

**Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff's Summary Report
December 4-5, 2025**

ITEM: #4

SUBJECT: Update on development of a Basin Plan Amendment to Address Water Quality Impacts Associated with Changes in Hydrology (formerly referred to as the Narrative Flow Objective project) (*Bryan McFadin*)

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item; no action will be taken by the Board.

BACKGROUND: Staff will provide an update on regional efforts to develop a basin plan amendment to address activities that alter watershed hydrology and degrade water quality through discharges of waste to waters of the state and associated controllable water quality factors. This project, formerly known as the Narrative Flow Objective, has been renamed to reflect a shift in approach. After careful evaluation, North Coast Water Board staff have decided not to pursue a new narrative water quality objective for flow at this time. Instead, staff are advancing a basin plan amendment focused on establishing policies and prohibitions that will enable implementation actions to address flow-related impacts on water quality and beneficial uses within the North Coast Water Board's authority.

The original Narrative Flow Objective project was described in the North Coast Water Board's 2023 Triennial Review as follows:

"Water quantity can have direct influences on various physical, biological, and chemical parameters of water quality. These parameters include stream temperature, oxygen saturation, suspended sediment concentrations, nutrients, organic matter, and other pollutants. In addition to the biogeochemical parameters of water quality that are influenced by flow, the hydrologic factors of a stream that can be influenced by controllable factors can also have significant impacts on the quality of aquatic habitats. Hydrologic factors such as the magnitude, timing, duration, frequency, and rate of change in flows are the critical components of a stream's hydrograph that directly determine habitat availability.

The purpose of the narrative instream flow objective is to augment the constituent-based water quality objectives contained in the Basin Plan with a clearly articulated characterization of the hydrologic conditions also necessary to support beneficial uses."

Staff will present the background and history of the Region's efforts to address flow-related impacts to water quality, the status of current efforts, discuss the rationale for the change in approach, describe the core elements of the basin plan amendment, and provide a schedule for bringing the basin plan amendment before the board for its consideration.

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS:

[Final Staff Report 2023 Triennial Review](https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/06_2024/pdf/7/triennial-finalstaffrprt.pdf)

(https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/06_2024/pdf/7/triennial-finalstaffrprt.pdf) (see section 3.2.2)