

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD—  
SANTA ANA REGION**

6809 INDIANA AVENUE, SUITE 200  
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92506  
ONE: (714) 684-9330

**GUIDELINES FOR SEWAGE DISPOSAL FROM LAND DEVELOPMENTS  
(January 24, 1979)**

Approved by State Board  
Resolution 79-46 (5/17/79)

**1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE****A. Introduction**

Water Code Section 13260 (Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act) requires any person discharging waste or proposing to discharge waste which may affect the waters of the State, except discharges to a community sewer system, to file a report of waste discharge. Based upon this report, a Regional Water Quality Control Board may adopt waste discharge requirements for the waste discharge. Strict interpretation of this requirement could involve individual waste disposal systems wherever located within the region. The Santa Ana Regional Board adopted guidelines in 1973 and again in 1975 in an attempt to (1) clarify when waivers of this requirement will be in the public interest (allowed by Section 13269); (2) establish minimum criteria for use of individual disposal systems; and (3) prevent pollution or nuisance from the discharge from leaching or percolation systems.

The addition of Article 5 of Chapter 4 of Division 7 of the Water Code (Section 13280 et seq.) requires the Regional Board to obtain substantial evidence to support the prohibition of waste discharge from individual disposal systems. In order to obtain information necessary to adequately evaluate whether a prohibition is necessary, the 1975 guidelines have been amended herein. In addition, modifications were provided to clarify the implementation of the guidelines.

**B. Rationale**

The individual discharge of domestic waste is generally considered an acceptable method of waste treatment and disposal in rural or low population density areas. These areas can assimilate the waste within the soil, provide filtration by percolation through adequate soils and limit the potential for exposure to inadequately treated waste. Inadequately treated or nondisinfected waste on the ground surface or in surface waters degrades the environment and is a public health hazard. As a general rule, individual sewage disposal systems cannot be considered to be satisfactory in areas of high population density.

A septic tank is designed mainly to remove solids from the wastewater. The leaching or percolation part of the system provides some additional treatment within the soil and also filters the discharge as it percolates through the soil. Filtering through adequate soil removes most of the pathogenic organisms.

These sewage disposal systems can result in additions of dissolved minerals to the groundwater. In high density areas, this increased salinity can eventually reach levels in the groundwater that may cause water pollution. In the foothills and mountains of the region, there are many areas that are not conducive to individual waste treatment and disposal systems because of adverse soil and topographic conditions. The effectiveness of individual sewage disposal systems in these areas can be quite limited due to factors inherent in the area. Failures, once they begin in an area, cause degradation of water quality, pollution, and public nuisances.

- II. These guidelines are intended to be used to regulate waste discharges from land developments using subsurface waste treatment and disposal systems.
  - A. Existing Developments Discharging or Proposing to Discharge Domestic Wastes from Subsurface Waste Treatment and Disposal Systems
    1. Discharges with existing waste discharge requirements are exempt from these guidelines unless there is a significant change in volume, type or concentration of waste.
    2. Discharges of waste without waste discharge requirements are exempt unless:
      - a. Requested by the Executive Officer to file a report of waste discharge, or
      - b. The discharge causes pollution, contamination, nuisance or violation of water quality objectives.
  - B. Proposed Developments using Subsurface Treatment and Disposal Systems for Domestic Wastes
    1. The Executive Officer may grant conditional waivers of reports of waste discharge and waste discharge requirements in:
      - a. Mountain Areas (as defined and delineated on the attached maps) where:
        - (1) Discharges will comply with minimum criteria, and
        - (2) Discharges are composed of domestic wastes only, and
        - (3) Discharges are from fewer than six dwelling units, or
        - (4) Discharges from a commercial development will not exceed 5000 gallons per day.

b. Non-Mountain Areas (as defined) where:

- (1) Developments have all lots greater than 20,000 square feet net area, and comply with the minimum criteria, or
- (2) Developments with lots less than 20,000 square feet net area, and:
  - . comply with the minimum criteria, and
  - . will not cause or threaten a pollution, contamination, nuisance or violation of water quality objectives, and
  - . discharge is composed of domestic wastes only, and
  - . contain not more than thirty dwelling units, or
  - . discharge from a commercial development will not exceed 5000 gallons per day.

