waters of the United States.

ALLEGED VIOLATION

11. The Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team alleges that the Discharger failed to file a ROWD prior to discharging to waters of the United States in violations of Water Code section 13376. The Discharger could have satisfied the requirement to file a ROWD by filing a Notice of Intent to comply with the requirements of the General Permit or filing a ROWD to obtain individual NPDES coverage. Wicked

Creations was required to file a ROWD by at least January 15, 2014, the start date of its business license and operations at the Facility.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

12. Pursuant to Water Code section 13385, subdivision (a)(1), any person who violates Water Code section 13376 is subject to administrative civil liability pursuant to Water Code section 13385, subdivision (c)(1), in an amount not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for each day in which the violation occurs.

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY

- 13. Pursuant to Water Code section 13385, subdivision (e), liability must be assessed at a level that recovers the economic benefits, if any, derived from the acts that constitute the violation. The State Water Resources Control Board's Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy) requires that the adjusted Total Base Liability Amount be at least ten percent higher than the Economic Benefit amount. The Economic Benefit totals \$20,383 (see Attachment A). Therefore, the minimum liability for the alleged violations is \$22,421.
- 14. Pursuant to Water Code section 13385, the maximum administrative civil liability for the violation is five million and eighty thousand dollars (\$5,080,000), based on a calculation of the total number of days of violation multiplied by the statutory maximum penalty. While the days of violation began on February 4, 2024, which is 60 days after the first Notice of Non-Compliance was received by the Discharger, in an exercise of discretion, the Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team has elected to begin counting days of violation on April 26, 2024, the day after the final deadline for the Discharger to accept the Conditional Settlement Offer. Since the violation is ongoing, the days of violation are being counted up until September 15, 2025, the day this Complaint is issued. This results in 508 days of violation, subjecting the Discharger to a maximum civil liability of five million and eighty thousand dollars (\$5,080,000 = 508 days x \$10,000).

PROPOSED LIABILITY

- 15. Pursuant to Water Code section 13385, subdivision (e), in determining the amount of civil liability, the regional board shall take into consideration the nature, circumstances, extent, and gravity of the violation or violations, whether the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement, the degree of toxicity of the discharge, and, with respect to the violator, the ability to pay, the effect on the ability to continue in business, any voluntary cleanup efforts undertaken, any prior history of violations, the degree of culpability, economic benefit or savings, if any, resulting from the violation, and other matters as justice may require.
- 16. The State Water Board adopted Resolution 2023-0043, thereby adopting the Enforcement Policy, which became effective on November 7, 2024. A prior version

of the Enforcement Policy was in effect during some portions of these violations. However, application of this earlier Enforcement Policy will not result in any substantive changes to this Complaint, so the Prosecution Team has elected to rely on the current version in the issuance of this Complaint. The Enforcement Policy establishes a methodology for assessing administrative civil liability. The use of this methodology addresses the factors that are required to be considered when imposing civil liability, including those set forth in Water Code section 13327 and 13385, subdivision (e). This policy can be found at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/enforcement/docs/2024/2024-enforcement-policy.pdf.

- 17. A detailed description of the application of the penalty methodology is included as Attachment A and incorporated herein.
- 18. Based on consideration of the above facts and after applying the penalty methodology as shown in Attachment A, the Executive Officer of the Santa Ana Water Board proposes that civil liability be imposed administratively on the Discharger pursuant to Water Code section 13385, subdivision (c), in the amount of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000).

REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 19. Notwithstanding issuance of this Complaint, the Santa Ana Water Board retains the authority to assess additional administrative civil liability or otherwise pursue any enforcement action for any violations that have not yet been assessed or for violations that may subsequently occur.
- 20.An administrative civil liability may be imposed pursuant to the procedures described in Water Code section 13323. An administrative civil liability complaint alleges the act or failure to act that constitutes a violation of law, the provision of law authorizing administrative civil liability to impose, and the proposed administrative civil liability.
- 21. Issuance of this Complaint is an enforcement action and is therefore exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Res. Code section 21000 et seq.) pursuant to title 14, California Code of Regulations sections 15308 and 15321, subdivision (a), paragraph (2).
- 22. Payment of the assessed liability does not absolve the Discharger from complying with the General Permit and Water Code section 13376.

WICKED CREATIONS IS HEREBY GIVEN NOTICE THAT:

23. The Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team proposes an administrative civil liability in the amount of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000). The amount

of the proposed civil liability is based upon a review of the factors cited in Water Code sections 13327 and 13385, as well as the Enforcement Policy, and includes consideration of the economic benefit or savings resulting from violations.

- 24.A hearing on this matter will be held at a regular meeting before the Santa Ana Water Board on December 12, 2025, at Orange County Sanitation District, located at 18480 Bandilier Circle, Fountain Valley, CA 92708, in accordance with the Hearing Procedure issued concurrently with this Complaint. unless one of the following options occurs:
 - a. The Discharger waives the hearing by completing the Waiver Form (checking off the box next to Option 1), attached herein, and returning it to the Santa Ana Water Board, along with payment of the proposed liability of one hundred fifty thousand (\$150,000).
 - b. The Discharger waives the 90-day hearing requirement in order to extend the hearing date (checking the box next to Option 2) and returning it to the Santa Ana Water Board, along with rationale for the extension.

