

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
MEETING SESSION – CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL WATER BOARD  
NOVEMBER 7, 2023**

**ITEM 4**

**SUBJECT**

CONSIDERATION OF A PROPOSED RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL COASTAL BASIN TO ESTABLISH TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR NITROGEN COMPOUNDS IN THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER BASIN, SANTA BARBARA COUNTY.

**DISCUSSION**

On June 22, 2023, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Central Coast Water Board) adopted [Resolution No. R3-2023-0003](#) to amend the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin (Basin Plan) to establish Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for nitrogen compounds in the Santa Ynez River basin, Santa Barbara County (TMDL Project).

Several streams in the Santa Ynez River basin are impaired due to one or more of the following conditions: excessive concentrations of nitrogen compounds such as nitrate, total nitrogen, or un-ionized ammonia, and low dissolved oxygen. These surface waters are impaired because they do not meet the Basin Plan water quality objectives for municipal and domestic water supply, groundwater recharge, and aquatic habitat beneficial uses. Impaired stream reaches include the Lower Santa Ynez River from Floradale Road downstream to the confluence with the estuary; San Miguelito Creek; and Sloans Canyon Creek. These waterbodies are on California's Clean Water Act section 303(d) List of impaired waters.

Sources of nitrogen discharges to surface waters within the Santa Ynez River basin include treated municipal wastewater effluent, runoff from irrigated cropland, urban stormwater, industrial and construction stormwater, manure from livestock and domestic animals, and natural sources.

This TMDL Project establishes numeric targets for nitrogen compounds (i.e., total nitrogen, nitrate, and un-ionized ammonia), chlorophyll a, dissolved oxygen, and floating algal cover. The TMDL numeric targets define the conditions necessary to protect designated beneficial uses of waters.

The TMDLs distribute, or "allocate" the waterbody's loading capacity among the various sources of that pollutant. To that end, nitrogen compounds allocations are given to wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) operators, owners and operators of irrigated lands, municipal and industrial NPDES-permitted stormwater entities, and owners/operators of livestock on rangeland and pasture. The largest and most significant nitrogen source causing the impairments is the Lompoc Regional WWTP.

Nitrogen water quality has been improving in impaired stream reaches of the Santa Ynez River basin in since 2012. As such, implementation and attainment of the nitrogen compounds allocations should not require an extended attainment time schedule. We anticipate that within five years after the Office of Administrative Law approval date of this Basin Plan amendment, implementing parties will achieve the nitrogen compounds allocations or meet all regulatory and policy requirements necessary for removing the impaired waters from the federal Clean Water Act section 303(d) List of impaired waters.

Existing permits and their future renewal or modification are anticipated to be sufficient to reduce and manage nitrogen compounds loads to surface waters and achieve the numeric targets. Cost estimates for TMDL compliance for agricultural sources or municipal stormwater sources were not warranted since these source categories appear to be already meeting TMDL load and waste load allocations and this TMDL implementation plan does not identify any new actions for these sources.

## **POLICY ISSUE**

Should the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) approve the amendment to the Basin Plan to establish TMDLs for nitrogen compounds and the associated implementation plan to restore and maintain water quality and aquatic habitats in the Santa Ynez River basin?

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

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

## **REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT**

Approval of this resolution will amend the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the State Water Board:

1. Approve the amendment to the Basin Plan adopted under Central Coast Water Board Resolution No. R3-2023-0003.
2. Authorize the Executive Director or designee to submit the approved amendment adopted under Central Coast Water Board Resolution No. R3-2023-0003 and the administrative record for this action to the Office of Administrative Law and the TMDL Project to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.