



# California Regional Water Quality Control Board

## Los Angeles Region

Winston H. Hickox  
Secretary for  
Environmental  
Protection

Over 50 Years Serving Coastal Los Angeles and Ventura Counties  
Recipient of the 2001 *Environmental Leadership Award* from Keep California Beautiful

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Gray Davis  
Governor

### CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT REQUIREMENTS

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (hereinafter referred to as the Regional Board) is the Lead Agency for evaluating the environmental impacts of the proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Basin Plan). The proposed amendment incorporates a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nitrogen compounds in Santa Clara River. The Secretary of Resources has certified the basin planning process as exempt from certain requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including preparation of an initial study, a negative declaration, and environmental impact report (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15251). As the proposed amendment to the Basin Plan is part of the basin planning process, the environmental information developed for and included with the amendment is considered functionally equivalent to an initial study, negative declaration, and/or environmental impact report.

Any regulatory program of the Regional Board certified as functionally equivalent, however, must satisfy the documentation requirements of California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3777(a) which requires the following:

- ❖ A written report providing:
  - \* a description of the proposed activity;
  - \* reasonable alternatives to the proposed activity; and
  - \* mitigation measures to minimize any significant adverse impacts.
  
- ❖ A completed environmental checklist that includes:
  - \* a checklist of environmental impacts;
  - \* a discussion of the environmental evaluation; and
  - \* a determination with respect to significant environmental impacts.

The attached checklist and the document entitled "Total Maximum Daily Loads for Nitrogen Compounds in the Santa Clara River" fulfill the requirements of section 3777, subdivision (a).

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## I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The Basin Plan designates beneficial uses of waterbodies, establishes water quality objectives for the protection of these beneficial uses, and outlines a plan of implementation for maintaining and enhancing water quality. Nitrogen loadings to the Santa Clara River result in impairments of beneficial uses associated with aquatic life habitat. Concentration of ammonia, a nitrogen compound, often exceeds water quality objectives for chronic and acute toxicity to aquatic life. Nitrate and nitrite, two oxidized nitrogen compounds, have, on infrequent occasions, been present in concentrations exceeding water quality objectives in the Basin Plan. All three of these nitrogen compounds may stimulate the production of algae, a nuisance condition for recreational beneficial uses and eutrophic conditions degrading aquatic life. In-stream conditions will be closely monitored during the implementation of the TMDL to protect the high quality aquatic life and endangered species present in the watershed. The proposed amendment would incorporate into the Basin Plan a TMDL to implement existing water quality objectives, to reduce nutrient loads to the Santa Clara River.

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Santa Clara River will require wastewater treatment plants and others to reduce the amount of nutrients discharged to the Santa Clara River. This may require dischargers to improve their systems, and several such upgrades are already under way.

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Environmental Impacts  
YES MAYBE NO

<b>1.</b>	<b>Earth. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Unstable earth conditions or in changes in geologic substructures?	NO
	b. Disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcoming of the soil?	NO
	c. Change in topography or ground surface relief features?	NO
	d. The destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?	NO
	e. Any increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on or off the site?	NO
	f. Changes in deposition or erosion of beach sands, or changes in siltation, deposition or erosion which may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of the ocean or any bay, inlet or lake?	NO
	g. Exposure of people or property to geologic hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, ground failure, or similar hazards?	NO
<b>2.</b>	<b>Air. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Substantial air emissions or deterioration of ambient air quality?	NO
	b. The creation of objectionable odors?	NO
	c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?	NO
<b>3.</b>	<b>Water. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Changes in currents, or the course of direction or water movements, in either marine or fresh waters?	NO
	b. Changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface water runoff?	NO

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Environmental Impacts  
YES MAYBE NO

	c. Alterations to the course of flow of flood waters?	NO
	d. Change in the amount of surface water in any water body?	MAYBE
	e. Discharge into surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?	YES
	f. Alteration of the direction or rate of flow of ground waters?	NO
	g. Change in the quantity or quality of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations?	NO
	h. Substantial reduction in the amount of water otherwise available for public water supplies?	NO
	i. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding or tidal waves?	NO
<b>4.</b>	<b>Plant Life. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, microflora and aquatic plants)?	YES
	b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of plants?	NO
	c. Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?	NO
	d. Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop?	NO
<b>5.</b>	<b>Animal Life. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds, land animals including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, insects or microfauna)?	YES

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Environmental Impacts  
YES MAYBE NO

	b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of animals?	NO
	c. Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?	NO
	d. Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat?	NO
<b>6.</b>	<b>Noise. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Increases in existing noise levels?	MAYBE
	b. Exposure of people to severe noise levels?	NO
<b>7.</b>	<b>Light and Glare. Will the proposal:</b>	
	a. Produce new light or glare?	NO
<b>8.</b>	<b>Land Use. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area?	MAYBE
<b>9.</b>	<b>Natural Resources. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Increase in the rate of use of any natural resources?	NO
	b. Substantial depletion of any nonrenewable natural resource?	NO
<b>10.</b>	<b>Risk of Upset. Will the proposal involve:</b>	
	a. A risk of an explosion or the release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to: oil, pesticides, chemicals or radiation) in the event of an accident or upset conditions?	MAYBE
<b>11.</b>	<b>Population. Will the proposal:</b>	
	a. Alter the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?	NO

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Environmental Impacts  
YES MAYBE NO