Eric T. Lindberg, PG CHG

Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT A

Specific Factors Considered for Administrative Civil Liability Complaint No. R8-2025-0066 Wicked Creations, Inc.

Wicked Creations, Inc. (Discharger) is alleged to have violated California Water Code section 13376 by failing to enroll in the *General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities*, *Order No. 2014-0057-DWQ, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. CAS000001* (General Permit) at its industrial facility located at 13832 West Street in the City of Garden Grove (Facility).

The State Water Resources Control Board's Water Quality 2024 Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy)¹ establishes a methodology for determining administrative civil liability by addressing the factors that are required to be considered under California Water Code (Water Code) section 13385, subdivision (e). Each factor of the ten-step approach and its application to each violation is discussed below, as is the basis for assessing the corresponding score.

<u>Violation</u>: The Discharger failed to meet the requirements of Water Code section 13376 by failing to obtain coverage under the General Permit or otherwise obtaining appropriate regulatory coverage from at least April 26, 2024 through September 15, 2025.

ENFORCEMENT POLICY – PENALTY CALCULATION

Step 1 and Step 2 – Actual or Potential for Harm for Discharge Violations and Assessments for Discharge Violations

These steps are not applicable to the violation because this is a non-discharge violation.

Step 3 – Per Day Assessments for Non-Discharge Violations

Step 3 of the Enforcement Policy directs the Santa Ana Water Board to calculate a per day factor for non-discharge violations by considering the Potential for Harm and Deviation from Requirement using Table 3 in the Enforcement Policy.

Potential for Harm: Moderate

The Enforcement Policy requires a determination of whether the characteristics of the violation resulted in a minor, moderate, or major potential for harm and/or threat to beneficial uses.

The Discharger's failure to obtain appropriate regulatory coverage has a moderate potential for harm because it undermines the Santa Ana Water Board's statutory mandate

¹ The violations alleged in this Complaint pre-date the effective date of the 2024 Enforcement Policy, therefore, consistent with Attachment D to the Enforcement Policy, substantive changes included in the 2024 Enforcement Policy are not applied to these violations.

to regulate industrial dischargers. Without enrolling in the General Permit, or otherwise obtaining regulatory coverage, the Discharger is not required to implement any Best Management Practices (BMPs) or conduct any monitoring of its stormwater discharges. BMPs and monitoring are critical pillars of the stormwater regulatory program designed to ensure that pollutants in stormwater are minimized. Failure to implement these tasks results in uncontrolled and unknown quantities of industrial pollutants to be discharged into the receiving water. Industrial facilities with Notice of Intent permit coverage are required to collect and analyze their discharge for Total Suspended Solids (TSS), Oil and Grease (O&G), and pH. Industrial facilities with the SIC Code 3429 would be expected to include the following pollutants in their sample analysis: Zinc, Nitrate & Nitrite Nitrogen (N+N), Iron, and Aluminum. The City of Garden Grove has confirmed the Facility's receiving water to be the East Garden Grove Wintersburg Channel, which discharges to the Bolsa Chica Ecological Preserve. The Water Quality Control Plan for the Santa Ana River Basin identifies the beneficial uses for the Bolsa Chica Ecological Preserve to include the following: Water Contact Recreation; Non-contact Water Recreation; Preservation of Biological Habitats of Special Significance; Wildlife Habitat; Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species; Spawning, Reproduction and Development; Marine Habitat; and Estuarine Habitat.

Despite the severity of the impact to the regulatory program, the Enforcement Policy states that most non-discharge violations should be considered to present a moderate potential for harm. Therefore, the potential for harm is moderate.

Deviation from Requirement: Major

A major deviation from requirement is appropriate because the Discharger's failure to enroll in the General Permit, or otherwise obtain appropriate regulatory coverage, rendered the requirement that industrial facilities with industrial activities exposed to stormwater receive permit coverage completely ineffective. All goals of the regulatory program are entirely undermined when a discharger is not required to implement or observe any of the requirements included in the General Permit such as implementation of BMPs and monitoring and sampling programs. Therefore, the deviation from requirement is major.

Per Day Factor: 0.55

Using a moderate Potential for Harm and a major Deviation from Requirement, the per day factor for this violation from Table 3 of the 2024 Enforcement Policy is 0.55.

Days of Violation:

As of September 15, 2025, the Discharger has accrued a total of 508 days of violation. The Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team has elected to count days of violation beginning with the day after the deadline for the Discharger to enroll and accept a Conditional Settlement Offer (April 26, 2024), which led to the assessment of a mandatory

minimum liability in Order R8-2024-0038, and ending with the issuance of Complaint No. R8-2025-0066 (September 15, 2025).

