

Water Quality Certification New Fee Methodology Proposal

First Fee Stakeholder Meeting
May 7, 2025



Division of Water Quality, Wetland Permitting

Purpose of this meeting

- Fee Development Timeline
- Review guiding principles on how fees are set for this program.
- Discuss background information on the Water Quality Certification (WQC) program fees.
- Present our conceptual changes to the existing fee methodology.
- Provide opportunity for discussion and input from WQC fee payers.
- Use feedback to further develop the fee methodology proposal.

**Any numbers discussed at this point in the proposal process are conceptual placeholders and will be determined based on the fee setting budget after the methodology is defined.*

Guiding Principles for WDPF Program Fees

- Revenue neutral
- Not a “Fee for Service” model
- Implementable statewide
- Indirect and redirected costs are added to direct program expenditures
- Minimize yearly swings

Background

Our goals for this proposal are to:

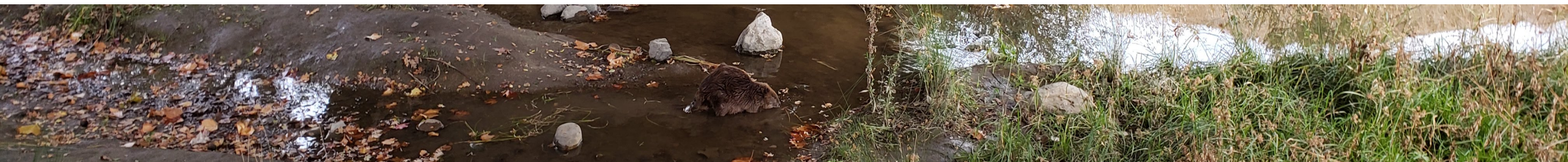
- Improve consistency and predictability of WQC program revenue.
- Ensure sufficient resources to cover increased workload related to *Sackett* decision.
- Reduce fee barrier to permitting.
- More accurately scale fees based on required staff resources.

Current Fee Regulations: [FY 2024-25
Water Quality Fee Schedule](#)



Draft Fee Methodology Proposal Overview

- The current proposed fee methodology concept would assign a point value to each project application based on various factors.
- The factors identified would correlate with increased risk to water quality and more closely tie fees to required staff resources for the WQC program.
- Points from each category would be totaled and placed into a fee tier (Fee Tier 1, Fee Tier 2, Fee Tier 3, etc.) which would determine the fee calculation.





Fee Determining Factors

Permit Type

- Individual 401 water quality certification
- Individual Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs)
- General Order Enrollee

Impacts to Waters Area:

- Permanent Impacts
- Temporary Impacts

Alternatives Analysis:

- Tier I
- Tier II
- Tier III

Points and Tier Methodology

- Fee Tier 1 would replace the Low Impact Discharge Category (Category E) and the fee would be a lower, flat application fee.
 - Fee Tiers 2 through Fee Tier 5 would be calculated as an application fee plus an additional per acre fee. The multiplier would be lowest for Fee Tier 2 and highest for Fee Tier 5.
 - For Example:
 - A project in Fee Tier 2 could be calculated as a \$2,000 application fee plus \$20,000 per acre.
 - A project in Fee Tier 5 could be calculated as a \$2,000 application fee plus \$50,000 per acre.
- *Reminder that these numbers are conceptual placeholders and will be determined based on the fee setting budget after the methodology is defined.*

Example of Proposed Point Calculator

Fee Factor	Threshold	Check if Yes	Points
General order	Qualifies for enrollment under a General Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Does not qualify	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Individual WDR adopted by Regional Board Required?	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
Permanent Impacts	<0.01	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	between 0.01- 0.5 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
	>0.5 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Temporary Impacts	less than 0.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	between 0.1 and 0.2 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	Greater than 0.2 acres	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Alternatives Analysis Required	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Tier 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
	Tier 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	Tier 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Total Points:			

Fee Tiers:	Point Ranges:
1	1
2	2--4
3	5--6
4	7--10
5	>10

Impacted Discharge Categories

- Fill and Excavation Discharges (Category A)
- Low Impact Discharges (Category E)



Current Fee Category	Current Discharge Category
A	Fill and Excavation Discharges
B	Dredging Discharges
C	Sand Mining, In-Stream Gravel Mining and Beach Nourishment Discharges
D	Ecological Restoration and Enhancement Projects
E	Low Impact Discharges
F	Emergency Projects Authorized by a Water Board General Order
G	Amended Orders
H	Wildfire Mitigation by Electrical Corporations, Electrical Utilities, and Electrical Cooperatives

Questions and Feedback?



Please send any additional questions or feedback by May 21, 2025, to FeeBranch@waterboards.ca.gov

Open Discussion & Next Steps