
Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

March 26, 2013

Mr. Jason E. Uhley
Riverside County Flood Control & Water Conservation District
1955 Market St.
Riverside, CA 92501

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT WATERSHED ACTION PLAN

Dear Mr. Uhley

We received the draft Watershed Action Plan (WAP) submitted on January 29, 2013. The draft WAP was submitted in accordance with Section XII.B of Order No. R8-2010-0033, NPDES No. CAS818033 (MS4 Permit). We have reviewed the draft WAP and find that additional information is needed prior to Regional Board consideration of approval of the WAP. Please submit a revised WAP addressing the comments below.

General Comments:

We appreciate the Permittees' efforts on the Hydrologic Conditions of Concern mapping and geodatabase development. This tool will facilitate identification and communication of the goals and objectives for each watershed, jurisdiction and receiving water and coordinate implementation of the WAP within the permit area. The WAP provides a good outline and goals for an integrated watershed management approach. However, the WAP and the geodatabase currently lacks watershed-specific water quality and hydromodification management information to guide the development of project-specific WQMPs. It also does not provide watershed-specific information to guide development of new and/or revised General Plans that integrate water quality and stream protection with water conservation, re-use and flood protection in the land use planning and development approval processes within the permit area.

Specific Comments:

1. Page 1-1, section 1, WAP Purpose: Please provide a link or define the Ahwanhee Principles as they relate to watershed planning.
2. Page 1-3, section 1.1, WAP Objectives: The WAP states that the geodatabase should incorporate the potential causes of stream degradation including sediment yield and balance on a watershed and sub watershed basis. Please specify when this information will be incorporated into the WAP and the geodatabase.
- 3.

4. Page 2-1, section 2.2, Physiography: The description of the Santa Ana River Watershed includes a statement that the Little San Bernardino Mountains are part of the watershed. The Little San Bernardino Mountains are actually not part of the Santa Ana River Watershed, but are located in the Whitewater River Watershed. Please revise.
5. Page 3-2, section 3.1.3, Chino Basin Master Plan and section 3.1.4, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Integrated Regional Water Management Planning (IRWMP): Section XII.B.3 of the MS4 Permit requires that the Permittees describe how regional efforts that benefit water quality link to their Urban Runoff Programs. Please briefly discuss in the WAP the specific measures in the IRWMP that are being implemented by the Permittees as part of the land use approval process, land use permits, or other program elements of a Permittee's storm water program. We encourage use of flow charts to facilitate communication of complex processes. In addition to updates and planned activities, please identify in the Regional Geodatabase known as the Stormwater and Water Conservation Tracking Tool (SWCT) those drainage areas corresponding with specific measures implemented by the Permittees consistent with the IRWMP.
6. Page 3-3, section 3.1.6 Groundwater Protection Procedures: In addition to including monitoring locations in the SWCT, please identify in the geodatabase the drainage areas where Permittees are implementing specific actions consistent with the Total Dissolved Solids Management Plan. Please discuss in the WAP what the specific actions or requirements are and how they are implemented as part of the land use approval process, land use permits, or other program elements of a Permittee's storm water program.
7. Page 3-4, section 3.1.7, Western Riverside County Conservation Authority: Please discuss in the WAP the Permittees' role and specific requirements, if any, in the land that the Riverside County Conservation Authority (RCA) has acquired and in future land acquisitions. The discussion in the WAP must provide the nexus between the Permittees' responsibility under the MSHCP and the specific measures to be implemented as part of the land use approval process, land use permits, or other program elements of a Permittee's storm water program. We encourage use of flow charts to facilitate communication of complex processes. In addition to incorporating in the SWCT the existing and future land acquired by the Riverside County Conservation Authority and the protected areas within RCA's property limits; please identify in the geodatabase those drainage areas where specific measures, if any, will be implemented by the Permittees consistent with the MHSCP.

Please discuss how sensitive habitats within the permit area outside the MSHCP area are identified and protected.

8. Page 3-5, section 3.2, Linkages to Urban Runoff Programs: Although this section describes the various documents under the storm water program, it does not identify the watershed or drainage area specific programs implemented by the permittees as part of the land use approval process, land use permits, or other program elements

of a Permittee's storm water program. See also our comments on Section 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.2.1 below.