Multiple Day Violation Reduction:

The Enforcement Policy allows for an alternate approach to calculating penalties for violations that last more than thirty (30) days. Where appropriate, this alternative approach shall result in a liability that is not less than an amount that is calculated based on an assessment of the first 30 days of the violation, plus an assessment for each 5-day period of violation, until the 60th day, plus an assessment for each 30 days of violation thereafter.

Here, the Discharger's failure to obtain appropriate regulatory coverage did not cause provable daily detrimental impacts to the environment, though it did cause daily detrimental impacts to the regulatory program. However, the violation has not resulted in a discrete economic benefit that can be measured on a daily basis because the Discharger did not avoid specific daily costs related to potential compliance measures that any permit would have required it to implement. Therefore, application of the multiple day reduction is appropriate.

Based on the application of the multiple day reduction, the total number of days of violation for Violation 1 is (30 + (30/5) + (508-60)/30) = 36+14=50.

Initial Liability Amount:

\$10,000 [maximum statutory liability per day violation] x 50 [days of violation] x 0.55 [per day factor]

$10,000 \times 50 \text{ days } \times 0.55 = 275,000$

Step 4 – Adjustment Factors

The Enforcement Policy then requires consideration of the discharger's conduct, specifically, the discharger's culpability, degree of cleanup and cooperation, and compliance history.

Culpability: 1.4

For culpability, the Enforcement Policy prescribes an adjustment using a multiplier between 0.75 to 1.5. The lower multiplier applies to accidental incidents and the higher multiplier for intentional and negligent behavior.

Here, the Discharger has been negligent in its failure to enroll in the General Permit or otherwise obtain NPDES coverage. All industrial facilities across the state of California that are engaged in manufacturing processes described under SIC code 3429 are

required to submit a Report of Waste Discharge before conducting industrial activities that could result in discharges to waters of the United States. In addition, the Discharger was informed of this requirement many times through a previous enforcement effort comprised of Notices of Non-Compliance issued on December 6, 2023, and January 4, 2024, an Expedited Payment Letter issued on March 27, 2024, site inspections, and phone calls from Santa Ana Water Board staff. Receipt of the Notices of Non-Compliance was confirmed via certified mail return receipt. Therefore, a culpability score of 1.4 is assigned.

History of Violations: 1.1

The Discharger has a history of adjudicated violations of the California Water Code within the past five years. After a public hearing, the Santa Ana Water Board's Executive Officer adopted Order No. R8-2024-0038 on the Santa Ana Water Board's behalf thereby ordering the Discharger pay a total liability of seven thousand three hundred seventy-six dollars (\$7,376) pursuant to Water Code sections 13399.30 and 13399.33. Therefore, an elevated factor of 1.1 is assigned.

Cleanup and Cooperation: 1.5

This factor reflects the extent to which a discharger voluntarily cooperates in returning to compliance and correcting environmental damage. A multiplier between 0.75 and 1.5 is to be used, with a higher multiplier reflecting a lack of cooperation in obtaining compliance.

The Discharger was uncooperative with Santa Ana Water Board staff, who attempted to assist the Discharger in correcting conditions of noncompliance through the issuance of Notices of Non-Compliance, multiple phone calls² and multiple attempted inspections.³ In addition, the Discharger has not enrolled in the General Order to date, despite being ordered to do so in Order R8-2024-0038. This response falls far below what can reasonably be expected from a discharger. A reasonable discharger would have complied with the requirements of Water Code section 13376 by enrolling in the permit which is a straightforward compliance option that can be satisfied by submitting Permit Registration Documents (PRDs) via SMARTS. The Discharger has failed to make any effort at complying with the requirements of Water Code section 13376. Therefore, a cleanup and cooperation factor of 1.5 is assigned.

Step 5 - Determination of Total Base Liability Amount

The Total Base Liability Amount for the violation is determined by multiplying the Initial Liability Amount determined in Step 3 by the Step 4 adjustment factors.

² Santa Ana Water Board staff attempted to contact the Discharger over the phone on January 25, 2024, January 29, 2024, February 1, 2024, February 2, 2024, February 14, 2024, and April 24, 2024.

³ Santa Ana Water Board staff attempted to inspect the facility on December 6, 2023, and June 7, 2024, but were denied access.

\$275,000 [initial liability amount]x 1.4 [culpability] x 1.1 [violation history] x 1.5 [cleanup and cooperation]

 $275,000 \times 1.4 \times 1.1 \times 1.5 = 635,250$

Step 6 - Economic Benefit

Estimated Economic Benefit: \$20,383

The Enforcement Policy requires the Economic Benefit Amount to be estimated for every violation. The economic benefit is any savings or monetary gain derived from the act or omission that constitutes the violation.

The Enforcement Policy provides that the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Economic Benefit of Noncompliance Model (BEN model) should be used to calculate the economic benefit equal to the present value of the avoided costs plus the "interest" on delayed costs. This calculation reflects the fact that the Discharger has had the use of the money that should have been used to avoid the instance of noncompliance. Using the BEN Model, the Discharger has derived an economic benefit of \$20,383.

