

Addendum to Contra Costa County's Direct Discharge Control Plan May, 2018

Introduction

The purpose of this addendum is to respond to Regional Board comments received since the submittal of the Direct Discharge Control Plan last February. The following concerns/questions were raised about how the Plan would work:

- How does the Contra Costa County (County) address trash from encampments before the homeless are removed?
- How does the County confirm there is a thorough cleanup of trash from a camp after the homeless have been removed.
- How does the County propose to assess the current status of trash in waterways and demonstrate progress over time, utilizing the reporting requirements in provision C.10.e.ii.d?
- How does the Direct Discharge Plan demonstrate how the County will prevent re-encampment when a homeless encampment is removed.
- The County must demonstrate there is financial commitment to successfully implement the Plan.

This addendum will provide more details on our Direct Discharge Control Plan and respond to these concerns and questions. While developing this addendum, the County assembled an Addendum Team, consisting of field staff and office staff. The Team's charter was to determine what data would be needed to respond to the above items, discuss current homeless and illegal dumping response procedures and necessary modifications to those procedures, flowchart response processes, and determine points of coordination. The response to each of the above questions/concerns is presented in the following addendum sections.

Identifying Homeless Encampments Associated with County/Flood Control District (FCD) Streams

Homeless encampments in County/FCD owned property or rights of way are considered illegal encroachments. The County and FCD do not accommodate illegal encampments. The County developed potential homeless encampment locations through a GIS analysis, meetings with County staff familiar with homeless encampment locations, and review of logs identifying previous encampment locations. From this information the County generated maps of potential homeless encampment locations. In addition the County added new, previously unknown locations through a review of communications from the 24-hour "1-800 No Dumping" phone line, calls from the public, calls from our Board of Supervisors' offices, and reports from County personnel. This information was added to the list of locations the Coordinated Out Reach and Engagement Team (CORE Team) to investigate, if it is not already part of their homeless patrols. The County has a full time CORE Team to patrol these locations on a regular basis. Sites with recent use are patrolled more frequently than sites that have little use. At a minimum, all sites are visited monthly. Active sites are visited two to three days a week.

The CORE Team engages homeless clients to identify their needs both immediate and longer term as part of the Comprehensive Continuum of Care Program. The CORE Team identifies medical, psychological, social, and housing needs. And then addresses them within that context to find a more stable housing situation as soon as possible. The CORE Team clearly states that the homeless clients can't stay at the County/FCD land. However, it takes a few days to secure the homeless individual's needs. And the CORE Team uses the threat of imminent eviction from and clean-up of the location to persuade the clients to take advantage of the many services. These services range from vouchers that can be used to stay at nearby motels to permanent housing opportunities. However, the reality is that there is only one short term bed for every three homeless individuals. And it takes time to secure housing for homeless people.

Managing Encampment Trash before Homeless Vacate

Although the County/FCD cannot offer a quid pro quo for cleaning up and maintaining a clean encampment, the CORE Team encourages the homeless within an encampment to clean up after themselves. The County provides sturdy, thick plastic bags for the homeless to use during clean ups, that are led by the CORE Team member. The threat of imminent posting to vacate the creekside campsite provides an incentive for the homeless to use County programs offered and leave the creek to move indoors.

The CORE Team leads camp clean-ups every few days to keep the camp clean, improve self-esteem and create inertia that helps them to take advantage of the variety of social services the County offers. The homeless also use the trash bags to pack their belongings in preparation of their relocation. This effort to bag trash and bag homeless belongings removes a large portion of the trash from the site. These cleanups remove over 6,000 lbs of trash each month from County and FCD streams. Full removal of all trash at a site occurs when the posting time has expired and the cleanup crew comes in and cleans up the vacated camp.

Thorough Cleanups

The County has dedicated maintenance crews that clean up camps after the homeless have left and the 72 hour posting has expired. The County also has a contractor who can clean up camps if the crews are busy. The County protocol is to take pictures to photo-document the camp when the camp is posted with the 72 hour notice to vacate. This has been a consistent practice and provides a good "before" estimate of the pre-cleanup trash load. Our crews also take photos after cleanup, but this has not been a consistent practice. The Addendum Team will be ensuring that cleanup crews take photographs before and after on a consistent basis so we can report on the thoroughness of our cleanup efforts. The County will also continue to weigh the removed debris. But this measurement is not stratified by site. The County takes the day's clean-up to the local dump or transfer station and weighs the aggregate.

