



Enforcement News

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

San Diego Water Board Issues \$801,000 Penalty to City of La Mesa for Sewage Discharges to Chollas Creek and San Diego River

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SAN DIEGO --- The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board today assessed an \$801,462 penalty against the City of La Mesa for spilling more than 1.3 million gallons of raw sewage into local waters in December of 2010.

As a condition of the settlement, nearly half the penalty (\$387,606) will be suspended if the city successfully completes a wetland restoration project in Alvarado Channel; one of the two areas where the spills occurred. The city's wetland restoration project will remove a segment of concrete channel bank, as well as trash and invasive plant species, and replant the area with native plants to improve water quality and wildlife uses.

"We think this project will be an asset to the local community," said David Gibson, the San Diego Water Board's executive officer. "One that can help people appreciate the value of wetland restoration in an area where the streams have been undergrounded, channelized, and marginalized from past development practices."

Multiple sewer overflows resulted in more than one million gallons of raw sewage being discharged to Chollas Creek, which drains to San Diego Bay, and 306,700 gallons of raw sewage being discharged to Alvarado Creek, which drains to the San Diego River.

The overflows occurred because the city's sewer collection system was not properly sized or designed to prevent stormwater from entering during heavy rains. As a result, during the December 2010 storms, rain water entered the sewage collection system, overwhelming its carrying capacity and causing sewer overflows in multiple locations.

Both Chollas Creek and the San Diego River are ecologically sensitive water bodies that can be adversely affected by sewage, according to the San Diego Water Board's list of [impaired water bodies](#). These water bodies also support vibrant recreation, wildlife, and commercial uses.



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The San Diego Water Board protects and restores water quality in the southwest portion of the state, including parts of San Diego, Riverside, and Orange counties.

A copy of the San Diego Water Board's settlement order is available for review at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_info/agendas/2013/Dec/Dec11.shtml .