Pursuant to California Water Code section 13385 subdivision (e), civil liability, at a minimum, must be assessed at a level that recovers the economic benefit, if any, derived from the acts that constitute a violation. The Violations described above identify several avoided expenses that have significantly benefited the Discharger.

Step 7 - Other Factors as Justice May Require

In accordance with Step 7 of the Enforcement Policy, the total base liability amount may be adjusted under the provision for "other factors as justice may require" if express findings are made. The Prosecution Team believes that the amount of \$635,250 is disproportionate to assessments for similar conduct under the Stormwater Enforcement Act of 1998. The Storm Water Enforcement Act requires that a mandatory minimum penalty of \$5,000 be assessed for failing to enroll in the General Permit. The Discharger's conduct here, as described in the above analysis, warrants the assessment of discretionary penalties that are greater than the mandatory minimum penalty under the Storm Water Enforcement Act, but less than the statutory maximum under Water Code section 13385.

In addition, the Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team notes that the Facility is located in a designated Disadvantaged Community as described in the Enforcement Policy. According to CalEnviroScreen, a tool developed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment for the purposes of identifying impacted communities by taking into consideration pollution exposure and its effects, as well as health and socioeconomic status, the Facility is located in a census tract with an overall score of 90 out of 100. Resolution R8-2024-0029, adopted on March 15, 2024, reaffirmed

the Santa Ana Water Board's commitment to uphold the human right to water, protect public health, beneficial uses, and particularly address communities that carry a disproportionate burden from environmental pollution within the Santa Ana River watershed. Therefore, residents in this community bear a disproportionate burden of pollution and it is appropriate to impose a liability greater than the amount authorized pursuant to the Stormwater Enforcement Act.

Thus, the Prosecution Team proposed an adjustment yielding a total base liability amount of \$150.000.

The Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team accrued \$4,603 in staff costs associated with the investigation and preparation of the violations alleged herein. However, consistent with the discussion above, the Prosecution Team has not elected to seek reimbursement of these costs due to the overall total liability.

Step 8 – Ability to Pay and Ability to Continue in Business

The Enforcement Policy provides that if there is sufficient financial information available to assess the violator's ability to pay the Total Base Liability Amount or to assess the effect of the Total Base Liability Amount on the violator's ability to continue in business, the Total Base Liability Amount may be adjusted to address the ability to pay or to continue in business. There is no obligation to ensure that a violator has the ability to pay or continue in business, but, rather, the Santa Ana Water Board is obligated to consider these factors when imposing a civil liability under the Water Code.

The Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team has sufficient financial information necessary to suggest that the Discharger has the ability to pay the proposed civil liability. The Discharger's Business Profile Record reported sales from the Facility in 2024 to exceed \$1,308,000. Based on this publicly available information, the Discharger has the ability to pay the proposed penalty and remain in business.

Step 9 - Maximum and Minimum Liability Amounts

The Enforcement Policy directs the Santa Ana Water Board to consider the maximum and minimum liability amounts for each alleged violation.

Maximum Liability Amount: \$5,080,000

The maximum liability is set by statute. Water Code section 13385 allows the Santa Ana Water Board to impose daily liability in an amount not to exceed \$10,000 per day, per violation. The maximum liability amount for Violation 1 is $$5,080,000 = $10,000 \times 508$ days.

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Minimum Liability Amount: \$22,421

The Santa Ana Water Board is bound by statute to recover, at minimum, the economic benefit to the violator in an action for violations of Water Code section 13385. The Santa Ana Water Board should strive to impose civil liabilities 10 percent greater than the economic benefit to the violator. The Enforcement Policy states that 'the adjusted Total Base Liability Amount should be at least 10 percent higher than the Economic Benefit Amount so that liabilities are not construed as the cost of doing business and that the assessed liability provides a meaningful deterrent to future violations". The minimum liability amount is \$22,421 (\$20,383 x 1.1).

Step 10 – Final Proposed Liability Amount

Final Proposed Liability Amount: \$150,000

Based on the foregoing analysis, and consistent with the Enforcement Policy, the final proposed Administrative Civil Liability is \$150,000.





Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

WAIVER FORM FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY COMPLAINT NO. R8-2025-0066

By signing this waiver, I affirm and acknowledge the following:

I am duly authorized to represent Wicked Creations, Inc. in connection with Administrative Civil Liability Complaint No. R8-2025-0066 (Complaint). I am informed that California Water Code Section 13323, subdivision (b), states that, "a hearing before the regional board shall be conducted within 90 days after the party has been served [with the Complaint]. The person who has been issued a complaint may waive the right to a hearing."

