



California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Los Angeles Region

Winston H. Hickox
Secretary for
Environmental
Protection

Over 50 Years Serving Coastal Los Angeles and Ventura Counties
Recipient of the 2001 *Environmental Leadership Award* from Keep California Beautiful

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Gray Davis
Governor

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT REQUIREMENTS

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (hereinafter referred to as the Regional Board) is the Lead Agency for evaluating the environmental impacts of the proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Basin Plan). The proposed amendment incorporates a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nitrogen compounds and related effects in Los Angeles River. The Secretary of Resources has certified the basin planning process as exempt from certain requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including preparation of an initial study, a negative declaration, and environmental impact report (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15251). As the proposed amendment to the Basin Plan is part of the basin planning process, the environmental information developed for and included with the amendment is considered functionally equivalent to an initial study, negative declaration, and/or environmental impact report.

Any regulatory program of the Regional Board certified as functionally equivalent, however, must satisfy the documentation requirements of California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3777(a) which requires the following:

- ❖ A written report providing:
 - * a description of the proposed activity;
 - * reasonable alternatives to the proposed activity; and
 - * mitigation measures to minimize any significant adverse impacts.

- ❖ A completed environmental checklist that includes:
 - * a checklist of environmental impacts;
 - * a discussion of the environmental evaluation; and
 - * a determination with respect to significant environmental impacts.

The attached checklist and the document entitled "Total Maximum Daily Loads for Nitrogen Compounds and Related Effects Los Angeles River and Tributaries" fulfill the requirements of section 3777, subdivision (a).

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I. Description of Proposed Activity

The Basin Plan designates beneficial uses of waterbodies, establishes water quality objectives for the protection of these beneficial uses, and outlines a plan of implementation for maintaining and enhancing water quality. Nitrogen loadings to the Los Angeles River result in impairments of beneficial uses associated with aquatic life habitat. Concentrations of ammonia, a nitrogen compound, often exceed water quality objectives for chronic and acute toxicity to aquatic life. Nitrate and nitrite, two oxidized nitrogen compounds, have, on infrequent occasions, been present in concentrations exceeding water quality objectives in the Basin Plan. All three of these nitrogen compounds may stimulate the production of algae, a nuisance condition for recreational beneficial uses. Algal growth in some instances has produced algal mats in the waterbody that can result in eutrophic conditions where low dissolved oxygen concentration can harm aquatic life in the waterbody. The decay of these mats may also cause in problems with scum and odors that affect the recreational uses of the river. The proposed amendment would incorporate into the Basin Plan a TMDL to implement existing water quality objectives and to reduce nutrient loads to the Los Angeles River.

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Los Angeles River will require wastewater treatment plants and others to reduce the amount of nutrients discharged to the Los Angeles River. This may require dischargers to improve their systems, and several such upgrades are already under way.

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Environmental Impacts
YES MAYBE NO

1.	Earth. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Unstable earth conditions or in changes in geologic substructures?	NO
	b. Disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcoming of the soil?	NO
	c. Change in topography or ground surface relief features?	NO
	d. The destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?	NO
	e. Any increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on or off the site?	NO
	f. Changes in deposition or erosion of beach sands, or changes in siltation, deposition or erosion which may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of the ocean or any bay, inlet or lake?	NO
	g. Exposure of people or property to geologic hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, ground failure, or similar hazards?	NO
2.	Air. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Substantial air emissions or deterioration of ambient air quality?	NO
	b. The creation of objectionable odors?	NO
	c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?	NO
3.	Water. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Changes in currents, or the course of direction or water movements, in either marine or fresh waters?	NO
	b. Changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface water runoff?	NO

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Environmental Impacts
YES MAYBE NO

	c. Alterations to the course of flow of flood waters?	NO
	d. Change in the amount of surface water in any water body?	MAYBE
	e. Discharge into surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?	YES
	f. Alteration of the direction or rate of flow of ground waters?	NO
	g. Change in the quantity or quality of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations?	NO
	h. Substantial reduction in the amount of water otherwise available for public water supplies?	NO
	i. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding or tidal waves?	NO
4.	Plant Life. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, microflora and aquatic plants)?	YES
	b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of plants?	NO
	c. Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?	NO
	d. Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop?	NO
5.	Animal Life. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds, land animals including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, insects or microfauna)?	YES

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Environmental Impacts
YES MAYBE NO

	b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of animals?	NO
	c. Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?	NO
	d. Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat?	NO
6.	Noise. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Increases in existing noise levels?	MAYBE
	b. Exposure of people to severe noise levels?	NO
7.	Light and Glare. Will the proposal:	
	a. Produce new light or glare?	NO
8.	Land Use. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area?	MAYBE
9.	Natural Resources. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Increase in the rate of use of any natural resources?	NO
	b. Substantial depletion of any nonrenewable natural resource?	NO
10.	Risk of Upset. Will the proposal involve:	
	a. A risk of an explosion or the release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to: oil, pesticides, chemicals or radiation) in the event of an accident or upset conditions?	NO
11.	Population. Will the proposal:	
	a. Alter the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?	NO

