



Enforcement News

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/>

San Diego Water Board Issues \$848,374 Penalty to Developer for Sediment Pollution

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 19, 2015

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SAN DIEGO – Today the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board) issued a penalty complaint of \$848,374 to San Altos-Lemon Grove, LLC for water quality violations related to construction activities at the 18-acre Valencia Hills site, located in Lemon Grove.

The complaint alleges that the developer allowed polluted storm water to reach Chollas Creek by failing to implement routine management practices to reduce sediment transport from the construction site.

Sediment from construction activities poses a large threat to local waters because so much exposed dirt can wash off during a storm. Excess sediment can alter or obstruct flows, resulting in flooding and possible damage to local ecosystems. Abnormally high levels of sediment in the water can smother aquatic animals and habitats, and it can reduce the clarity of water, which harms the ability of organisms to breathe, find food and refuge and reproduce. Sediment can also act as a binder, carrying toxic constituents, such as metals, pesticides and other synthetic organic chemicals with it into rivers, bays and ocean.

The site was brought to the San Diego Water Board's attention after the city of Lemon Grove had issued multiple administrative citations, stop work notices, and correct work notices for water quality violations to the developer, with minimal response. Even after the San Diego Water Board issued a Notice of Violation, the developer continued to have storm water violations.

"Repeat non-compliance tells us they didn't take the city or our inspectors very seriously," said Chiara Clemente, San Diego Water Board's enforcement coordinator. "These requirements are not new. It's unfortunate that it's taking a large monetary penalty to motivate them to do basic management measures that the industry considers routine for protecting downstream water quality."

With a strong El Niño weather event predicted for this winter, the San Diego Water Board has been urging construction site operators and others to take necessary precautions.

"We often hear about how exceptional a particular rain event was," Clemente said in reference to some prior enforcement cases. "Between El Niño and climate change, extreme storms are the new norm. People need to adapt accordingly."

A copy of the San Diego Water Board's Complaint is available for review on its [website](#). The San Diego Water Board has scheduled a hearing for Dec. 16, 2015, to consider this Complaint. The developer can pay the penalty, propose a settlement or supplemental environmental project, or contest the penalty before the San Diego Water Board.

The San Diego Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore California's water resources and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations. For more information on the San Diego Water Board, construction storm water requirements, and information about drought resources, visit its [website](#).

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