

Water Quality Certifications

Overview

The Water Quality Certification program regulates removal or placement of materials in wetlands and waterways in the State. Examples of such projects include navigational dredging, flood control channelization, levee construction, channel clearing, fill of wetlands for development, bridge piers, docks, etc. These types of projects generally require a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and the State's Water Quality Certification is issued pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act to certify that the project approved by the Corps will also meet State water quality requirements.

The program protects all waters, but has special responsibility for wetlands, riparian areas, and headwaters because these waterbodies have high resource value, are vulnerable to filling, and are not systematically protected by other programs. The program is involved with protection of special-status species and regulation of hydromodification impacts. The program implements the State and Federal Wetlands No Net Loss Policies, which seeks to avoid, reduce, and mitigate impacts.

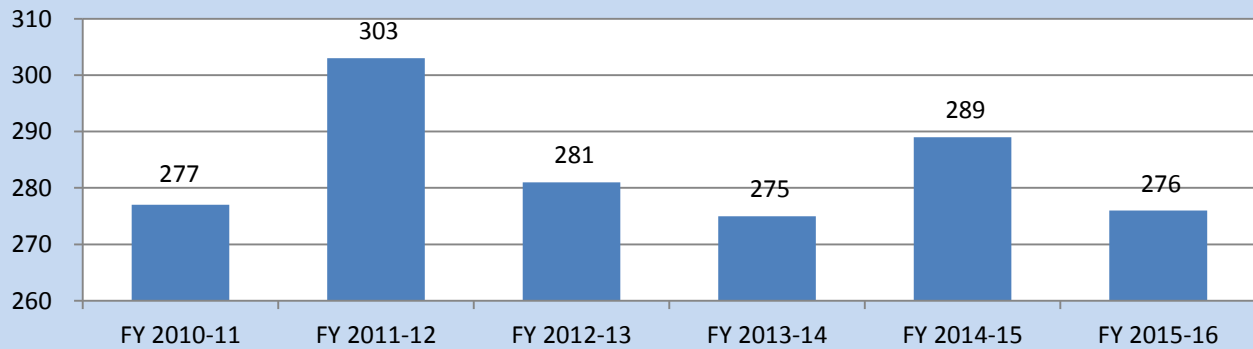
Most projects are regulated by the Regional Water Boards; however the State Water Board regulates multi-region projects and supports and coordinates the Program statewide. Regional Water Board staff issues Water Quality Certifications based on information contained in application packages. Regional Water Board staff conducts inspections of WQC projects and takes appropriate enforcement action as needed.

The Central Valley Water Board dedicates 9 PYs to implement this program.

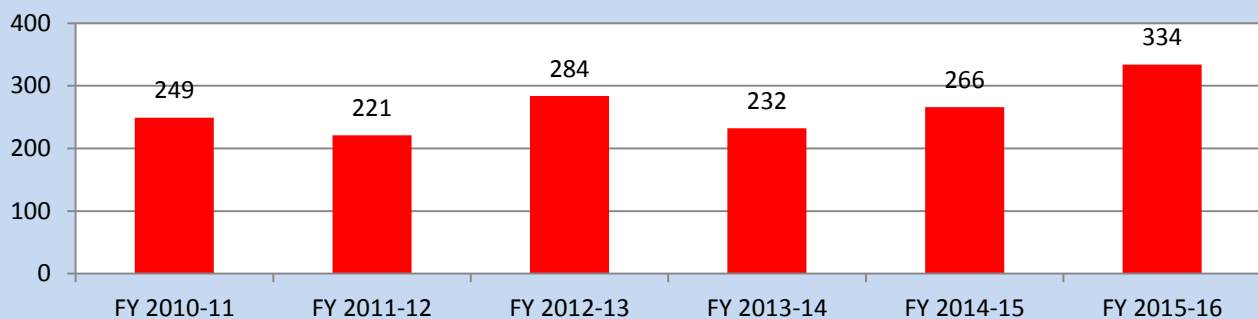
Staff Activities

- Issuance of certifications and associated permits for non-jurisdictional waters.
- Inspection of certification projects.
- Follow up compliance/enforcement activities.
- Meetings with applicants/consultants.
- Internal/External program round tables.
- Coordination with U.S. Army Corps staff.
- Program management coordination.
- Training and Outreach to regulated community and stakeholders.
- Training of Regional Water Board staff.
- Participation in the Central Valley In-Lieu Fee Program.
- Participation in Habitat Conservation Plan programs.

Applications Received



Certifications Issued



Priority Projects FY 2016-2017

- Timely issuance of certifications. Due to the high number of applications received, review and issuance of certifications takes the majority of available staff resources. Process streamlining using workload sharing, and development of new program tools such as general orders, will result in more timely issuance of certifications, and free up resources for other program priorities.
- Increase compliance and enforcement activities. Review of applications and issuance of certifications does not ensure that water quality and wetland resources are protected. To do this, staff field presence is required. A goal of the program is to increase the numbers of inspections and follow up compliance and enforcement activities. Streamlining in other program areas will help allow for these activities.
- Staff training and development. The program has a number of new supervisors and staff. In order to maximize the contributions of these new staff and make them effective, training and development activities will be conducted.

Performance Targets for Fiscal Year 2016 – 2017

- Review 95% of applications for completeness within 30 days of receipt.
- Issue 95% of certifications within 60 days of receiving complete information.