9. Page 3-6, section 3.2.1, Low Impact Development Implementation: Please revise the last sentence in the second paragraph to read as follows: "The WQMPs require project proponents to ~~consider~~ **implement** LID BMPs."
10. Page 3-8, section 3.3, TMDL and Hydromodification Coordination: The first paragraph in this section discusses major water quality impacts, but leaves off the impact of hydromodification. Hydromodification is as significant as increased contamination. Please revise. Also, hydromodification management approach in the MS4 permit is based on the 2 year frequency storm; please briefly discuss how flood risk may be minimized by addressing hydromodification.
11. Page 4-2, section 4.2.1.1 Comprehensive Bacteria Reduction Plan (CBRP): This section appears to re-state the requirement for the CBRP which has already been approved. We recommend that background information be moved to the Appendix. This section should briefly discuss specific BMPs/measures implemented by the Permittees as specified in the CBRP and which drainage areas and jurisdictions are required to implement these measures. The WAP should briefly discuss how the specific BMPs/measures are implemented as part of the land use approval process, land use permits, or other program elements of a Permittee's storm water program. Please identify in the geodatabase the drainage areas where specific actions will be implemented by the Permittees pursuant to the CBRP.
12. Page 4-4, section 4.2.1, Middle Santa Ana River Bacterial Indicator TMDL: Please revise the statement that implies the Office of Administrative Law is part of the Regional Board's organization. The Office of Administrative Law is a separate state agency responsible for reviewing administrative regulations proposed by state agencies.
13. Page 4-7, section 4.2.2.1 Comprehensive Nutrient Reduction Plan (CNRP): This section appears to re-state the permit requirement for the CNRP. We recommend that background information be moved to the Appendix. This section should briefly discuss specific BMPs/measures proposed to be implemented by the Permittees as specified in the CNRP. The WAP should briefly discuss how the specific BMPs/measures for specific drainage areas within the jurisdictions will be implemented as part of the land use approval process, land use permits, or other program elements of a Permittee's storm water program. Please show in the geodatabase the drainage areas where specific actions will be implemented by the Permittees in the watershed pursuant to the CNRP.
14. Page 4-11, section 4.4.1, Channel Assessment and Classification: This section states that a desktop study and some field verification were conducted to verify stream classification. However, it is not clear if channel stability risk assessments were conducted to arrive at the potentially susceptible and not susceptible to

hydromodification risk groupings. The risk groupings should also consider the presence of sensitive habitats.

The geodatabase does not differentiate among the stream classifications. Please use the same legends and color schemes as the San Bernardino HCOC mapping to the extent possible.

This section should also state that upon approval of the HMP, which is scheduled to be submitted January 29, 2014, drainage areas identified as not susceptible to hydromodification will not need to demonstrate project level pre=post development hydrology. All other requirements including LID/site design and design capture volume standard still apply as specified in the WQMP.

15. Page 4-15, Figure 4, Hydromodification Susceptibility Map. We do not think that there is enough observations of San Jacinto River channel to allow blanket exemption based on the large river exemptions. Also, please elaborate as to what it means to allow a channel exemption for the San Jacinto River Channel when many upstream areas are not granted the exemption.
16. Section 4 of the WAP: Section XII.B.6. of the MS4 permit requires that specific BMP/measures for drainage areas and jurisdictions discharging into 303(d) listed waters without an approved TMDL should also be identified. Please show in the geodatabase the drainage areas where specific actions will be implemented by the Permittees in the watershed pursuant to this requirement.
17. Section 4 of the WAP should also identify any other specific BMPs or measures implemented in drainage areas and jurisdictions to address other WAP objectives specified in section 1.1, including cumulative impacts of development on vulnerable streams, preservation of beneficial uses and protection of water resources, including groundwater recharge areas.
18. Page 5-15, section 5.2.2, LIP Coordination: The last paragraph in this section states in part "...a Permittee may accept or reject each of the watershed protection principles based on applicability or where there may be adequate justification inability to incorporate into a Permittee's LIP. If a watershed protection principle is rejected, the Permittee must provide an explanation of why it was rejected in its LIP." Any rejection of a watershed protection principle by a jurisdiction for a drainage area should be explicitly stated as part of the WAP along with the rationale and evaluation of the impact on a watershed or sub-watershed basis, as appropriate. This will also allow opportunity for regulatory and public review. Separate individual LIP changes without considering the impact on the watershed defeat the purpose of a coordinated watershed management through the WAP.
19. Page 5-15, section 5.2.3, Regional Watershed Opportunities: Please state where in the geodatabase the cause of stream degradation will be found.