- □ (OPTION 1: Check here if Wicked Creations, Inc. waives the hearing requirement and will pay the liability in full.)
 - a. I hereby waive any right Wicked Creations, Inc. may have to a hearing before the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (Santa Ana Water Board).
 - b. I certify that Wicked Creations, Inc. will remit payment for the proposed civil liability in the full amount of one hundred and fifty thousand (\$150,000) by submitting a check that references Complaint No. R8-2025-0066, made payable to the State Water Resources Control Board Cleanup and Abatement Account. Proof of payment must be received by the Santa Ana Water Board office no later than October 30, 2025, or the Santa Ana Water Board may adopt an Order requiring payment.
 - c. I understand the payment of the above amount constitutes a proposed settlement of the Complaint, and that any settlement will not become final until after the 30-day public notice and comment period. Should the Santa Ana Water Board receive significant new information or comments from any source (excluding the Santa Ana Water Board's Prosecution Team) during this comment period, the Santa Ana Water Board's Executive Officer may withdraw the Complaint, return payment, and issue a new Complaint. I understand that this proposed settlement is subject to approval by the Santa Ana Water Board, and that the Santa Ana Water Board may consider this proposed settlement in a public meeting or hearing. I also understand that approval of the settlement will result in Wicked Creations, Inc. having waived the right to contest the allegations in the Complaint and the imposition of civil liability.

KRIS MURRAY, CHAIR | ERIC LINDBERG, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

- d. I understand that payment of the above amount is not a substitute for compliance with applicable laws and that continuing violations of the type alleged in the Complaint may subject the Discharger to further enforcement, including additional civil liability.
- □ (OPTION 2: Check here if Wicked Creations, Inc. waives the 90-day hearing requirement in order to engage in settlement discussions.)

I hereby waive any right Wicked Creations, Inc. may have to a hearing before the Santa Ana Water Board within 90 days after service of the Complaint, but I reserve the ability to request a hearing in the future. I certify that Wicked Creations, Inc. will promptly engage the Santa Ana Water Board Prosecution Team in settlement discussions to attempt to resolve the outstanding violation(s). It remains within the discretion of the Santa Ana Water Board to agree to delay the hearing. Any proposed settlement is subject to the conditions described above under "Option 1."

□ (OPTION 3: Check here if Wicked Creations, Inc. waives the 90-day hearing requirement in order to extend the hearing date and/or hearing deadlines. Attach a separate sheet with the amount of additional time requested and the rationale.)

I hereby waive any right Wicked Creations Inc. may have a hearing before the Santa Ana Water Board within 90 days after service of the Complaint. By checking this box, Wicked Creations, Inc. requests that the Santa Ana Water Board delay the hearing and/or hearing deadlines so that the Discharger may have additional time to prepare for the hearing. Please provide a written explanation of why additional time is needed. It remains within the discretion of the Santa Ana Water Board to approve the extension.

(Print Name and Title)	
(Signature)	
(Date)	

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region

HEARING PROCEDURE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY COMPLAINT R8-2025-0066

ISSUED TO WICKED CREATIONS, INC. ORANGE COUNTY

HEARING SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 12, 2025

PLEASE READ THIS HEARING PROCEDURE CAREFULLY. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE DEADLINES AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS CONTAINED HEREIN MAY RESULT IN THE EXCLUSION OF YOUR SUBMITTAL.

California Water Code section 13323 authorizes the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region (Regional Water Board) to impose a fine, called administrative civil liability, against any person who violates water quality requirements. The Regional Water Board's Prosecution Team has issued an Administrative Civil Liability (ACL) Complaint that proposes the Regional Water Board impose civil liability against Wicked Creations, Inc. (Respondent) for the violations alleged in the ACL Complaint.

I. HEARING DATE AND LOCATION

The Regional Water Board has scheduled a hearing to consider this matter on December 12, 2025. At the hearing, the Regional Water Board will consider evidence regarding the violation(s) alleged in the ACL Complaint. After considering the evidence, the Regional Water Board may impose the proposed civil liability, impose a higher or lower amount, or decline to impose any liability.

The hearing will be held at the following location:

Orange County Sanitation District 18480 Bandilier Circle Fountain Valley, CA 92708

The Regional Water Board's meeting agenda will be issued at least ten days before the meeting and posted on the Regional Water Board's website at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/santaana/board_info/agendas/2025_agendas.html. The hearing may be rescheduled or continued to a later date. Please check the Regional Water Board's website for the most up-to-date information.

II. PRESIDING OFFICER

For the purposes of this Hearing Procedure, the Presiding Officer is the Chair of the Regional Water Board, or another member of the Regional Water Board designated in writing by the Chair of the Regional Water Board.

III. <u>HEARING WAIVER</u>

Water Code section 13323, subdivision (b), requires a hearing on the ACL Complaint within 90 days of service of the ACL Complaint; however, the Respondent may waive this right. The Respondent may decide to waive the hearing requirement and pay the full proposed liability amount and settle the ACL Complaint, contingent on the Regional Water Board's approval of the settlement. Alternatively, the Respondent may decide to waive the right to a hearing within 90 days to (1) engage in settlement discussions or (2) seek additional time to prepare for the hearing.

To waive the hearing requirement for any of the above reasons, the Respondent should complete and submit the *Waiver Form for Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (Waiver Form)*, included with the ACL Complaint, by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below. If there are multiple Respondents, each of them must submit a separate waiver. Any request to postpone the hearing must be approved by the Presiding Officer.

