

Update of Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS Policy)

OWTS Policy Update Information

What is the OWTS Policy?

- The OWTS Policy was adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board); the Policy became effective May 13, 2013. The Policy established a statewide, risk-based, tiered approach for regulation and management of OWTS. More information on the OWTS Policy is available at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/owts/docs/owts_fs.pdf

Why was the OWTS Policy updated?

- The Policy includes a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for systems in compliance with the Policy, which by law expires after five years. The State Water Board renewed the conditional waiver on April 17, 2018.
- OWTS Policy Attachment 2 contains a list of impaired waterbodies for which OWTS discharges are likely to be a contributing source of pathogens or nitrogen. Since the adoption of the OWTS Policy, technical studies performed and other factors justify changes to Attachment 2. The list of water bodies was amended to reflect the changes.
- The resolution and supporting staff report that amend the OWTS Policy are available at:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/owts/docs/rs2018_0019.pdf

How will the update affect OWTS owners?

- OWTS located near waterbodies removed from Attachment 2 are no longer subject to Tier 3 requirements unless a local agency has developed an advanced protection management program (APMP) for the area. Your local agency will inform you of APMP requirements if they are applicable.

What Changed After May 13, 2018?

- Local agencies that developed a local agency management program (LAMP) that was approved by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) may implement the approved program.
- A local agency without an approved LAMP may permit new or replacement OWTS consistent with Tier 1, 3, and/or 4 requirements. Owners of new or replacement OWTS that do not meet the tier requirements must submit a report of waste discharge (RWD) to the appropriate Regional Water Board.
- For OWTS classified as Tier 4 that cannot be repaired to comply with Tier 1 or 3 requirements, the Regional Water Board may authorize repairs in substantial conformance with the OWTS Policy or may require submission of an RWD. Local agencies with an approved LAMP may authorize repairs in substantial conformance with applicable Tier 2 requirements for OWTS not able to comply with corrective action requirements.

Additional Resources

OWTS Policy Program Page

The OWTS update documents, staff report, fact sheets, and other OWTS related documents are available on the program page at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/owts/index.html

Tier 3 Map Screening Tool

The State Water Board has updated the Tier 3 map available on the Internet to reflect the OWTS Policy update. Due to inherent mapping resolution issues, the tool is for screening only. Verification of Tier 3 status is required. The map is available at:

<http://gispublic.waterboards.ca.gov/webmap/owts/owtsmap.html>

Surface and Groundwater Quality Data

Water quality data maintained by the State of California is available on the Internet from the following databases:

Surface Water Data The California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) provides surface water quality data, including streams, lakes, rivers, and the coastal ocean. The data is available at:
<http://ceden.org/index.shtml>

Groundwater Data The Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) and GeoTracker program provides groundwater quality data. The data is available at:
<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/>

For more information please contact:

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