



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

May 7-8, 2026

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Green Diamond Elk River Permit 5-year Review

Jim Burke

The purpose of this Executive Officer's Report article is for North Coast Water Board staff to update Board Members and the public about the status of the Green Diamond Resource Company's (Green Diamond) ongoing compliance with its water quality permitting in the Elk River Watershed. Staff are not recommending any changes to this regulatory program.

Background:

Following adoption of the 2016 Upper Elk River Sediment Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Action Plan and further discussions with Regional Water Board staff, Green Diamond revised specific provisions of the South Fork Elk River Management Plan (South Fork Elk River Management Plan) for the purpose of meeting the TMDL hillslope targets and load allocation. On August 23, 2019, Green Diamond submitted the revised plan as the Elk River Management Plan that would apply to all Green Diamond's timberlands in the Elk River watershed. The revisions primarily addressed expanded riparian management zone (RMZ) protection measures, modified annual harvest limits, and yarding prescriptions. Regional Water Board staff found that the Elk River Management Plan was expected to implement most, but not all, of the TMDL Hillslope Water Quality Indicators, but additional protection measures for riparian zones were necessary to implement certain Specific Upper Elk River Watershed Indicators.

On February 6, 2020, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted Order No. R1-2020-0001, *Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges Related to Green Diamond Resource Company's Forest Management Activities Conducted Within the Upper Elk River Watershed*

Humboldt County (2020 Order). The 2020 Order superseded those portions of the Green Diamond's existing Forest Management Waste Discharge Requirements (Order No R1-2012-0087) that apply to certain activities conducted by Green Diamond on its timberlands in the Upper Elk River Watershed. The 2020 Order was developed to be consistent with hillslope indicators and numeric targets contained in the TMDL Action Plan.

Therefore, in addition to those RMZ prescriptions from the Elk River Management Plan, Section I.C of the Order established the following requirements for Riparian Zones: *(Green Diamond) shall retain a minimum of 50% post-harvest forest overstory canopy cover well distributed throughout the area and shall not utilize group openings larger than 0.25 acres within 300 feet from Class I and II watercourses and 150 feet from Class III watercourses, or to the first hydrologic divide. The overstory canopy retention requirement in this section shall not supersede canopy retention requirements from the ERMP when those canopy requirements exceed retention of 50% overstory canopy.*

With the Elk River Management Plan and additional protection measures for riparian zones included as requirements in the 2020 Order, Regional Water Board staff determined that Green Diamond's timber harvest and related management activities in the Elk River Watershed would be consistent with the TMDL Action Plan.

2020 Order Review:

Section I.C.6 of the 2020 Order states, *No later than five years from the date of adoption of this Order, the Regional Water Board will consider the Order requirements for riparian zone protection and after public notice and comment will provide staff direction on potential changes to the requirements.*

Since adoption of the Order in February 2020, Green Diamond has operated on four Timber Harvest Plans with annual harvest acreage as follows:

- 2020: 169 total acres, 81 clearcut acres
- 2023: 67.4 total acres, 49.4 clearcut acres
- 2024: 115.3 total acres, 31.8 clearcut acres

Regional Water Board staff have participated in pre-harvest, active, and completion inspections on each of the timber harvest plans and have determined that operations were consistent with the requirements of the 2020 Order. Staff have found Green Diamond's timber harvest operations to appropriately address controllable sediment discharge sources, and operations within and adjacent to the expanded riparian zone protection measures to be sufficiently protective of water quality.

Staff are not proposing modifications to the existing 2020 Order.



Closed Landfill General Waste Discharge Requirements Development Update

By Chris Watt and in part using Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

The North Coast Water Board is developing General Waste Discharge Requirements (General Order) for Closed Landfill Facilities in the North Coast Region. This General Order will provide updated, consistent requirements to protect water quality at closed municipal solid waste landfills (and might include wood waste landfills, and other waste management units) during their post-closure maintenance period.

Over a dozen closed landfills in the North Coast Region are currently covered by individual Waste Discharge Requirements adopted between the 1970s and 1990s. The General Order is an opportunity to replace older individual orders with modern, consistent requirements that better protect groundwater and surface water resources while streamlining regulatory oversight and facility compliance.

What Are Closed Landfills and Why Do They Need Regulation?

Closed landfills are facilities that previously disposed of nonhazardous solid waste (and in some cases nonhazardous liquid waste) but have ceased accepting waste and installed a final cover system over the waste. While closed landfills generally pose a lower threat to water quality than active landfills, they still require ongoing maintenance and monitoring to protect our water resources.

Potential Water Quality Impacts:

Closed landfills can impact groundwater and surface water through three primary pathways:

- **Landfill Leachate:** Liquid generated from moisture within landfill waste that can contain dissolved solids, organic compounds, and metals that may migrate to surface water or groundwater.
- **Landfill Gas:** Decomposition of organic materials produces methane and carbon dioxide, which can contain volatile organic compounds that may migrate to groundwater.
- **Stormwater Runoff:** Storm water that contacts waste or contaminated soil before entering surface waters or percolating to groundwater.