2. Reports of waste discharge and waste discharge requirements will be required in:

a. Mountain Areas (as defined and delineated on the attached maps) where:

- (1) The development fails to comply with the minimum criteria, or
- (2) Discharge is from six or more dwelling units, or
- (3) Discharge is not composed of domestic wastes only, or
- (4) Each dwelling unit does not have available a minimum of 6000 square feet of area suitable for disposal of the wastes, or
- (5) The Regional Board or another public agency determines that the discharges could cause or threaten a pollution, contamination or nuisance, or
- (6) A report of waste discharge for an existing discharge has been requested by the Executive Officer, or
- (7) Discharge from a commercial development will exceed 5000 gallons per day.

b. Non-Mountain Areas (as defined) where:

- (1) The development fails to comply with the minimum criteria, or

- (2) The development contains lots with less than 20,000 square feet net area, and:
    - . contains more than 30 dwelling units, or
    - . discharge from a commercial development will exceed 5000 gallons per day, or
  - (3) The discharge is not composed of domestic wastes only, or
  - (4) The Regional Board or another public agency determines that the discharges could cause or threaten a pollution, contamination or nuisance.
- c. The sewage collection and treatment facilities are for a community development.

### C. Waste Discharge Prohibitions

1. Waste discharge requirements will prohibit waste discharges where there is substantial evidence that:
  - a. They will cause violations of water quality objectives, or
  - b. They will cause pollution, contamination or nuisance, or
  - c. They will unreasonably degrade the quality of any waters of the State.
2. Waste discharge requirements which prohibit an existing subsurface discharge shall contain an appropriate time schedule for elimination of the discharge.

## III. MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR SUBSURFACE DISCHARGE OF DOMESTIC WASTE

Unless the developer demonstrates by substantial evidence or the local health authority finds that a pollution, nuisance, or contamination will not occur as a result of the discharge of domestic wastes, the following criteria are considered necessary for the protection of water quality objectives, to prevent impairment of beneficial uses, to prevent pollution, nuisance, or contamination, and to prevent unreasonable degradation of water quality:

- A. Depth of soil between ground surface and anticipated high groundwater in the disposal area shall not be less than 10 feet.
- B. Depth of soil containing at least 10 percent of the particles smaller than 0.08 millimeters between the bottom of the disposal facilities and anticipated high groundwater shall not be less than 5 feet.

- C. Depth of soil between the bottom of any leaching system and impermeable strata shall not be less than 8 feet.
- D. Natural or finished ground slope in the disposal area shall not be greater than 30 percent.
- E. The percolation rate in the disposal area shall not be greater than 60 minutes per inch if the discharge is to a leachfield, and not less than 1.1 gallons of effluent per square foot per day if the discharge is through a seepage pit. If the percolation rates are faster than 5 minutes per inch, additional testing will be required to determine compliance with III.B., or if percolation rates are faster than 5 minutes per inch, minimum depth to groundwater between the bottom of the disposal facilities and the anticipated high groundwater shall be 40 feet. (The percolation rates shall be determined in accordance with procedures prescribed by the appropriate public agency.)
- F. Compliance is required with all applicable local requirements, including but not limited to requirements on lot size, distance from wells, streams, drainage courses, reservoirs, adjoining properties, or other points.

#### IV. REPORTS AND FEE REQUIREMENTS

- A. Where a report of waste discharge is required by these guidelines, the report shall be filed:
  - 1. Not later than 60 days after request thereof by the Regional Board.
  - 2. At least 120 days prior to commencement of a proposed discharge.
- B. All reports of waste discharge required by these guidelines shall be accompanied by a filing fee in accordance with Subchapter 9, Chapter 3, Title 23, California Administrative Code.
- C. In addition to information required under Water Code Section 13260, all reports of waste discharge, required by these guidelines, shall be accompanied by:
  - 1. An appropriate soils percolation report which satisfies the criteria in Section III.
  - 2. A copy of any tentative or final subdivision map required by the Subdivision Map Act, California Business and Professions Code Section 11500, et seq., and
  - 3. A copy of any environmental review documents prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

D. For developments containing more than thirty dwelling units and with lots containing less than 20,000 square feet net area, a report shall be submitted on the conditions in the area of the development including:

1. quality of groundwater in the area (insofar as possible, wells within the development and within 600 feet of the boundary of the proposed development must be sampled and analyzed for "standard water chemistry"),
2. existing or planned land use within 600 feet of the boundaries of the development, dwelling density (units/acre), and
3. distance to community sewer systems.
4. whether failures of the disposal systems have occurred and whether such failures are due to inadequate design, construction or maintenance.

