

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD**

**CENTRAL COAST REGION**

**(REGION 3)**

**WATERSHED MANAGEMENT  
INITIATIVE CHAPTER**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document constitutes the Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) Chapter of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 3). The Chapter is updated periodically and was last updated in 2002. A WMI Chapter has been developed by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board), each of the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Boards) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to comprise the Watershed Management Initiative “Integrated Plan.”

A five-year Strategic Plan guides the water resource protection efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards. A key component of the Strategic Plan is a watershed management approach for water resources protection. Past State and Regional Board programs tended to be directed at site-specific problems. This approach was reasonably effective for controlling pollution from point sources. However, with diffuse nonpoint sources of pollutants, a new regulatory strategy was needed. To protect water resources within a watershed context, a mix of point and nonpoint source discharges, ground and surface water interactions, and water quality/water quantity relationships must be considered. These complex relationships present considerable challenges to water resource protection programs. The WMI is an attempt to integrate various regulatory and non-regulatory programs, promote cooperative and collaborative efforts within watersheds and focus limited resources on priority issues.

During initial implementation of the Watershed Management Initiative, each Regional Board identified priority watersheds in their Region, prioritized water quality issues, and developed watershed management strategies. The Central Coast Regional Board approved a list of six targeted watersheds at a regularly scheduled Board meeting on March 21 and 22, 1996. The original targeted watersheds were the San Lorenzo River, Pajaro River, Salinas River, Morro Bay, Santa Maria River, and Santa Ynez River. San Luis Obispo Creek and the South Coast of Santa Barbara County were subsequently added. These watersheds were selected because they were recognized as having significant water quality problems along with existing local efforts and commitments to address these problems. Region 3’s watershed management approach is described in more detail in *Section One* of the Chapter. Strategies for each watershed are described in *Section Two* of the Chapter. Regionwide activities are described in *Section Three*.

Water quality priorities are developed from water quality data, legislative mandates, statutes, regulations and from Board and public input. Identified priorities reflect an attempt to balance competing demands, while at the same time adhering to the Regional Boards’ mission to protect, restore and enhance water quality. Region 3 has undertaken a series of internal priority-setting exercises, in order to make more efficient use of decreased staffing levels (fifteen staff – 23% of current staff level - have left over the past two years and have not been replaced due to budget constraints and the hiring freeze). In addition, amendments to the sections of the California Water Code pertaining to waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements have necessitated redirection of significant staff effort, primarily on waivers for irrigated agriculture, but also with some redirection for timber harvest.

The list below reflects a synthesis of a number of documents developed to refine priorities, and includes both priorities that will be addressed by regional board staff and priorities that may be best addressed by partners and stakeholders. Table D-7 in Appendix D of this Chapter identifies priority projects and activities that may be funded through federal, statewide or local grant programs.

### **Water Quality Priorities**

- **Agriculture** - Addressing water quality impacts from irrigated agriculture, a major land use in the region that has been identified as a potential source of impairment for many of the waterbodies on the 303(d) list (constituents of concern include nutrients, pesticides and sediment) by implementing the conditional waiver for irrigated lands
- **Total Maximum Daily Loads** – Developing and implementing TMDLs throughout the region
- **Urban Runoff** –Addressing beach closure issues, implementing Phase II of the NPDES Stormwater Program
- **Point Source Regulatory Programs** – Streamlining permit writing, renewing major permits and several existing Waste Discharge Requirements, performing inspections
- **Basin Planning** – Developing a riparian corridor policy, revising or developing water quality objectives
- **Monitoring** – Maintaining the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program, integrating data from the agricultural cooperative monitoring program
- **Clean-up** – Overseeing perchlorate, MTBE, military base, hazardous waste, and underground storage tank cleanups

The most significant change from priorities outlined in previous WMI Chapters is an increased focus on agricultural water quality impacts through implementation of the new conditional waiver program and a decreased focus on nonpoint source impacts not related to irrigated agriculture. Development of the new agricultural waiver has resulted in more NPS and WMI staff resources being devoted to agricultural water quality issues and less on other NPS issues such as urban runoff and beach closures; however, implementation of Phase II of the stormwater program and pathogen TMDLs will allow the Regional Board to continue addressing such issues.

### **Summary**

Region 3 continues working to integrate and coordinate programs and functions, which is especially important given current staffing constraints. WMI, Nonpoint Source Program, Basin Planning and TMDL staff are coordinating their efforts to address agricultural impacts through implementing the agricultural waiver program. As before, land disposal regulation, cost recovery, cost reimbursement, underground tank regulation, and above ground tank regulation activities are being implemented on a region-wide basis.

Additional funding is needed to support an adequate level of regulatory and non-regulatory activities in all watersheds in the region, particularly to focus and increase efforts where high priority problems have been identified or in higher priority watersheds. Additional funding for the activities itemized above would provide more opportunity for watershed-specific problem solving.

For more information or copies of the Watershed Management Initiative Chapter, contact Alison Jones, Watershed Coordinator for Region 3 at (805) 542-4646 or [ajones@rb3.swrcb.ca.gov](mailto:ajones@rb3.swrcb.ca.gov). Additionally, readers can visit Region 3's website at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3>.