Protection Through Proper Maintenance:

The potential for water quality impacts can be greatly reduced through proper post-closure maintenance of final covers, stormwater conveyance systems, and monitoring of groundwater and Landfill Gas. The General Order would ensure these protective measures are consistently maintained at all closed landfill facilities.

Purpose and Benefits of the General Order

Why a General Order?

Many existing individual Waste Discharge Requirements for closed landfills are outdated and do not reflect current monitoring practices or water quality protection standards. These facilities are subject to prescriptive monitoring requirements under California Code of Regulations, Title 27, making them well-suited for regulation under a General Order that provides consistent, up-to-date requirements across similar facilities.

Benefits for Water Quality and Communities:

The General Order will enhance protection of the North Coast Region's water resources through:

- **Updated Monitoring Requirements:** Modern analytical methods and monitoring programs enable earlier detection of potential releases, allowing timely corrective actions
- **Consistent Protection Standards:** All enrolled facilities will be subject to the same baseline corrective action requirements, ensuring equitable protection of water quality throughout the region
- **Enhanced Oversight:** Standardized requirements allow North Coast Water Board staff to focus resources on facility inspections, detailed groundwater data analysis, and corrective action oversight
- **Transparency:** Regular monitoring reports and inspections provide ongoing verification that closed landfills are not impacting drinking water supplies or beneficial uses of water

Benefits for Facility Operators:

- **Streamlined Process:** Facilities would be enrolled through a simplified Notice of Intent process, shifting administrative time related to amending an individual WDR to a more simplified enrollment process.
- **Flexibility:** Opportunity to update monitoring programs as needed during enrollment while maintaining required water quality protection
- **Cost Predictability:** Standard monitoring parameters and frequencies provide clarity for budgeting post-closure maintenance costs
- **Proactive Planning:** Predictability of requirements would allow operators to update post-closure maintenance plans before enrolling to address any identified deficiencies or proposed changes

Facilities Affected

Closed landfill facilities across the North Coast Region which would potentially be eligible for enrollment in the General Order, including municipal solid waste disposal sites in Del Norte, Trinity, Siskiyou, Humboldt, Mendocino, and Sonoma Counties (and possibly wood waste disposal sites and non-hazardous industrial waste management units).

The General Order would apply to landfills that completed closure after 1984 and installed final cover systems in accordance with Title 27 requirements.

Public Engagement and Participation

The North Coast Water Board is committed to meaningful public engagement throughout the General Order development process:

Community Notification: Property owners near closed landfills will receive mailed notification about development of the General Order and opportunities for public participation. Special attention will be given to ensuring Disadvantaged Communities receive information and have opportunity to participate in the process.

Tribal Engagement: Tribal governments will be provided an opportunity to participate in development of the General Order.

Engagement Period: Staff level meetings with tribal governments, responsible parties, and the public are expected to occur between August and December 2026.

Public Comment Period: A 60-day public comment period on the Draft General Order is expected to begin in February 2027, providing opportunity for public review and written comments on the Draft General Order. Additional information about the Draft General Order, including the draft document and public hearing notice, will be posted to the North Coast Water Board's website at www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast when available.

Public Hearing: The North Coast Water Board is anticipated to consider adoption of the General Order at a public meeting in Summer 2027, where public testimony will be accepted.

Staff welcomes questions and input from the public, facility operators, and communities of interest as we move forward with General Order development. For more information, please contact Chris Watt at 707-576-6732 or at chris.watt@waterboards.ca.gov.



Projected List of Future Regional Water Board Agenda Items

The following is a list of Regional Water Board agenda items that staff are planning for the next two Board meetings. **This list of agenda items is intended for general planning purposes and is subject to change.** Questions regarding the listed agenda items should be addressed to the identified staff person.

June 16-17, 2026 – Santa Rosa, CA

- Resolution expressing appreciation to Brenda Adelman (*Valerie Quinto*) [A]
- 2027 Board Meeting Schedule (*Valerie Quinto*) [A]
- New General Order for Ocean Discharging Publicly Owned Treatment Works (*Matt Herman*) [A]
- DG Fairhaven NPDES Permit (*Justin McSmith*) [A]
- Guerneville SWDS Waste Discharge Requirements Revision (*Terri Cia*) [A]
- Sonoma County Local Area Management Program Resolution (*Kelsey Cody*) [A]
- Russian River Watershed Association update (*Valerie Quinto*) [I]
- Regional Board Program Priorities for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (*Valerie Quinto*) [I]

August 5-6, 2026 – Crescent City, CA

- Rescission Order for NPDES Individual Enrollees prior to General Order enrollment [A]
- Smith River Lily Bulb Order Adoption Hearing [A] (*Brenna Sullivan*)
- Cloverdale NPDES Permit [A] (*Justin McSmith*)
- Tentative ACLC(s) [A]
- Tentative Time Schedule Order [A]