20. Page 5-8, section 5.1.3: Please discuss the significance of controlled release points.
21. Appendix A, Page 7, Susceptibility Assessment: Please discuss if channel stability risk assessments were conducted or assumptions verified to arrive at a very low risk for streams categorized as Engineered, Partially Hardened, and Maintained (EPHM) and low risk for streams categorized as Engineered, Earthen, and Maintained (EEM), Not Earthen or Engineered (NEE) and Natural (NAT). It is unclear if any actual channel stability risk assessments were conducted to verify the susceptibility of these channels. The assessments must be provided in this appendix or another appendix to the WAP to support the proposed HCOC Applicability Map and form a basis for restoration prioritization or retrofit opportunities in the HMP.
22. Appendix A, Page 8, section 3.2.1, Areas within Prado Dam: This section states that the Permittees chose the 10-year inundation level to establish the elevation not susceptible to hydromodification. It is unclear how this level was chosen. The hydromodification management approach specified in the MS4 permit utilizes the 2 year frequency storm event. Please provide a rationale why the 2-year inundation level was not chosen to define the boundary of the Prado Dam and the corresponding drainage areas not susceptible to hydromodification.
- Also, please note that Regional Board staff observed HCOC conditions in the Temescal wash channel upstream from the 516 foot elevation of Prado basin. Photos of the inspections are available on request.
23. Page 5-15, section 5.2.3, Regional Watershed Opportunities: This section lacks specific information on regional restoration opportunities and prioritization, but recognizes that the information will be part of the HMP to be developed. Also, the geodatabase does not yet have the information on restoration opportunities in the watershed. Please state when this information will be available.
24. Page 5-15, section 5.2.4, Regional Retrofit Opportunities: The geodatabase does not yet have the information on retrofit opportunities in the watershed. Please provide a schedule for incorporation.
25. Page 5-16, section 5.2.5, Watershed Benefit Estimation: This section identifies factors to consider before decisions are made about implementation of regional BMPs. While we agree with the approach, the WAP should contain specific analysis of where susceptible streams, protected habitats and high pollutant concentrations are located on a watershed or sub-watershed basis, as appropriate. See also our comment on Appendix B below.
26. Appendix A, Page 8, section 3.2.2: This section quoted the San Diego HMP. However, the quote is taken out of context and there are more criteria than just the 100 square miles and 20,000 cfs which is all the susceptibility report seems to be using. On Page 6-6 of the San Diego HMP, the river reach should be 1) downstream from a reservoir, 2) have a wide floodplain area, 3) field observations,

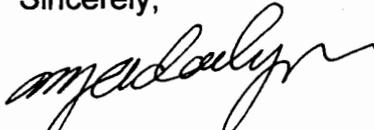
4) discharges to the river should enter directly to the river bottom below the 100 year flow level through an erosion control device and 5) years of historical perspective from the TAC member to justify exemptions in certain river reaches. This doesn't appear to be shown in the case of the San Jacinto River or Temescal Wash. Furthermore, the channel immediately above Canyon Lake is certainly non-engineered, if not natural.

27. The HCOC Applicability Map and supporting documentation should identify any sensitive stream habitat areas and mitigation areas that need to be protected. For example, the area that drains into the back bay of Lake Elsinore could carry sediment into mitigation areas that were put in when the levee was installed. The mitigation areas need to be mapped so that the threat from increased development could be more easily recognized and controlled.

28. Appendix B: The BMP Retrofit prioritization Methodology does not consider channel stability factors. We've observed excessive stream erosion at the bottom of several developed watersheds that may benefit from BMP retrofit projects upstream of the watershed.

A revised WAP addressing the comments above must be submitted to us no later than June 24, 2013. If you have any questions, please contact Milasol Gaslan at mgaslan@waterboards.ca.gov or at (951)782-4419 or Michael Roth at mroth@waterboards.ca.gov or at (951)320-2027.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Adackapara
Division Chief

Cc: David Garcia, Riverside County Flood Control and Conservation District,
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