#### V. INNOVATIVE WASTE TREATMENT SYSTEMS

Innovative waste treatment systems as alternates to septic tank-subsurface disposal systems will be evaluated on a case by case basis, but must conform with these guidelines and provide protection to water quality and public health at least equivalent to conventional septic tank-subsurface disposal systems.

#### VI. OPERATION BY A LOCAL AGENCY

Sewage collection, treatment and disposal facilities for community developments must be operated and maintained by a local agency with authority to conduct wastewater treatment activities. Waste discharge requirements for community developments will be prescribed under Water Code Section 13263 (a) or 13378 only to local agencies which are authorized to collect and treat the wastewater generated by the community development.

#### VII. WAIVERS AS CONDITIONAL

All waivers of reports of waste discharge contained or implied in these guidelines, and all waivers of adoption of waste discharge requirements set forth in these guidelines are conditional, and such waivers may be terminated in whole or in part at any time by the Regional Board. Any discharge of waste, existing or proposed, other than a discharge into a

community sewer system, may, at the option of the Regional Board, require the filing of a report of waste discharge, and waste discharge requirements may be adopted for any subsurface discharges of domestic waste.

#### VIII. MORE STRINGENT WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS

These guidelines shall not be construed to prevent the Regional Board from adopting waste discharge requirements for the subsurface discharge of domestic wastes which are more stringent than the minimum criteria set forth in these guidelines, where necessary to protect water quality or prevent nuisance.

These guidelines do not authorize the commission of any act nor disposal of any wastes in violation of any more stringent local ordinances, rules or regulations.

#### IX. TECHNICAL AND MONITORING REPORTS

All subsurface dischargers of domestic waste may be required to provide technical and monitoring reports in accordance with Water Code Section 13267.

#### X. AREAS OF PROHIBITION

These guidelines do not apply to any area where the subsurface discharge of waste is already or subsequently prohibited by action of the Regional Board.

## DEFINITIONS

### Domestic Waste

Waste water produced solely from human habitation or associated commercial facilities. This includes but is not limited to dwellings, markets, restaurants, office buildings. This does not include wastes which are separate but generated by industrial or manufacturing processes and which may have waste components which could affect waters of the State.

### Subsurface Discharge

Wastewater which has been treated and is discharged for disposal by means of underground leaching or percolation systems.

### Innovative Waste Treatment Systems

Systems which are other than septic tank-leaching or percolation systems used for the collection and treatment of domestic wastes.

### Standard Water Chemistry

Water quality analysis for cations and anions for inorganic salts, i.e. sodium, calcium, magnesium, potassium, ammonium, boron, fluoride, carbonate, bicarbonate, sulfate, chloride and nitrate. Includes filtrable residue, electrical conductivity, and pH.

### Failure (as used in IV.D.4.)

The ineffective treatment and disposal of waste to the extent that the leaching or percolation system must be repaired or replaced in order to rehabilitate the disposal system. Surfacing of inadequately treated sewage, overflow of waste, the discharge of untreated greywater to the surface and frequent pumpings are indications of system failure.

### Community Developments

Developments where individual dwelling units are owned or controlled separately from the waste collection, treatment, and disposal system and the system is not owned and operated by owners of the dwelling. Does not include apartment houses and mobile home parks. Does include condominiums and lot sales mobile home parks.

### Local Agency

As defined in Government Code Section 53090 et seq.

### Mountain Areas

All of the Santa Ana River drainage system within the San Bernardino and Angeles National Forests as delineated on the attached maps.

