



California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Coast Region



Linda S. Adams.
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, California 93401-7906
(805) 549-3147 • Fax (805) 543-0397
<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast>

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

December 11, 2009

(Addressee)

Subject: Central Coast Region Water Quality

You have probably heard of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board), but you may not know much about the Water Board, its authority, and responsibilities. This letter is to provide you with some basic information about the Water Board's role in the Central Coast Region and the issues we are addressing. The Water Board is a state agency that implements state and federal water quality laws within the Central Coast Region. The Central Coast Region includes all or parts of nine counties¹, plus marine waters out to the three-mile limit.

In the Central Coast Region, we face widespread toxicity in surface waters, pollutant loading to groundwater, and degradation of watersheds. The Central Coast Water Board makes critical decisions to address those issues to protect water quality within this region, including setting standards, issuing waste discharge requirements, determining compliance with those requirements, and taking appropriate enforcement actions. The Water Board's decisions include the more typical "end of pipe" regulation of direct discharges to water bodies from sewage treatment plants and industrial facilities, but also include actions related to land uses where those land uses affect water quality and the health of our watersheds. These types of Water Board actions include regulation of stormwater discharges from construction sites and agricultural lands.

The Central Coast Water Board has created a "Vision of Healthy Watersheds" to focus its implementation of state and federal water quality laws to best protect and enhance our watersheds. This "Vision of Healthy Watersheds" represents a refocusing of our approach – a new framework for how we conduct business and achieve measurable results. This Vision structures our work towards our highest water quality priorities and more strategically aligns us with the anticipated challenges and opportunities in water quality, and positions our agency to respond more nimbly to unexpected ones.

The term Healthy Watershed seems simple enough. However, there are several aspects to Healthy Watersheds that are of importance to the Regional Board. Our vision of a healthy watershed is one that supports all beneficial uses of the ground and surface water, and where human activities restore, enhance, and protect the watershed,

¹ Counties of the Central Coast Region: Ventura (northern quarter), Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Mateo (small part), Santa Clara (southern third), San Benito (most), and Kern (small part)



not degrade it.² We are maximizing our effectiveness in attaining healthy watersheds by setting measurable goals and specific objectives, implementing the objectives, tracking our progress toward achieving them, and adapting to the feedback our tracking provides.

Measurable Goals

Healthy Aquatic Habitat – By 2025, 80 percent of Aquatic Habitat will be healthy, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key parameters.

Proper Land Management – By 2025, 80 percent of lands within a watershed will be managed to maintain proper watershed functions, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key watershed parameters.

Clean Groundwater – By 2025, 80 percent of groundwater will be clean, and the remaining 20 percent will exhibit positive trends in key parameters.

When it comes to water (and some other resources as well), California is living beyond its means. In many parts of our region, we are using more water than is available on a sustainable basis. In some of our watersheds, we are mining groundwater (use exceeds safe yield) and causing seawater intrusion, and diverting water from streams which degrades aquatic habitat due to critically low flows. We are frequently causing pollutants to discharge to our waters, both surface and groundwater, in excess of their assimilative capacity.

For example, while 83% of the people living in our region rely on groundwater as their drinking water source, we are discharging pollutants to groundwater basins such that the cost to society (water purveyors, municipalities, and individuals) for treating the water will be in the billions of dollars over the next decades. We also have widespread toxicity in surface waters, both upstream and downstream of municipalities, and widespread degradation of aquatic habitat. We are taking action now to directly address the sources of these pollutants in our irrigated agriculture program, storm water

² Healthy watersheds function well ecologically and are sustainable. They support healthy, diverse aquatic habitat, have healthy riparian areas and corridors with sufficient vegetative buffer area to minimize land pollutant runoff into surface waters, sufficient cover and canopy to maintain healthy habitat, and have near natural levels of sediment transport. Surface waters meet water quality objectives, and sediments are sufficiently low in pollutants to provide for healthy habitat. Groundwaters are near natural levels in quantity and quality, for water supply purposes and for base flow for sustaining creek habitat, and migratory fish routes. A Healthy Watershed sustains these characteristics by having control measures that ensure protection of the dynamics that provide these healthy factors and functions. For example, watersheds must be protected, through low impact development or other forms of protection, from hydromodification that adversely affects recharge area functions, or the stability of creeks' beds or banks. Creek buffer/riparian areas must be protected from land disturbance activities. Healthy sustainable watersheds use less energy for imported water, have fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and a lesser carbon footprint than unhealthy watersheds. Our goal of Healthy Watersheds is compatible, supportive, and in coordination with the larger issue (beyond water quality) of sustainability and the State's Global Warming Solutions Act.

program, Total Maximum Daily Load program, and through traditional point source permitting.

Also, trash, including plastic that is insidiously long lasting, degrades our creeks and ocean waters and harms water dependent animals. Water Board and staff are taking actions, consistent with state and federal laws, that will result in land use decision makers and land use operators to act in a manner that will improve our watersheds rather than degrading them.

In addition to regulating discharges from municipal or other agency wastewater systems, we are directing these agencies to evaluate means of starting or increasing wastewater recycling. In most situations, increased recycling will improve the watershed's sustainability, and it may be very beneficial to the local agency as well. Our statewide goal is to increase the use of recycled water over 2002 levels by at least one million acre-feet per year (afy) by 2020 and by at least two million afy by 2030. Additionally, we want to do our part in our region to meet two other statewide goals:

1. Increase the use of stormwater by at least 500,000 afy by 2020 and by at least one million afy by 2030 (baseline 2007).
2. Increase the amount of water conserved in urban and industrial uses by at least 20 percent by 2020 (baseline 2007).

These are just a few of the goals of the Central Coast Water Board and the State Water Resources Control Board in Sacramento. As Board Members, we direct our Executive Officer, Roger Briggs, who in turn directs our staff to carry out our work. Regional Water Board members are appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate, and serve staggered four-year terms. Our jobs on the Board are essentially part time community service jobs (Board members receive \$100 per meeting – no salary). We have eight regularly scheduled Board meetings per year in various locations in our region, and currently have two vacancies on our Board (out of nine positions). See our web site at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/about_us/board_members.shtml for more details. In our "real lives," we are self-employed in our own businesses (six of us), and one of us works for a statewide non-profit organization. Two of us are former mayors of Central Coast cities (Russell Jeffries, Salinas, and Tom O'Malley, Atascadero) and one of us is still on a city council – Mr. O'Malley, Atascadero. Consequently, we have a good collective understanding and appreciation of the issues of cities and small and medium sized businesses, and how they interact with environmental protection.

Most people agree that watersheds should be healthy and sustainable. We are interested in hearing what your perspectives are regarding your roles in protecting and maintaining watershed health. What are you interested in doing as individuals and as agencies for watershed sustainability? We would like to meet with you to discuss these

issues, share ideas, and gain a better understanding of each others' perspective. If you are interested in such a discussion with one of us, please contact our Executive Officer, Roger Briggs, at 805-549-3140 or rbriggs@waterboards.ca.gov and he will coordinate appropriate meetings.

Sincerely,



John H. Hayashi, Board Member



David T. Hodgin, Board Member



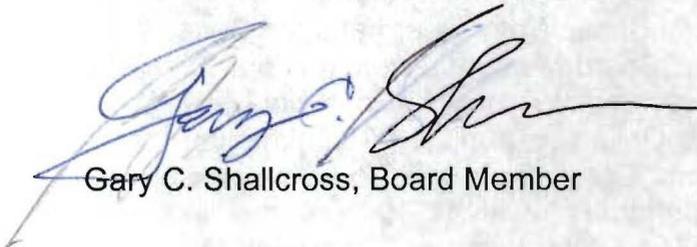
Dr. Monica S. Hunter, Board Member



Russell M. Jeffries, Vice Chair



Tom P. O'Malley, Board Member



Gary C. Shallcross, Board Member



Jeffrey S. Young, Chair

H:\new\My Documents\Vision\Watershed%20Agencies fina.DOC