



# Fact Sheet

## An Overview of the Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California and the 2019 Review

### What Does the Ocean Plan Do?

The [Ocean Plan](#) is one of five statewide water quality control plans established by the State Water Resources Control Board to preserve and enhance California's territorial ocean waters for the use and enjoyment of the public.

This is achieved by controlling the discharge of waste into the ocean and seawater intake. Discharge of waste can include stormwater runoff, municipally treated sewage outflow, and other discharges by industry under regional and state board permits.

These plans, which are the State Water Board's master water quality planning documents, [designate beneficial uses](#), water quality goals, and include programs to achieve these objectives. All five plans include provisions unique to their geographic jurisdiction.

### History of the Ocean Plan

The plan was adopted by the State Water Board on July 6, 1972, and has been amended five times since it was last reviewed in 2011. The amendments are as follows:

- [Model Monitoring, Vessel Discharges, and Non-Substantive Amendment \(2012\)](#): Established guidance for monitoring ocean waters, aligned provisions with state and federal laws and regulations for commercial vessel discharges, and applied various formatting and grammatical changes.
- [State Water Quality Protection Areas and Marine Protected Areas Amendment \(2012\)](#): Established new criteria for designating State Water Quality Protection Areas.
- [Trash Amendment \(2015\)](#): Enacted provisions to control trash entering California's ocean waters.
- [Desalination Amendment \(2015\)](#): Instituted requirements to protect ocean waters during the construction and operation of seawater desalination facilities.
- [Bacteria Amendment \(2019\)](#): Revised statewide bacteria water quality objectives and implementation options to protect recreational users from the effects of pathogens (bacteria).

### Reviewing Water Quality Control Plans

The State Water Board and its nine regional boards conduct periodic reviews of water quality control plans, often referred to as triennial reviews. These assessments are designed to identify potential projects that may modify water quality control plans to



keep pace with regulatory and policy changes, new technologies, and environmental shifts. Reviews also provide an opportunity for the public, stakeholders, and other interested parties to offer input on planning priorities.

These processes are required by the [Clean Water Act](#) and the [California Water Code](#), but are often non-regulatory and typically result in a staff report and work plan that reflects priorities for future rule making actions.

## **The 2019 Ocean Plan Review**

The State Water Board is currently reviewing the plan. Staff coordinated with coastal regional boards and held four public scoping meetings in early 2019. Using the information gathered and input received, staff prepared the Draft Staff Report and ranked 22 issues, which is referred to as the Work Plan.

Both documents were available for public comment from June 24 through August 8. Staff hosted one public and one tribal-focused workshop on July 12 to address questions and informal comments and responded with appropriate revisions. The issues and their final ranking can be found in the [Proposed Final Staff Report and Work Plan](#).

## **What Happens Next?**

The proposed Final Staff Report and Work Plan was brought to the State Water Board on [December 3 for a public hearing](#), after which, the Proposed Final Staff Report and Work Plan were adopted. Once approved, one or more high or very high- ranking issues may be undertaken as projects in the next few years. Selected issues also may warrant additional study or amendments to the Ocean Plan, utilizing the latest science, research, and technology.

## **Additional Resources**

For more information about the Ocean Plan or the 2019 Review, please visit the [Ocean Standards webpage](#).

Questions may be directed to Jonathan Dolan at [Jonathan.Dolan@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Jonathan.Dolan@waterboards.ca.gov) or (916) 323-0880, or Katherine Walsh at [Katherine.Walsh@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Katherine.Walsh@waterboards.ca.gov) or (916) 445-2317.

*(This Fact Sheet was last updated on Dec.2, 2019)*