<b>12.</b>	<b>Housing. Will the proposal:</b>	
	a. Affect existing housing, or create a demand for additional housing?	NO
<b>13.</b>	<b>Transportation/Circulation. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Effects on existing parking facilities, or demand for new parking?	NO
	b. Substantial impact upon existing transportation systems?	NO
	c. Alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods?	NO
	d. Alterations to waterborne, rail or air traffic?	NO
	e. Increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists or pedestrians?	NO
<b>14.</b>	<b>Public Service. Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas:</b>	
	a. Fire protection?	NO
	b. Police protection?	NO
	c. Schools?	NO
	d. Parks or other recreational facilities?	NO
	e. Maintenance of public facilities, including roads?	NO
	f. Other governmental services?	YES
<b>15.</b>	<b>Energy. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Use of substantial amounts of fuel or energy?	MAYBE
	b. Substantial increase in demand upon existing sources of energy, or require the development of new sources of energy?	NO

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Environmental Impacts  
YES MAYBE NO

<b>16.</b>	<b>Utilities and Service Systems. Will the proposal result in a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities:</b>	
	a. Power or natural gas?	NO
	b. Communications systems?	NO
	c. Water?	MAYBE
	d. Sewer or septic tanks?	NO
	e. Storm water drainage?	NO
	f. Solid waste and disposal?	NO
<b>17.</b>	<b>Human Health. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Creation of any health hazard or potential health hazard (excluding mental health)?	MAYBE
	b. Exposure of people to potential health hazards?	MAYBE
<b>18.</b>	<b>Aesthetics. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. The obstruction of any scenic vista or view open to the public?	MAYBE
	b. The creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view?	NO
<b>19.</b>	<b>Recreation. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Impact upon the quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities?	MAYBE
<b>20.</b>	<b>Archeological/Historical. Will the proposal:</b>	
	a. Result in the alteration of a significant archeological or historical site structure, object or building?	NO

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Environmental Impacts  
YES MAYBE NO

<b>21.</b>	<b>Mandatory Findings of Significance</b>	
	<b>Potential to degrade:</b> Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	NO
	<b>Short-term:</b> Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time, while long-term impacts will endure well into the future.)	NO
	<b>Cumulative:</b> Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may impact on two or more separate resources where the impact on each resource is relatively small, but where the effect of the total of those impacts on the environment is significant.)	NO
	<b>Substantial adverse:</b> Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	NO

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### III. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

Expand on all “YES” and “MAYBE” answers given to the preceding questions in regard to environmental impacts. The evaluation shall consider whether the environmental impact indicated will have a substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the activity. In addition, the evaluation should discuss environmental effects in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

3d. This TMDL is intended to reduce the nutrient load in the Santa Clara River River. One method of accomplishing this goal is treatment of domestic waste. Some methods of treating domestic waste may result in decreased discharge volumes and diminish the volume of surface water in the Santa Clara River.

3.e. This TMDL is intended to reduce the nutrient load in the Santa Clara River River. This will improve the quality of surface water, the Santa Clara River, by reducing nutrients in the river.

4.a. This TMDL is intended to reduce the nutrient load in the Santa Clara River. This should improve the habitat for many other plant and fish species.

5.a. See 4.a.

6.a. Temporary noise during the construction to up-grade the facilities could occur, but this would not be considered significant due to the temporary nature of any reconstruction activities.

8.a. The TMDL requirements may necessitate changes in the operations of waste dischargers involving modification to the existing facilities for nitrification/denitrification process to reduce the nutrient load in the Santa Clara River. Approval of the application for the modification to the POTWs would be required to ensure compliance with the City’s zoning ordinance.

10.a. The TMDL requirements may necessitate changes in chemical used and the operations of waste dischargers. Such changes would be reported to the Regional Board under NPDES permits. Appropriate design and operation criteria, standby or emergency power facilities, emergency bypass facilities, and/or sufficient capacity shall be provided by the dischargers so that in the event of plant upsets or outages due to power failure or other cause, discharge of hazardous substances and inadequately treated wastewater does not occur.

14.f. The TMDL requirements may necessitate action on the part of local public agencies to adjust their effluent concentrations. Such changes would be reported to the Regional Board under NPDES permits and are not expected to adversely impact beneficial uses of surface waters and is expected to be environmentally beneficial.

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15.a. The nitrification/denitrification technique of reducing nitrogen load in wastewater treatment plants may result in an increase in the energy usage of the wastewater reclamation plants, depending on the nitrogen removal process selected. Most treatments would involve an increase in energy consumption that would be minor compared to the overall demands of these facilities, and several of the facilities assigned waste load allocations have already begun planning and construction of nitrification/denitrification facilities to meet existing water quality objectives.

16.c. The TMDL requirements may necessitate changes in the operations of waste dischargers. Such changes would be reported to the Regional Board under NPDES permits, and are not expected to adversely impact beneficial uses of surface waters.

17.a and b. The TMDL Santa Clara River will require wastewater treatment plants to reduce the amount of nutrients discharged to the Santa Clara River. This may require dischargers to improve their systems which might involve construction of wetlands to remove nutrient compounds while providing support for recreation and endangered species habitat. The dischargers shall at all times properly operate and maintain the constructed wetlands to prevent any problems due to breeding of mosquitoes, gnats, midges, or other pests.

18.b. The TMDL may require dischargers to improve their systems which might involve construction of wetlands to remove nutrient compounds while providing support for recreation and endangered species habitat. Constructed wetland with complex of saturated substrates, emergent and submergent vegetation, flowering plants, and animal life should improve year-round texture and color vista.

19.a. This TMDL is intended to reduce the nutrient load in the Santa Clara River. This will improve water quality and recreational opportunities in Santa Clara River.

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#### IV. DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment could not have a significant effect on the environment.

I find that the proposed Basin Plan amendment could have a significant adverse effect on the environment. However, there are feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact. These alternatives are discussed in the attached written report.

I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment may have a significant effect on the environment. There are no feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts. See the attached written report for a discussion of this determination.

DATE:

*Original Signed By*


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Dennis A. Dickerson  
Executive Officer

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