### Non-Mountain Areas

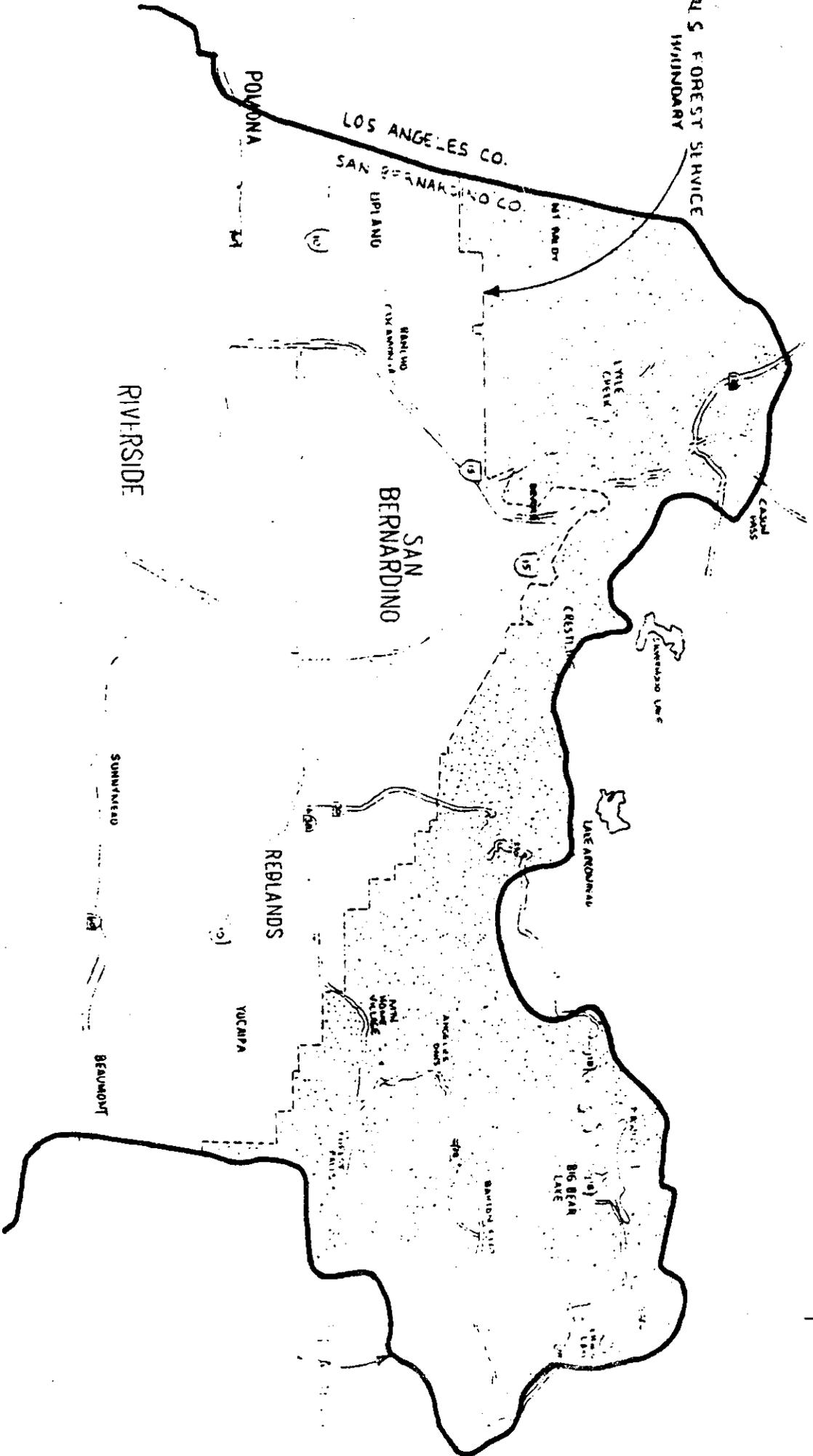
All of the Santa Ana River Region outside of the San Bernardino and Angeles National Forests.

### Net Area

The area of a lot exclusive of easements which might prevent or limit their use for subsurface disposal of domestic wastes. These include but are not limited to: flood control; streets, curbs and gutters; and common areas. This does not include equestrian trails.

