

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

**STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 17-18, 2024**

Prepared on October 3, 2024

**ITEM NUMBER:** 10

**SUBJECT:** BASIN PLAN PROGRAM UPDATE

**STAFF CONTACTS:** Daniel Ellis, (805) 549-3889,  
[daniel.ellis@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:daniel.ellis@waterboards.ca.gov)  
Jamie Pratt, (805) 549-3761,  
[jamie.pratt@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:jamie.pratt@waterboards.ca.gov)

**ACTION:** Informational

**SUMMARY**

This staff report summarizes the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Central Coast Water Board) Basin Plan Program's activities during the last several years and priorities going forward. The staff presentation will provide an overview of the Basin Plan Program and current Program priorities.

**DISCUSSION**

**Background**

The Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coastal Basin (Basin Plan) was initially adopted by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) in 1975. The current Basin Plan (2019 edition) and recent amendments can be found on the Central Coast Water Board Basin Planning website.<sup>1</sup>

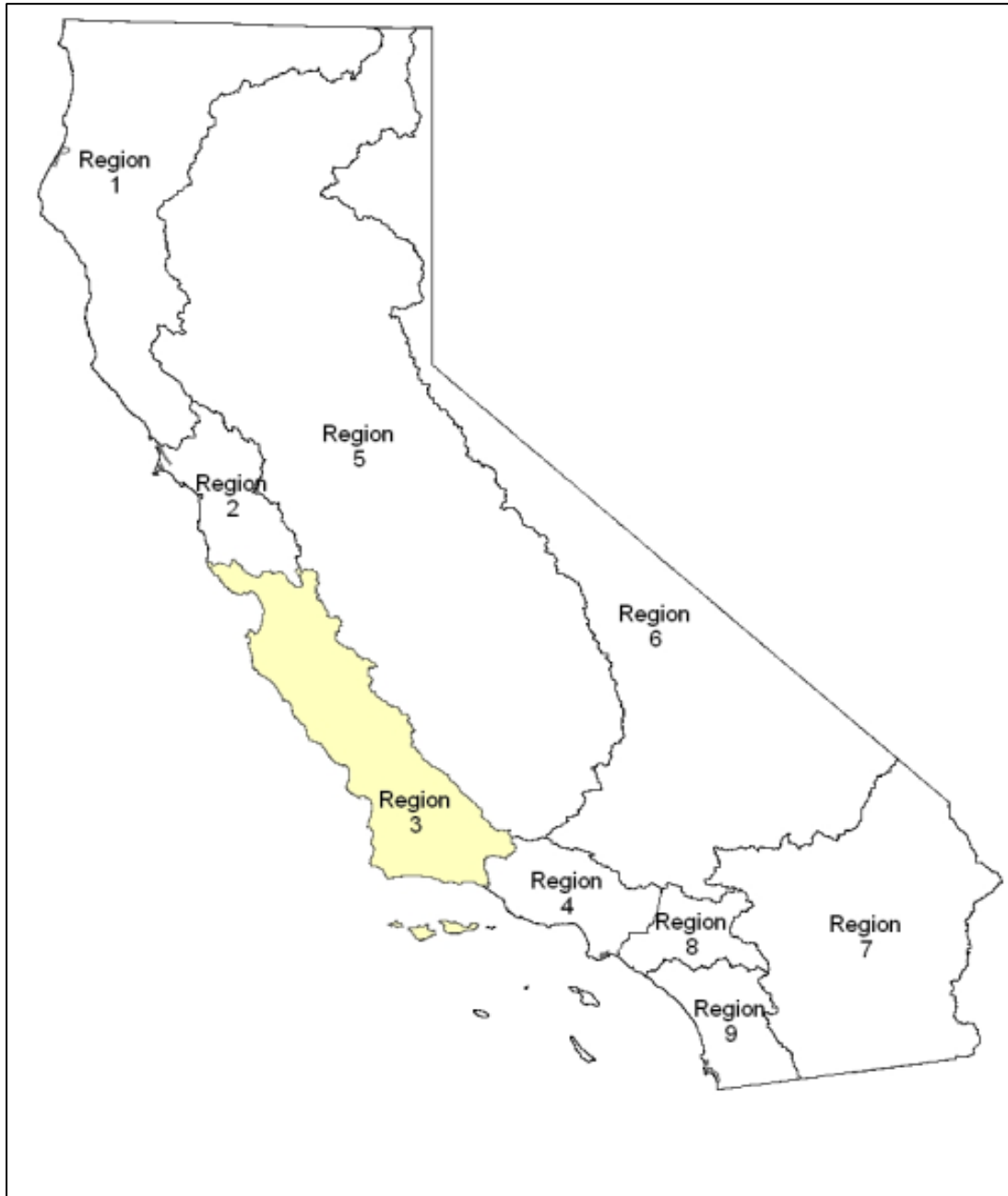
The Basin Plan explains how the quality of surface waters and groundwater in the Central Coastal Basin should be managed to provide the highest water quality reasonably possible. The Basin Plan defines and designates beneficial uses to waters of the state (both surface water and groundwater), establishes narrative or numeric water quality objectives to protect beneficial uses, and contains provisions to protect high quality waters from degradation (i.e., antidegradation), collectively referred to as water quality standards. The Basin Plan also includes programs of implementation for achieving water quality objectives and outlines corrective measures to be implemented when developing discharge limitations. Figure 1 shows the geographic boundary of the Central Coast region.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Coast Water Board, Basin Planning website:  
[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water\\_issues/programs/basin\\_plan/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/)

The Basin Plan fulfills statutory requirements for water quality planning in the California Water Code (section 13240) and in the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) (section 303(c)). The CWA further stipulates that a state’s water quality standards be reviewed every three years; the last Triennial Review of the Basin Plan was completed in December 2021. The Basin Planning Program is finishing up a subset of the amendment projects (proposals) prioritized during the 2021 Triennial Review and proposing a 2024 Triennial Review priority list of proposals for Water Board approval. Once approved, this will inform Basin Plan Program activities for the next three years.