Waterways Assessment and Progress

County crews have been cleaning up trash from homeless encampments and illegal dumping sites for years and we have data from these cleanup efforts. While not perfect, this data provides useful information of deposited trash levels in the County and FCD creeks throughout the County, including unincorporated areas and flood control channels within cities. In addition the County and Flood Control District have 13 trash "hot spot" assessment sites. Some of these sites are associated with homeless encampments. Our protocol with the Direct Discharge Control Plan is to identify the location where trash from homeless encampments is being removed and track the amount of trash hauled off from the site, either through CORE lead pick-ups while occupied, or by County crews after the encampment has been closed. The County has protocols for tracking quantities of trash removed. Data varies from cleanup efforts, whether by a maintenance crew, volunteer creek group during a Creek Cleanup, the CORE Team, or our private contractor. At a minimum, the County collects weights, which are converted into volume (gallons). At a maximum the County uses the trash "hot spot assessment" protocol to characterize the type of trash and non-organic debris.

One of the process improvements identified by the Addendum Team is to develop written procedures to memorialize the "verbal" protocols. Preparing those written procedures is currently in development. To show progress over time, we have to demonstrate a reduction in homeless camps and re-encampment each year. To do this, and to meet other Plan requirements, the Addendum Team determined the need for the following data:

- Number of homeless encampments removed over time
- Population of homeless within the encampments over time
- The movement of homeless populations and why certain camps are more attractive
- Photo documentation of each encampment with GPS location
- Number of trash bags filled and removed from encampments
- Number of homeless that have been given services by the CORE Team
- Map of illegal dumping locations near creeks

Some of this data will come from the CORE Team who report on at least a weekly basis. The County is currently working with the CORE Team to ensure their reports include the information noted above. As part of the assessment on illegal encampments, the County will develop a map of illegal camp locations on or adjacent to County and FCD creeks. And, as part of the annual reporting requirements, the County will identify the number of new illegal camp locations, if any illegal dumping has occurred where fencing was installed, and any further action taken to prevent illegal camps along creeks. All of this information gathered above will be used to determine trash load reductions in our creeks and improvement to our waterway conditions.

Re-encampment

One of the County's objectives with the Direct Discharge Control Plan is to prevent re-encampment of previously cleaned out homeless camps. Preventing re-encampment is an important component of our Plan and the County intends to take a stepwise approach to meeting this objective. Cleaned out camps will be monitored regularly to make sure re-encampment does not occur. If a particular location is subject to re-encampment, we will determine why through discussions with the CORE Team. It may be close proximity to a service center, particularly easy access, hidden from view, or a host of other reasons. The County will then make modifications to the camp area to neutralize those attractions. This might include, for example, more secure fencing at the points of access or trimming of vegetation for increased visibility. If this does not work then physical alteration of the camp area will be explored. This might include, for example, stainless steel bars (or other extremely difficult material to cut) blocking off flat areas under bridges adjacent to the abutments, or installing sharp edged riprap embedded in concrete along the slopes. Another approach is to implement increased patrolling by law enforcement personnel to prevent re-encampment. Our reports to the Regional Board will include how many camps have been removed, if any re-encampment has occurred, and measures taken to prevent further re-encampment.

Financial Commitment

The County analyzed the total compliance costs for the Municipal Regional Permit 2.0 through the end of the five-year permit term. In round numbers, the estimated annual cost is \$5 million (assuming PCBs load reductions are addressed largely by others), while the dedicated revenue source for our Stormwater Program is \$3 million. While we recognize there is a structural problem with our budget, with costs exceeding revenue, we have made trash reduction a priority. As a result, the Direct Discharge Control Plan, budgeted at \$300,000 for fiscal year 2017/18 was fully funded and the proposed budget amount for fiscal year 2018/19 is also funded at \$365,000. The primary source of funding is the Stormwater Utility Assessment funds generated from an assessment on all parcels within the unincorporated County. There is also \$50,000 in funds allocated from the Flood Control District for FY 2017/18 and \$50,000 for FY 2018/19. The FY 2017/18 budget was proposed by the Public Works Department and approved by the Board of Supervisors. The FY 2018/19 budget has been proposed by the Department to the Board, which is currently in the midst of budget discussions. The budget is expected to be approved in June. The County understands trash reduction is a priority of the Regional Board, and has allocated its resources accordingly.

Conclusion

The homeless in California has been an issue since the hobos of the Great Depression and there has been no easy way to resolve it. The County knows from our homeless study, commissioned with UC Berkeley, there are different types of homeless populations. Some produce more trash than others.

Our objective is not necessarily to remove all homeless. Effectively dealing with the homeless requires a significant amount of coordination with a variety of agencies and sharing of information, not the least of which is sharing health and safety information that would benefit the cleanup crews. The Addendum Team also identified the need for training for our cleanup crews and others that will be working on our Direct Discharge Control Plan. While it is a daunting task, the County is committed to the reduction of trash generated by homeless in our creeks.

Contra Costa County is committed to providing a continuum of care to homeless people to find secure housing. For those homeless trying to reside in County or FCD creeks, the County will continue to increase the effectiveness of barriers to prohibit encampment, respond quickly to new encampments, and assist the homeless to keep their camps clean while the County secures more appropriate housing.

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