

# Chapter 1. Introduction

---

The California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) proposes to adopt a General Order (GO) for General Waste Discharge Requirements for the Discharge of Biosolids to Land for use in agricultural, silvicultural, horticultural, and land reclamation activities in California. Biosolids are defined as sewage sludge that has been treated, tested, and shown to be capable of being used beneficially as a soil amendment for the above purposes. The GO would establish a notification and permit review process applicable to all persons and public entities intended to apply biosolids to land for the above purposes. The GO describes the mandatory discharge prohibitions, discharge and application specifications, transportation and storage requirements, and general procedures and provisions for all land appliers.

California's Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) would require individual permits for those biosolids operations that did not meet the requirements of the GO. Further, the GO would not supersede county land use regulations.

The SWRCB originally certified a final program environmental impact report (PEIR) for the GO in 2000. Litigation brought against the SWRCB after approval of the GO resulted in the preparation of this revision to that PEIR. The court generally found the PEIR to be adequate, but concluded that two of the project alternatives identified in the PEIR were dismissed from detailed analysis without sufficient grounds. It ordered the SWRCB to decertify the final PEIR and set aside its approval of the GO pending revision and recertification of the PEIR, which will contain new analyses of the two alternatives.

In accordance with the court order, the SWRCB has prepared this revised PEIR to include a detailed examination of the "Class A Only" and the "Food Crop Limitation" alternatives. In addition, although not required by the court, the SWRCB has added new discussions to the PEIR where pertinent new information has become available since certification of the prior version.

The SWRCB released the draft revised PEIR for public review and comment on February 2, 2004. Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5, the SWRCB considered this to be a recirculation of the PEIR (since the 1999 final PEIR is to be decertified) and requested that reviewers focus their comments on the changes made to the alternatives analysis. Soon after the release of the draft PEIR, SWRCB staff found that text changes made in 1999 prior to certification of the final PEIR were not included in the draft revised PEIR. None of those changes affected the two new alternatives. A corrected version of the draft revised PEIR, including the changes made as part of the 1999 final PEIR, was sent to all agencies and individuals that had previously received copies of the draft revised PEIR. The review period for the draft revised PEIR ended on March 17, 2004.

The final revised PEIR is based on the corrected version of the draft revised PEIR. The final PEIR for this project consists of two volumes. The first volume is this document, which consists of comments received during the public review period, the agency's

written responses, a list of commenters, and specific revisions being made to the draft PEIR. The second volume consists of the corrected-draft revised EIR that was made available for public review.

Both volumes will be considered by the SWRCB prior to taking action on the proposed GO. Taken together, they comprise the final EIR for this project.