

Water Quality Report Card

Un-ionized Ammonia in the Main Street Canal Subwatershed of Lower Santa Maria River Watershed

Regional Water Board:	Central Coast, Region 3
Beneficial Uses Affected:	REC-1, REC-2, MUN, GWR, COLD, WARM
Implemented Through:	Conditional Waiver of WDRs ₂ MS4 Permit
Effective Date:	May 22, 2014 (TMDL)
Attainment Date:	2026

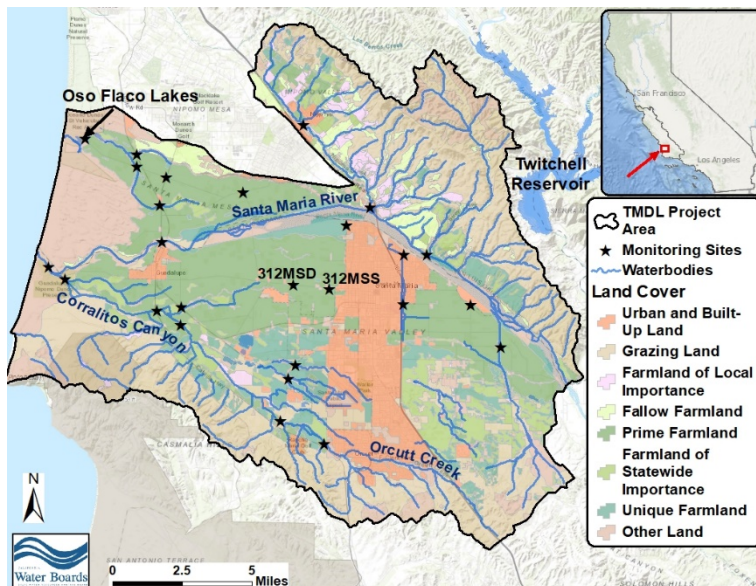
STATUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conditions Improving
Pollutant Type:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point Source <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonpoint Source
Pollutant Source	Irrigated Crop Production Point Source

Water Quality Improvement Strategy

The Lower Santa Maria River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) project area is approximately 237 mi² located in southern San Luis Obispo and northern Santa Barbara counties. Primary land uses in the watershed include farmland, grazing lands, urban lands, and a mix of other land types such as forest, dunes, and beaches. Nitrate and un-ionized ammonia pollution of both surface waters and groundwater has long been recognized as a problem in the lower Santa Maria River valley. Elevated levels of nitrate or un-ionized ammonia has impacted municipal and domestic water supply, groundwater, and aquatic habitat within the lower Santa Maria River valley.

Main Street Canal, a subwatershed of the Santa Maria Watershed, is on the [Clean Water Act Section 303\(d\) List](#) of polluted waters for un-ionized ammonia, nitrate, and pH. The [Santa Maria Watershed Nutrients TMDL](#) was approved in May 2014 to address the impairments and establishes numeric targets and load allocations for un-ionized ammonia and nitrate for Main Street Canal. Discharges from irrigated agriculture and point sources were established as the primary controllable sources of pollution. The [2017 Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands](#) (Agricultural Order) and Municipal Stormwater Permit [NPDES No. CAS000004](#) implement the TMDL.

Main Street Canal – Lower Santa Maria River Watershed



TMDL Load and Wasteload Allocations for Receiving Water

Main Street Canal	
Pollutant	Receiving Water Concentration
Un-ionized Ammonia as N	0.025 mg/L
Nitrate as N	10 mg/L

Water Quality Outcomes

- Improvements made toward reaching the TMDL allocation of 0.025 mg/L. Reductions after 2007-2009 are attributed to the elimination of an illicit discharge. Additional exceedances are likely from a combination of irrigated agriculture and urban surface water runoff.
- Notice of Violation issued on 4/13/09 triggered corrective action to eliminate contaminated rinse water from fertilizer tanks from entering the waterway.
- Data collected in the Santa Maria River watershed during the 2019 Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program ([CCAMP](#)) sampling rotation will continue to assess the status and water quality conditions.