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Environmental Impacts
YES MAYBE NO

12.	Housing. Will the proposal:	
	a. Affect existing housing, or create a demand for additional housing?	NO
13.	Transportation/Circulation. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Effects on existing parking facilities, or demand for new parking?	NO
	b. Substantial impact upon existing transportation systems?	NO
	c. Alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods?	NO
	d. Alterations to waterborne, rail or air traffic?	NO
	e. Increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists or pedestrians?	NO
14.	Public Service. Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas:	
	a. Fire protection?	NO
	b. Police protection?	NO
	c. Schools?	NO
	d. Parks or other recreational facilities?	NO
	e. Maintenance of public facilities, including roads?	NO
	f. Other governmental services?	YES
15.	Energy. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Use of substantial amounts of fuel or energy?	MAYBE
	b. Substantial increase in demand upon existing sources of energy, or require the development of new sources of energy?	NO

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Environmental Impacts
YES MAYBE NO

16.	Utilities and Service Systems. Will the proposal result in a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities:	
	a. Power or natural gas?	NO
	b. Communications systems?	NO
	c. Water?	MAYBE
	d. Sewer or septic tanks?	NO
	e. Storm water drainage?	NO
	f. Solid waste and disposal?	NO
17.	Human Health. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Creation of any health hazard or potential health hazard (excluding mental health)?	NO
	b. Exposure of people to potential health hazards?	NO
18.	Aesthetics. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. The obstruction of any scenic vista or view open to the public?	NO
	b. The creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view?	NO
19.	Recreation. Will the proposal result in:	
	a. Impact upon the quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities?	NO
20.	Archeological/Historical. Will the proposal:	
	a. Result in the alteration of a significant archeological or historical site structure, object or building?	NO

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Environmental Impacts
YES MAYBE NO

21.	Mandatory Findings of Significance	
	Potential to degrade: Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	NO
	Short-term: Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time, while long-term impacts will endure well into the future.)	NO
	Cumulative: Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may impact on two or more separate resources where the impact on each resource is relatively small, but where the effect of the total of those impacts on the environment is significant.)	NO
	Substantial adverse: Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	NO

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III. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

Expand on all “YES” and “MAYBE” answers given to the preceding questions in regard to environmental impacts. The evaluation shall consider whether the environmental impact indicated will have a substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the activity. In addition, the evaluation should discuss environmental effects in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

3.d. A slight change in the amount of surface water may occur if existing wastewaters discharged through NPDES permits are adjusted to meet the TMDL requirements. A change in the surface flow volume may result in a change of the stream morphology, disposition of surface runoff and groundwater discharge and the direction of flow. Such discharges would be regulated by the Regional Board under NPDES permits, and are not expected to adversely impact beneficial uses of surface waters. Any water quality impacts from this TMDL will improve water quality.

3.e. This TMDL is intended to reduce nutrient loads in the Los Angeles River. This will improve the quality of surface water, the Los Angeles River, by reducing nutrients and increasing the dissolved oxygen content of the river.

4.a. This TMDL is intended to reduce nutrient loads in the Los Angeles River. This will reduce the algae levels, which should improve the habitat for many other plant and fish species.

5.a. See 4.a.

6.a. Temporary noise during the construction to up-grade the facilities could occur, but this would not be considered significant due to the temporary nature of any reconstruction activities.

8.a. The TMDL requirements may necessitate changes in the operations of waste dischargers involving modification to the existing facilities for nitrification/denitrification process to reduce the nutrient load in the Los Angeles River. Approval of the application for the modification to the POTWs would be required to ensure compliance with the City’s zoning ordinance.

14.f. The TMDL requirements may necessitate action on the part of local public agencies to adjust their effluent concentrations. Such changes would be reported to the Regional Board under NPDES permits and are not expected to adversely impact beneficial uses of surface waters and is expected to be environmentally beneficial.

15.a. The nitrification/denitrification technique of reducing nitrogen load in wastewater treatment plants may result in an increase in the energy usage of the wastewater reclamation plants, depending on the nitrogen removal process selected. Any increase in energy consumption would be minor compared to the overall demands of these facilities.

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III. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

16.c. The TMDL requirements may necessitate changes in the operations of waste dischargers. Such changes would be reported to the Regional Board under NPDES permits, and are not expected to adversely impact beneficial uses of surface waters.

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IV. DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment could not have a significant effect on the environment.

I find that the proposed Basin Plan amendment could have a significant adverse effect on the environment. However, there are feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact. These alternatives are discussed in the attached written report.

I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment may have a significant effect on the environment. There are no feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts. See the attached written report for a discussion of this determination.

DATE:

Dennis A. Dickerson
Executive Officer

California Environmental Protection Agency

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