IV. ADJUDICATORY HEARING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

A. Applicable Statutes and Regulations

The following statutes and regulations, as implemented by this Hearing Procedure, govern the hearing on the ACL Complaint:

- 1. California Water Code section 13323.
- 2. Chapter 4.5 of the Administrative Procedure Act (Gov. Code, §11400 et seq.), excluding Article 8 (*Language Assistance*), Article 13 (*Emergency Decision*), Article 14 (*Declaratory Decision*) and Article 16 (*Administrative Adjudication Code of Ethics*).
- Evidence Code sections 801 through 805.
- 4. Government Code section 11513.
- 5. California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 648 et seq.
- 6. State Water Resources Control Board's Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy).

These statutes and regulations are available online at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/laws-regulations. Except for Government Code section 11513, chapter 5 of the California Administrative Procedure Act (Gov. Code § 11500 et seq.) does not apply to this hearing.

B. Separation of Prosecutorial and Advisory Functions

Regional Water Board staff and attorneys that have prepared the ACL Complaint (Prosecution Team) have been separated from Regional Water Board staff and attorneys that will advise the Regional Water Board on the ACL Complaint (Advisory Team). The Prosecution Team will present evidence for consideration by the Regional Water Board. The Advisory Team provides legal and technical advice to the Regional Water Board. Members of the Advisory Team and the Prosecution Team are identified below.

Advisory Team:

Alan Kuoch, Supervising Engineering Geologist, Regional Water Board Heraclio Pimentel, Attorney III, Office of Chief Counsel

Prosecution Team:

Eric Lindberg, P.G., C.H.G., Executive Officer, Regional Water Board Michelle Beckwith, Senior Environmental Scientist (Sup.), Regional Water Board David Rosas, Environmental Scientist, Regional Water Board Nick Amini, Supervising Water Resource Control Engineer, Regional Water Board Carson Capps, Attorney, Office of Enforcement Catherine Hawe, Attorney IV, Office of Enforcement

Any members of the Advisory Team who normally supervise any member of the Prosecution Team are not acting as their supervisors in this proceeding, and vice versa. Further, members of the Advisory Team have not exercised any authority over the Prosecution Team or advised them with respect to this matter, or vice versa. Eric Lindberg, Executive Officer, regularly advises the Regional Water Board in other, unrelated matters, and other members of the Prosecution Team may have previously acted as advisors to the Regional Water Board in other, unrelated matters, but no members of the Prosecution Team are advising the Regional Water Board in this proceeding. Members of the Prosecution Team have not had any substantive ex parte communications with the Regional Water Board or the Advisory Team regarding this proceeding.

C. Ex Parte Communications

Any communication regarding any issue in this proceeding to a Regional Water Board member or member of the Advisory Team by a Party or Interested Person that is made without notice and opportunity for all Parties to participate in the communication is considered an "ex parte" communication. Ex parte communications are prohibited, except as authorized by statute (e.g., communications regarding non-controversial procedural matters). (Gov. Code § 11430.10 et seq.)

D. Evidentiary Standards

Government Code section 11513 and Evidence Code sections 801 through 805 apply to this proceeding.

The technical rules of evidence do not apply to this proceeding. The Parties may submit any relevant evidence that is the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely in the conduct of serious affairs, regardless of the existence of any common law or statutory rule which might make improper the admission of the evidence over objection in civil actions.

Hearsay evidence is evidence of a statement that was made other than by a witness while testifying at the hearing and that is offered to prove the truth of the matter stated. Hearsay evidence may be used for the purpose of supplementing or explaining other evidence but over timely objection shall not be sufficient in itself to support a finding unless it would be admissible over objection in civil actions. An object is timely if made before conclusion of all testimony or closing statement if one is provided.

V. <u>HEARING PARTICIPANTS</u>

A. Parties

Parties are the primary participants in the hearing. Parties may present written evidence, offer witness testimony, cross-examine witnesses, and provide closing statements. Parties may be asked to respond to questions from the Regional Water Board and Advisory Team.

The following are Parties to this proceeding:

- 1. Regional Water Board Prosecution Team
- 2. Wicked Creations, Inc.
- 3. Any other person or entity designated as a party by the Presiding Officer in accordance with Section V.C.

B. Interested Persons (Non-Parties)

Interested Persons include any persons or entities that are interested in the outcome of the proceeding but that have not been designated as a party. Interested Persons may present written or oral non-evidentiary policy statements. Interested Persons are not subject to cross-examination but may be asked to respond to clarifying questions from the Regional Water Board and Advisory Team.

Interested Persons may not submit evidence (e.g., photographs, eye-witness testimony, and monitoring data). Any person or entity that would like to submit evidence should request to be designated as a party pursuant to Section V.C.

