



County of San Diego

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Director

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Mr. Wayne Chiu
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92123-4353

NPDES PERMIT AND WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCHARGES FROM THE MUNICIPAL SEPARATE STORM SEWER SYSTEMS (MS4) DRAINING THE WATERSHEDS WITHIN THE SAN DIEGO REGION (REGIONAL MS4 PERMIT) (ORDER NO. R9-2013-0001)

Dear Mr. Chiu:

The County of San Diego, Department of Environmental Health (DEH) has reviewed the proposed draft Order No. R9-2013-001 (Regional MS4 Permit), and offers the following comments:

The existing San Diego MS4 Storm Water permit includes vector-related language which is intended to raise awareness of the potential unintended public health risk resulting from mosquito production in certain storm water management devices, the proposed draft permit does not. The removal of the vector-related language raises a significant concern, and we request that it be placed back into the proposed draft to protect public health. Please note that the San Diego Regional MS4 permit was the first in the United States to include vector-related language, and ultimately resulted in improved language adopted into storm water permits throughout the State.

The vector-related language included in the existing MS4 permit represents a compromise that allows water quality goals to be met while minimizing the risk to public health. It recognizes that mosquitoes cannot completely be eliminated given the current water quality requirements. It further serves a critical public health purpose of maintaining an awareness of the potential unintended public health threat created by mosquitoes, and emphasizes the importance of proper maintenance of storm water management and treatment structures to minimize the potential for mosquito production and ultimately the spread of mosquito-borne diseases including West Nile Virus (WNV).

WNV continues to be a threat to human health, and has proven to be unpredictable. 2012 was the second worst year for WNV in the United States and California since it was introduced 13 years ago. Approximately 5,400 human illnesses were confirmed nationwide, with 243 deaths as of December 12, 2012. In California there were 464 confirmed cases in 2012 with 18 deaths as of December 24, 2012.

It is critical that the State and the RWQCB continue to include vector-related language in storm water NPDES permits to protect public health. It would be counterproductive and counterintuitive to strive to improve the quality of water for the benefit of public and environmental health only to create environments highly conducive to mosquitoes that have the potential to severely impact human and animal health from mosquito-borne diseases.

The County of San Diego's DEH respectfully requests that the Board restore the vector-related language in the proposed draft MS4 Permit. The following is the existing permit language from Section D - Urban Runoff Management Systems, Subsection 2 - Development Planning:

f. If not properly designed or maintained, certain BMPs implemented or required by municipalities for urban runoff management may create a habitat for vectors (e.g. mosquitoes and rodents). However, proper BMP design and maintenance can prevent the creation of vector habitat. Nuisances and public health impacts resulting from vector breeding can be prevented with close collaboration and cooperative effort between municipalities and local vector control agencies and the State Department of Health Services during the development and implementation of urban runoff management programs.

In addition, the County of San Diego's DEH requests that to facilitate inspection of new BMPs, the San Diego Regional Permit require that a list of new storm water management and treatment units be submitted by the Permittees to their respective vector control agencies. The County requests that the Permit include the following language recently added to the draft Fact Sheet for the Los Angeles MS4 permit:

Monitoring studies conducted by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) have documented that mosquitoes opportunistically breed in structural storm water Best Management Practices (BMPs), particularly those that hold standing water for over 96 hours. Certain Low Impact Development (LID) site design measures that hold standing water such as rainwater capture systems may similarly produce mosquitoes. BMPs and LID design features should incorporate design, construction, and maintenance principles to promote drainage within 96 hours to minimize standing water available to mosquitoes. This Order requires regulated MS4 Permittees to coordinate with other agencies necessary to successfully implement the provisions of this Order. These agencies may include CDPH and local mosquito and vector control agencies on vector-related issues surrounding implementation of post-construction BMPs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed draft language for the MS4 Permit. If you have questions regarding the above comments, please contact Rebecca Lafreniere, Chief, at (858) 694-3595 or by E-mail at Rebecca.Lafreniere@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



JACK MILLER, Director

cc: Richard Crompton, Director, County of San Diego, Department of Public Works
Rebecca Lafreniere, Chief, County of San Diego, Department of Environmental Health,
Community Health Division