**Figure 1. Central Coast Water Board (Region 3) Boundary**



## Human Right to Water

California Water Code section 106.3, subdivision (a) states that it is the policy of the State of California “that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitation purposes.” On January 26, 2017, the Central Coast Water Board adopted Resolution R3-2017-0004, which affirms the realization of the human right to water and the protection of human health as the Central Coast Water Board’s top priorities.

The Basin Plan program considers protection of drinking water in its prioritization and development of future Basin Plan amendment projects.

## Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice principles call for the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of all environmental laws, regulations, and policies that affect every community’s natural resources and the places people live, work, play, and learn. The Central Coast Water Board implements regulatory activities and water quality projects in a manner that ensures the fair treatment of all people, including Underrepresented Communities. Underrepresented Communities include but are not limited to Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), Severely Disadvantaged Communities (SDACs), Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs), Tribes, Environmentally Disadvantaged Communities (EnvDACs), and members of Fringe Communities.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Central Coast Water Board is committed to providing all stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the public process and provide meaningful input to decisions that affect their communities.

Central Coast Water Board and Basin Plan Program priorities include the realization of the human right to water and the protection of human health and the implementation of activities that ensure the equitable treatment of Underrepresented Communities in the Central Coast region. Furthermore, the most recent Basin Plan amendment (Resolution

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<sup>2</sup> Disadvantaged Community: a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80% of the statewide annual median household income (Public Resources Code section 80002(e)); Severely Disadvantaged Community: a community with a median household income of less than 60% of the statewide average. (Public Resources Code section 80002(n)); Economically Distressed Area: a municipality with a population of 20,000 persons or less, a rural county, or a reasonably isolated and divisible segment of a larger municipality where the segment of the population is 20,000 persons or less with an annual median household income that is less than 85% of the statewide median household income and with one or more of the following conditions as determined by the department: (1) financial hardship, (2) unemployment rate at least 2% higher than the statewide average, or (3) low population density. (Water Code section 79702(k)); Tribes: federally recognized Indian Tribes and California State Indian Tribes listed on the Native American Heritage Commission’s California Tribal Consultation List; EnvDACs: CalEPA designates the top 25 percent scoring census tracts as DACs. Census tracts that score the highest five percent of pollution burden scores but do not have an overall CalEnviroScreen score because of unreliable socioeconomic or health data are also designated as DACs (refer to the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Mapping Tool or Results Excel Sheet); Fringe Community: communities that do not meet the established DAC, SDAC, and EDA definitions but can show that they score in the top 25 percent of either the Pollution Burden or Population Characteristics score using the CalEnviroScreen 3.0.

R3-2024-0003)<sup>3</sup> included the addition of the definitions for two Tribal Beneficial Uses and a non-tribal Subsistence Fishing Beneficial Use to the Basin Plan, demonstrating the Central Coast Water Board's commitment to working with Tribes and underrepresented communities.

### **Climate Change**

The Central Coast faces the threat and the effects of climate change for the foreseeable and distant future. To proactively prepare and respond, the Central Coast Water Board has launched the Central Coast Water Board's Climate Action Initiative, which identifies how the Central Coast Water Board's work relates to climate change and prioritizes actions that improve water supply resiliency through water conservation and wastewater reuse and recycling; mitigate for and adapt to sea level rise and increased flooding; improve energy efficiency; and reduce greenhouse gas production. The Climate Action Initiative is consistent with the Governor's Executive Order B-30-15 and the State Water Board's Climate Change Resolution No. 2017-0012.

The Basin Plan Program further prioritizes climate change by ensuring all future Basin Plan amendments consider climate change.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Basin Plan is the Central Coast Water Board's master water quality control planning document. The Basin Plan Program continues to focus on regular reviews and updates to the Basin Plan aligned with the Central Coast Water Board's priorities to continue to improve the Basin Plan's effectiveness to protect and restore water quality and aquatic habitats. Additional priorities and goals of the Basin Plan Program are to:

- Update and maintain the Basin Plan so that it is aligned with the goals and priorities of the Central Coast Water Board and organized to provide a clear structure that identifies beneficial uses and water quality objectives for all waters of the state.
- Facilitate the effective use of the Basin Plan by Water Board programs to achieve tangible results in water quality protection and restoration.
- Facilitate understanding of Basin Plan information for Central Coast Water Board staff and any persons interested in the water quality of the Central Coast Region.

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<sup>3</sup> Resolution R3-2024-0003:

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water\\_issues/programs/basin\\_plan/docs/signed\\_2024\\_bpa\\_rslt.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/docs/signed_2024_bpa_rslt.pdf)