C. Requesting Party Status

Any interested Person who wishes to participate in the hearing as party must submit a request in writing by the deadline listed under "important Deadlines" below. The request must include the following information at a minimum:

- 1. How the issues to be addressed at the hearing substantially affect the requestor's interests; and,
- 2. Why the existing Parties do not adequately represent the requestor's interests.

The request for party status must also include any requested revisions to the Hearing Procedure.

A Party must submit any written objection to a request for party status by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below.

Following the deadline to submit objections to party status requests, the Presiding Officer will promptly respond to any timely written requests for party status. The Presiding Officer will not grant a request for party status if the Presiding Officer determines the designation of the requestor as a party will impair the interests of justice of the orderly and prompt conduct of the proceeding. The Presiding Officer, when granting a request for party status, may impose restrictions on the requestor's hearing participation, including limiting or excluding the use of cross-examination and other procedures, to promote the orderly and prompt conduct of the proceeding. Unless and until an Interested Person is granted party status, the deadlines for Interested Persons shall continue to apply.

VI. PREHEARING SUBMITTAL OF NON-EVIDENTIARY POLICY STATEMENTS BY INTERESTED PERSONS

A. Non-Evidentiary Policy Statements

Interested Persons must submit any written non-evidentiary policy statements regarding the ACL Complaint by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below.

Interested Persons are not required to submit written statements to speak at the hearing.

B. Responding to Interested Persons Non-Evidentiary Policy Statements

A Party must submit any response to Interested Person written policy statements by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below.

VII. PREHEARING SUBMITTALS BY PARTIES

A. Prehearing Evidence and Argument Submittals (Excluding Rebuttal Evidence)

The Parties must submit the following information in advance of the hearing by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below:

- 1. All evidence, excluding witness testimony to be presented orally at the hearing, and an exhibit list providing an exhibit number and brief description of each exhibit. Evidence already in the Regional Water Board's public files may be submitted by reference as long as the evidence and location are clearly identified. The file names of any electronic copies of exhibits must identify the Party submitting the exhibit, the exhibit number, and a brief identification of the exhibit (e.g., "Resp Ex. 1 Permit.pdf").
- 2. All legal and technical arguments or analysis.
- 3. The name of each witness, if any, whom the Party intends to call at the hearing; the subject of each witness' proposed testimony; and the estimated time required by each witness to present direct testimony.
- 4. The qualifications of each witness, if any.

B. Prehearing Rebuttal Evidence Submittals

Rebuttal evidence is evidence offered to disprove or contradict evidence presented by an opposing Party.

The Parties must submit any rebuttal evidence in advance of the hearing by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below. Rebuttal evidence shall be limited to rebutting the scope of previously submitted materials; rebuttal evidence that is not responsive to previous submittals may be excluded by the Presiding Officer.

The requirement to submit rebuttal evidence in advance of the hearing applies only to rebut timely-submitted written evidence. Rebuttal evidence pertaining to an issue raised solely during oral testimony need not be submitted in advance of the hearing.

C. Prehearing Objections to Evidentiary Submittals

A Party must submit any objections to prehearing evidentiary submittals by the deadlines listed under "Important Deadlines" below.

These deadlines do not apply to objections to late-submitted evidence. Objections to late-submitted evidence must be made within seven days of the late submittal or at the hearing, whichever is earlier.

D. Prehearing Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

The Prosecution Team must submit, and the other Parties may submit, Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law for consideration by the Regional Water Board and Advisory Team. The Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law must include the Party's proposed penalty calculation, using the methodology prescribed by the Enforcement Policy. The Parties may use this opportunity to highlight specific evidence and argument for the Regional Water Board's consideration.

Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law must be submitted in Microsoft Word Format by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below. The Presiding Officer may prescribe a page limit for the Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

E. Prohibition on Surprise Evidence

It is the policy of the Regional Water Board to discourage the introduction of surprise testimony and exhibits. The Presiding Officer may refuse to admit proposed exhibits or testimony into evidence that are not submitted in accordance with this Hearing Procedure and shall refuse to do so when there is a showing of prejudice to any Party or the Regional Water Board, except where the party seeking to introduce the proposed exhibits or testimony demonstrates that compliance with this Hearing Procedure would create severe hardship. Excluded material will not be considered.

VIII. REVISIONS TO HEARING PROCEDURE AND PREHEARING CONFERENCE

A. Revisions to Hearing Procedure

The Presiding Officer may revise the Hearing Procedure for good cause (1) on the Presiding Officer's own motion or (2) upon request from any Party or Interested Person seeking party status. A Party or Interested Person seeking party status requesting revisions to this Hearing Procedure must submit the request in writing by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below. Before revising this Hearing Procedure, the Presiding Officer will provide the Parties an opportunity to comment.

B. Prehearing Conference

The Presiding Officer for Regional Water Board, upon its own motion or upon request from a Party, may schedule a Prehearing Conference with the Parties to discuss any prehearing matter, such as revisions to this Hearing Procedure, designation of additional parties, or evidentiary objections.

IX. <u>HEARING</u>

A. Order of Proceeding

The Presiding Officer will conduct the hearing on the ACL Complaint generally in the order listed under California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 648.5. The Presiding Officer may modify the order of proceeding for good cause.