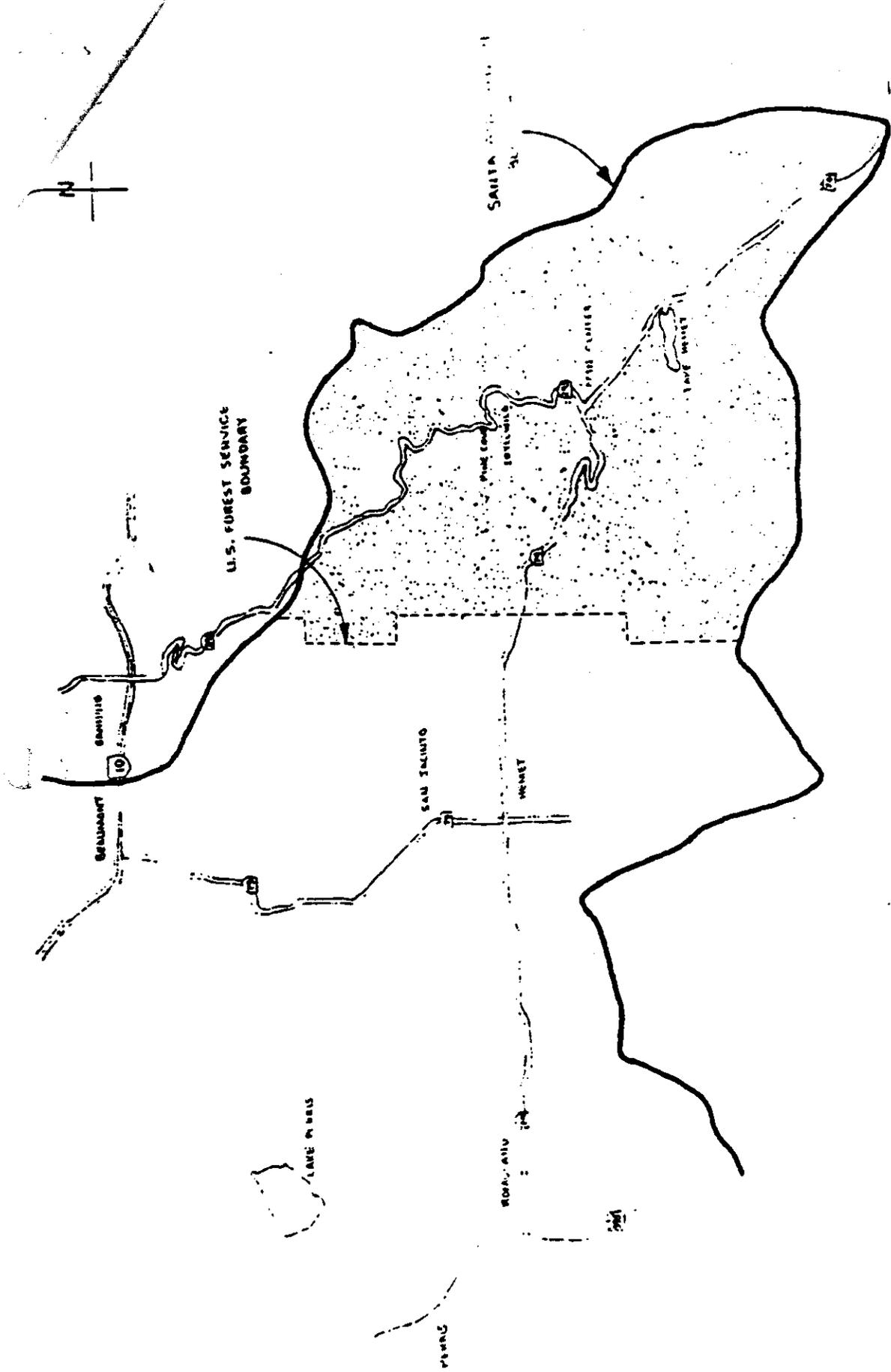
### Public Agency

A governmental agency which has authority or responsibility for review or control of factors that may affect water quality through the development of land or the discharge of wastes. Includes, but is not limited to: local health departments; city and county planning departments; State Departments of Water Resources, Fish and Game, Health Services; flood control and water conservation districts; municipal water districts.



SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY "MOUNTAIN AREA"

THE "MOUNTAIN AREA" INCLUDES ALL OF REGION 8 (SANTA ANA RIVER DRAINAGE SYSTEM) WHICH FALLS WITHIN THE SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST. THE MASTER MAPS ARE ON FILE AT THE REGIONAL BOARD OFFICE, AND SHOULD BE CONSULTED IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT.



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY "MOUNTAIN AREA"**

THE "MOUNTAIN AREA" INCLUDES ALL OF REGION 3 (SANTA ANA RIVER DRAINAGE SYSTEM) WHICH FALLS WITHIN THE SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST. THE MASTER MAPS ARE ON FILE AT THE REGIONAL BOARD OFFICE, AND SHOULD BE CONSULTED IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT.