



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

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IN REPLY PLEASE
REFER TO FILE: **WM-9**

Mr. Samuel Unger, P.E.
Executive Officer
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Los Angeles Region
320 West 4th Street, Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Attention Dr. Celine Gallon

Dear Mr. Unger:

COMMENT LETTER—2017-19 TRIENNIAL REVIEW

The County of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the 2017-19 Triennial Review of Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region. Enclosed are our comments for your review and consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (626) 458-4325 or palva@dpw.lacounty.gov or your staff may contact Mr. Fernando Villaluna at (626) 458-4364 or fvillaluna@dpw.lacounty.gov.

Very truly yours,

MARK PESTRELLA
Director of Public Works


PAUL ALVA
Assistant Deputy Director
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**COMMENTS OF COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES AND LOS ANGELES COUNTY
FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT ON THE 2017-2019 TRIENNIAL REVIEW OF THE
WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE LOS ANGELES REGION**

The County of Los Angeles (County) and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Triennial Review of the Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region (Basin Plan). The County and the LACFCD recommend the following projects for Regional Board's consideration during the 2017-2019 Triennial Review.

1. Develop technical guidance for natural source determinations
2. Update the Bacteria Objectives and associated TMDLs
3. Re-evaluate temperature water quality objective

These projects are further described below.

1. Develop Technical Guidance for Natural Sources Exclusion Determinations

The development of technical guidance for natural sources determinations is a high priority for the County and the LACFCD, dating back to the 2008 Triennial Review. This project was also identified in the 2014-2016 Triennial Review Staff Report as a recommended project for the 2017-2019 Triennial Review. We support this recommendation and request that the Regional Board embark on this project during this Triennial Review as originally planned.

As acknowledged by the Regional Board during previous triennial reviews, many water quality constituents, such as bacteria, nutrients and metals are naturally occurring in the environment. In some cases, the contribution from natural sources alone could lead to exceedances of established water quality objectives. This has created additional challenges for attaining water quality standards by requiring unnecessary remedial actions to address naturally-occurring pollutants, which are beyond the control of permittees. It is recommended that water quality standards take into consideration natural conditions to ensure that resources are invested where they are most needed and effective to improve water quality by focusing on anthropogenic sources.

For example, the risk to humans by fecal contamination from non-human sources has been shown to be less than those from human sources. Consequently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has provided scientific tools, such as Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA), for developing alternative site-specific bacteria criteria for waterbodies that are predominantly impacted by non-human fecal sources. In Los Angeles Region, many stormwater permittees, including

the County, Cities, and the LACFCD, have shown interest in utilizing natural source determinations to develop site-specific bacteria criteria for sites where sources are characterized predominantly as non-human.

To this end, it is recommended that the Regional Board develop a guidance for purposes of making natural source determinations in the Los Angeles Region and allow its use to develop site-specific objectives where it is needed.

2. Update the Bacteria Objectives and associated TMDLs

In 2012, the USEPA published new bacteria criteria and recommended for States to adopt them. The new criteria reflect recent scientific understandings regarding microbial risk to human health and their adoption for the Los Angeles Region will ensure the continued protection of recreational beneficial uses in the region. This project was identified in the 2014-2016 Triennial Review as a recommended project for the 2017-2019 Triennial Review. We support this recommendation and request that the Regional Board embark on this project during this Triennial Review as originally planned.

The State Water Board is working on revising the Bacteria Provisions statewide which is expected to be adopted in 2018. Among the elements in the State's Bacteria Provisions include new bacteria objectives as proposed by USEPA as well as various implementation provisions, such as water quality standards variances and seasonal suspensions. It is recommended that the Regional Board allocate resources to update the bacteria objectives in the Basin Plan, as well as the bacteria TMDLs following the State Water Board's adoption of the Bacteria Provisions.

3. Re-evaluate Temperature Water Quality Objectives

This project was identified in the 2014-2016 Triennial Review Staff Report as a priority project contingent on resources availability. It is our understanding that this project was not completed during the 2014-2016 Triennial Review. We recommend that this continue to be a priority project for the upcoming 2017-2019 Triennial Review.

Currently, the Basin Plan expresses temperature objective as "*not to be altered by more than 5 °F above the natural temperature*". To apply this objective, the *natural temperature* of waterbodies would need to be known. However, the Basin Plan does not contain information on natural temperature of waterbodies and this has precluded the application of the criteria. As a result, a default threshold of 80 °F has been used for assessing waterbodies regardless of their natural temperature condition or seasonal variability in temperature. In the LA Region, ambient air temperatures can vary drastically which would easily raise the temperature of a waterbody above 80 °F, particularly in concrete channels during summer periods. Concrete channels are very

susceptible to fluctuations in temperature due the material's ability to absorb heat, which can significantly alter the temperature of water as it moves through the channel. This has created uncertainty as to the accuracy of listing waterbodies for temperature-related impairment as well as for assessing compliance with the objective. Therefore, updating the temperature objective is highly recommended to ensure that proper standards are used to protect beneficial uses of waterbodies.