



Fact Sheet

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD | 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 | Mailing Address: P. O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 | www.waterboards.ca.gov

The Nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards in California

The State Water Resources Control Board has jurisdiction throughout California. Created by the State Legislature in 1967, the Board protects water quality by setting statewide policy, coordinating and supporting the Regional Water Board efforts, and reviewing petitions that contest Regional Board actions. There are nine regional water quality control boards that exercise rulemaking and regulatory activities by basins. This organization is a result of the landmark Porter-Cologne Act* (see page 2).

Region 1 -- North Coastal Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Siskiyou, Sonoma, and Trinity counties.

Region 2 -- San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara (north of Morgan Hill), San Mateo, Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Solano counties.

Region 3 -- Central Coastal Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Santa Clara (south of Morgan Hill), San Mateo (southern portion), Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, Kern (small portions), San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura (northern portion) counties.

Region 4 -- Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Los Angeles, Ventura counties, (small portions of Kern and Santa Barbara counties).

Region 5 -- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Modoc, Shasta, Lassen, Plumas, Butte, Glen, Colusa, Lake, Sutter, Yuba, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, Yolo, Napa, (N. East), Solano (West), Sacramento, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, San Joaquin, Contra Costa (East), Stanislaus, Toulumne, Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Kings, Fresno, Tulare, Kern. (Very small portions of San Benito, San Luis Obispo) counties.

Fresno Office: Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, and Tulare counties.

Redding Office: Butte, Glen, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Tehama Counties.

Region 6 -- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board:

Modoc (East), Lassen (East side and Eagle Lake), Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Alpine, Mono, Inyo, Kern (East), San Bernardino, Los Angeles (N/E corner) counties.

Region 7 -- Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board:
Imperial, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego counties.

Region 8 -- Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board:
Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino counties.

Region 9 -- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board:
San Diego, Imperial, Riverside counties.

*The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act took effect on January 1, 1970. It combined the State Water Rights Board and the State Water Resources Control Board and created the nine Regional Water Boards.

The Porter-Cologne Act built on institutions established 20 years earlier in the Dickey Water Pollution Act of 1949. Planning was to become a critical focus of the 20-year-old water boards. The planning mandates looked to protect beneficial uses, but also acknowledged that the boards should consider all of the significant factors that affect water quality. These plans were to contain a consideration of competing interests, but the study panel noted that "Conservatism in the direction of high quality should guide the establishment of objectives both in water quality control plans and in waste discharge requirements. A margin of safety must be maintained to assure protection of all beneficial uses."

In designing the planning requirements, the study panel expected the water boards to be proactive and to look on a 40- to 50-year horizon. "Problems must be anticipated, the necessary information and data obtained and plans formulated in advance." In many respects the study panel recognized the magnitude of the planning challenge it expected under the Porter-Cologne Act. It also recognized that the information feeding the planning process would expand and that the plans themselves would need regular review and updating.

Coupled with the underlying plans, the Porter-Cologne Act significantly expanded the enforcement authority of the water boards. Water quality control plans to protect beneficial uses would do little good if they could not be enforced. The Porter-Cologne Act strengthened the authorities available for the water boards so they could issue waste discharge requirements and remedial orders fashioned to implement the water quality control plans. It also included a suite of new administrative and judicial enforcement tools to compel compliance with board orders.

The Porter-Cologne Act was a cutting edge water quality law. Portions of it became the model for the 1972 amendments that invigorated the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. In many respects Porter-Cologne still surpasses the federal act, because it allows the water boards to comprehensively regulate surface and ground waters. It also allows the water boards to establish requirements for nearly any source of waste discharge, including nonpoint sources and certain other sources exempted from the federal act's permitting requirements.

Importantly, the Porter-Cologne Act was crafted in a way that would allow the water boards to plan for the long-term, but also to respond as our understanding of factors affecting water quality improved and as new challenges (such as storm water) emerged. In its strong foundations and flexible framework, the Porter-Cologne Act is different than its predecessors.

The Porter-Cologne Act began with an exchange in which the Legislature invited the State Board to initiate a comprehensive review of water quality control laws. All the work and negotiation by various stakeholders, the legislature and a study group established to review contemporary rulemaking (during 1969) crafted a law that at bottom was designed to accommodate and respond to a changing California.

(This narrative was edited from a longer historical treatise put together in July 2009, by SWRCB Chief Counsel Michael Lauffer)