

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
OCTOBER 21, 2008**

ITEM 4

SUBJECT

CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE LOS ANGELES REGION (BASIN PLAN) TO SUBDIVIDE REACH 4 OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER INTO TWO SEPARATE REACHES

DISCUSSION

The Santa Clara River is the largest river system in Southern California that remains in a relatively natural state. The Santa Clara River originates on the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County, traverses Ventura County, and flows into the Pacific Ocean between the cities of San Buenaventura (Ventura) and Oxnard. The predominant land uses in the Santa Clara River watershed include agriculture, open space, and residential uses.

Reaches 5 and 6 of the Santa Clara River are located upstream of the Blue Cut gauging station, west of the Los Angeles/Ventura County line. Beneficial uses of the Upper Santa Clara River include agricultural supply, groundwater recharge, and rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat. Reaches 5 and 6 of the Upper Santa Clara River are listed as impaired by chloride on the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) approved 303(d) list of impaired water bodies in California due to excessive concentrations of chloride. A chloride total maximum daily load (TMDL) is currently effective, and it assigns wasteload allocations to the Valencia and Saugus Water Reclamation Plants. These plants are owned and operated by the County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles.

Previously, Reach 4 of the Santa Clara River was defined as the section between the A Street Bridge in Fillmore and the Blue Cut gauging station near the Ventura /Los Angeles County line. The amendment redefined the reach to consist of Reach 4A between the confluence of Piru Creek and the A Street Bridge in the City of Fillmore, and Reach 4B between the Blue Cut gauging station and the confluence of Piru Creek. This action did not modify the water quality objective for chloride in either Reach 4A or Reach 4B, nor adopt a site specific objective for chloride in Reaches 4A or 4B. The Los Angeles Water Quality Control Board (Los Angeles Water Board) subdivided Reach 4 in order to more effectively consider the results of the forthcoming Chloride TMDL special studies.

Reach 4 receives surface flow from Reach 5 and contains several unique hydrogeologic features that affect chloride and other water quality parameters in the upper and lower segments of Reach 4. The key hydrological feature of Reach 4 is a dry gap where surface water in the upper portion of Reach 4 infiltrates into the underlying groundwater basin, Piru Basin, under dry weather conditions. Flow resurfaces approximately six miles downstream. Flow from a major tributary, Piru Creek, also infiltrates into the Piru basin under dry weather conditions. Both the surface water and groundwater upstream of the Piru Creek confluence with Reach 4 contain greater levels of chloride than the surface and groundwater levels downstream from the Piru Creek confluence due to water reclamation plant discharges into Reaches 5 and 6 upstream of Reach 4. The Basin Plan recognizes the unique hydrogeology in the Piru Basin by

establishing different groundwater objectives for chloride upstream and downstream of Piru Creek. The water quality objective for chloride in groundwater downstream of the Piru Creek confluence is 100 milligrams per liter (mg/l), whereas the chloride water quality objective in groundwater upstream of the Piru Creek confluence is 200 mg/l. However, the water quality objective for chloride in surface water is 100 mg/l both upstream and downstream of Piru Creek.

The Los Angeles Water Board found that subdividing Reach 4 into two reaches, which are spatially equivalent to the existing reach, would better represent the unique hydraulic regime between the downstream portion of Reach 4 (Reach 4A) and the upstream portion of Reach 4 (Reach 4B). Reach 4A is different from Reach 4B in terms of channel morphology, loss in transit, and inflows from tributaries. All flow in Reach 4B infiltrates to groundwater during dry weather conditions, creating the beginning of the “Dry Gap”, while in Reach 4A, rising groundwater resurfaces due to unique geologic conditions. Additionally, surface water quality in Reaches 4A and 4B is significantly different due to the differing groundwater-surface water interactions and contributions from wastewater discharges in these areas. Furthermore, influence from tributary inflows to the Santa Clara River in Reach 4B, is significantly smaller than influence from tributary flows in Reach 4A. In addition, the proposed reaches better coincide with the Basin Plan descriptions of the groundwater basins underlying the reaches. Finally, the Los Angeles Water Board found that dividing Reach 4 into two separate reaches would provide the greatest benefit by limiting the geographical scope of any potential site specific objective for chloride to be considered by the Los Angeles Water Board in the future.

POLICY ISSUE

Should the State Water Board approve the amendment to the Basin Plan to subdivide Reach 4 of the Santa Clara River into two separate reaches as adopted under Los Angeles Water Board [Resolution No. R4-2007-018](#)?

FISCAL IMPACT

Los Angeles Water Board and State Water Board staff work associated with or resulting from this action will be addressed with existing and future budgeted resources.

REGIONAL WATER BOARD IMPACT

Yes, approval of this resolution will amend the Los Angeles Water Board’s Basin Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the State Water Board:

1. Approves the amendment to the Basin Plan as adopted under Los Angeles Water Board Resolution No. R4-2007-018.
2. Authorizes the Executive Director or designee to submit the amendment adopted under Los Angeles Water Board Resolution No. R4-2007-018 to the Office of Administrative Law for approval of the regulatory provisions.

DRAFT

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2008-

APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE LOS ANGELES REGION (BASIN PLAN) TO SUBDIVIDE REACH 4 OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER INTO TWO SEPARATE REACHES

WHEREAS:

1. On November 1, 2007, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (Los Angeles Water Board) adopted [Resolution No. R4-2007-018](#) amending the Basin Plan to subdivide Reach 4 of the Santa Clara River into two separate Reaches.
2. The Los Angeles Water Board found that the analysis contained in the Final Project Report, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) "Substitute Document" for the proposed Basin Plan amendment, including the CEQA Checklist, the staff report, and the responses to comments prepared by Los Angeles Water Board staff complies with the requirements of the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board's) certified regulatory CEQA process, as set forth in the California Code of Regulations, Title 23, section 3775 et seq.
3. The State Water Board finds that in amending the Basin Plan the Los Angeles Water Board complied with the requirements set forth in sections 13240, 13245, and 13246 of the California Water Code. The State Water Board also finds that the regulatory action meets the "Necessity" standard of the Administrative Procedures Act, Government Code, section 11353, Subdivision (b).
4. The Los Angeles Water Board found that adoption of this amendment is consistent with the State Antidegradation Policy ([State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16](#)), in that the boundary re-designation for Reach 4 of the Santa Clara River does not include revisions to water quality objectives. Likewise, the amendment is consistent with the federal Antidegradation Policy (40 CFR 131.12).
5. A Basin Plan amendment does not become effective until approved by the State Water Board and until the regulatory provisions are approved by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The State Water Board:

1. Approves the amendment to the Basin Plan adopted under Los Angeles Water Board Resolution No. R4-2007-018.

D R A F T

2. Authorizes the Executive Director or designee to submit the amendment adopted under Los Angeles Water Board Resolution No. R4-2007-018 to OAL for approval of the regulatory provisions.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned Clerk to the Board does hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of a resolution duly and regularly adopted at a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board held on October 21, 2008.

Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board