B. Administration of Oath

All persons intending to testify at the hearing must take the oath administered by the Presiding Officer.

C. Witnesses

Any witness providing written testimony must appear at the hearing and affirm that the written testimony is true and correct and be available for cross-examination.

D. Hearing Time Limits

Parties: Each Party will have a combined total of 30 minutes to present evidence (including examining witnesses), cross-examine witnesses, and provide a closing statement.

Interested Persons: Each Interested Person will have 3 minutes to present oral, non-evidentiary comments or policy statements.

Questions from the Regional Water Board and the Advisory Team, responses to such questions, and discussion of procedural issues do not count against these time limits.

E. Requesting Additional Hearing Time

Hearing participants who would like additional time must submit their request by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below. Additional time may be provided at the discretion of the Presiding Officer upon a showing that additional time is necessary.

F. Visual Presentations

Each Party may use PowerPoint and other visual presentations at the hearing. The presentation content shall not exceed the scope of previously submitted written materials. The Parties must submit their presentations, if any, by the deadline listed under "Important Deadlines" below.

Interested Persons may use a visual presentation as an aid to their oral, non-evidentiary comments or policy statements only with the Presiding Officer's prior approval.

X. <u>MISCELLANEOUS</u>

A. Submittal Timing and Format

All submittals made pursuant to this Hearing Procedure must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the respective due date with the "Important Deadlines" below. All submittals must be sent to the "Primary Contacts," identified below. Electronic copies are encouraged. Parties without access to computer equipment are strongly encouraged to have their materials scanned at a copy or mailing center. The Presiding Officer will not reject materials solely for failure to provide electronic copies.

B. Availability of Documents

The ACL Complaint and all submittals made in accordance with this Hearing Procedure are available upon request by contacting the Prosecution Team, identified in the "Primary Contacts" below.

Interested Persons may request to be included in the transmission of all submittals by contacting the Advisory Team.

C. Questions

Questions concerning this Hearing Procedure may be addressed to the Advisory Team attorney, identified in the "Primary Contacts" below.

PRIMARY CONTACTS

Advisory Team:

Alan Kuoch, Supervising Engineering Geologist
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region
3737 Main Street, Suite 500, Riverside, CA 92501

<u>Alan.Kuoch@waterboards.ca.gov</u>
(951) 394-9475

Heraclio Pimentel, Attorney III
Office of Chief Counsel, State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814

<u>Heraclio.Pimentel@waterboards.ca.gov</u>
(916) 323-1677

Prosecution Team:

Michelle Beckwith, Senior Environmental Scientist (Sup.)
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region 3737 Main Street, Suite 500, Riverside, CA 92501

Michelle.Beckwith@waterboards.ca.gov
(951) 782-4433

Wicked Creations, Inc. ACLC R8-2025-0066 Hearing Procedure

Carson Capps, Attorney
Office of Enforcement, State Water Resources Control Board
801 K Street, Suite 2300, Sacramento, CA 95814

<u>Carson.Capps@waterboards.ca.gov</u>
(916) 341-5273

Respondent:

Michael Boone, Damian Smith, Dorothy Ortega Wicked Creations, Inc. 13832 West Street Garden Grove, CA 92843 sales@wicked-creations.com (714) 530-6374

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IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Note: Where a deadline falls on a weekend or state holiday, the deadline is extended to

the following business day.

Deadline	Event	Hearing Procedure
		Section
September 15, 2025	Prosecution Team issues ACL Complaint, Hearing Procedure, and other related materials	
	Parties' deadline to request revisions to Hearing Procedure	Section VIII.A
September 24, 2025	Interested Persons' deadline to request party status (If requesting party status, this is also the deadline to request revisions to Hearing Procedure)	Section V.C.
September 30, 2025	Parties' deadline to submit objections to party status requests	Section V.C.
	Respondent's deadline to submit Waiver Form	Section III
October 15, 2025	Interested Persons' deadline to submit written non-evidentiary policy statements	Section VI.A
October 29, 2025	Prosecution Team's deadline to submit prehearing evidence and argument (excluding rebuttal evidence)	Section VII.A
November 10, 2025	Remaining Parties' (including the Respondent(s)) deadline to submit prehearing evidence and argument (excluding rebuttal evidence)	Section VII.A
November 24, 2025	Parties' deadline to submit prehearing rebuttal evidence	Section VII.B
	Parties' deadline to submit responses to Interested Person non-evidentiary policy statements	Section VI.B
	Parties' deadline to submit objections to prehearing evidence submittals (excluding rebuttal evidence)	Section VII.C
	Deadline to submit requests for additional hearing time	Section IX.E
December 1, 2025	Parties' deadline to submit objections to prehearing rebuttal evidence	Section VII.C
	Parties' deadline to submit Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law	Section VII.D
December 11, 2025	Parties' deadline to submit copy of visual presentations	Section IX.F
December 12, 2025 Hearing Date(s)		