

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
August 8, 2018**

ITEM 5

SUBJECT

Report on 2014 Triennial Review Project to Evaluate Water Contact Recreation (REC-1) Water Quality Objectives and Methods for Quantifying Exceedances. *(Michelle Santillan)*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational item only. The Board will not take an action.

KEY ISSUES

1. Protection and restoration of the REC-1 beneficial use needs to focus on human sources of bacteria.
2. The Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for indicator bacteria do not need to be updated at this time to align the efforts of the San Diego Water Board and regulated parties to control human sources of bacteria. Furthermore, there are data gaps that must be filled prior to considering a TMDL reopener; this information is needed to conduct a source analysis for the TMDL and to determine the status of compliance with existing requirements. More information is needed to identify and quantify human sources of bacteria, such as leaks from sewage collection systems, transient communities, and illicit discharges. In addition, more information is needed on the fate and transport of human waste through the wastewater and storm water infrastructure and through the natural and modified urban stream network.
3. The Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIPs) developed under the San Diego Regional MS4 permit and accepted by the Board are not as comprehensive as the Regional Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit envisioned. The focus of the WQIPs needs to shift from broad sources of fecal indicator bacteria towards honing in on human sources of pathogens; this will require modification of compliance strategies.

PRACTICAL VISION

This project advances the Practical Vision¹ plans to achieve healthy waters through collaboration, reliance on the latest science, prioritization of issues and actions, and prudent use of authorities in service to the people of California. By evaluating the existing water quality objectives, USEPA guidance, scientific studies, and stakeholder interests, the San Diego Water Board will be able to protect the contact recreational beneficial uses in the most efficient manner practicable.

DISCUSSION

During the Basin Plan Triennial Review completed in May 2015, the San Diego Water Board identified the Evaluation of Water Contact Recreation (REC-1) Water Quality Objectives and the Methods for Quantifying Exceedances as a Tier 1 priority project. The goal of the project was to determine whether and to what extent data supports amending: 1) the objectives, 2) implementation provisions for applicable bacteria Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), or 3) the TMDLs themselves.

¹ Practical Vision: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/Practical_Vision/index.shtml

The San Diego Water Board has implemented various actions to meet the Triennial Review commitments for this project. In developing these recommendations, staff considered issues and perspectives from external and internal workgroups, the public, and local and regional studies and data. For example, San Diego Water Board staff formed, and actively participated in, monthly stakeholder workgroup meetings to examine issues related to the REC-1 bacteria water quality objectives for surface waters and to discuss various technical studies. These meetings were also essential in bridging the communication gap between staff and external stakeholders. Meetings extended from August 2015 through December 2017. The stakeholder group included representatives from the City of San Diego's Transportation and Storm Water Department, County of Orange South Watershed Management Area, and the County of San Diego Watershed Protection Program. Meeting agendas and summaries are posted on the project website: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/issue3.html.

In addition, a few key studies also helped inform recommendations on next steps. For example, results of the [Surfer Health Study](#) (September 2016) conducted by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project indicated gastrointestinal illness (GI) of study participants increased following periods of ocean exposure and increased even further following wet weather; and the [Cost Benefit Analysis](#) of San Diego Region Bacteria TMDLs (October 2017) concluded that the most cost-effective way to meet the TMDL was to abate sources of human waste.

In summary, recommendations in the Project Summary (Supporting Document No. 1) focus on continued prioritization of REC-1 impairments and threats, specifically by addressing human sources of fecal contamination through a series of short-term and long-term actions within various San Diego Water Board functions. Recommendations include, but are not limited to: modifying existing permits, conducting compliance audits into existing permit requirements related to human waste, and issuance of an Investigative Order for the San Diego River Watershed to identify and quantify sources and transport pathways of human fecal material.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Not applicable.

COMPLIANCE RECORD

Not applicable.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to the email list for Board meetings on July 17, 2018.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. 2014 Triennial Review Project Summary – Evaluation of Contact Water Recreation (REC-1) Water Quality Objectives and Methods for Quantifying Exceedances