

Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

CONSIDERATION OF ENROLLMENT UNDER GENERAL WAIVER FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF LIMITED-THREAT DISCHARGES, SECTION D

ORDER NO. R3-2024-0035

AND

MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM ORDER NO. R3-2026-0011 FOR

SPACE EXPLORATION TECHNOLOGIES CORP.
SPACE LAUNCH COMPLEX 4, VANDENBERG SPACE FORCE BASE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

JANUARY 26, 2026

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Central Coast Water Board) proposes to authorize the Space Exploration Technologies Corp (SpaceX; Discharger) to discharge rocket launch related water, along with intermittent comingled stormwater (rainwater that falls on, and runs off of, hardscape surfaces), via onsite land surface disposal with enrollment in the General Waiver for Specific Types of Limited-Threat Waste Discharges, Order No. R3-2024-0035 (General Waiver). The General Waiver identifies 13 specific discharge types that the Executive Officer may enroll in the General Waiver. Proposed low-threat discharges not specifically identified in the General Waiver may be enrolled under Section D, contingent upon Central Coast Water Board (Board) consideration and approval. The Discharger's proposed discharge type is not specifically identified in the General Waiver; therefore, Board approval is required to enroll the discharge in the General Waiver.

SpaceX launches Falcon 9 rockets from Space Launch Complex 4 (SLC-4) at Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB). Launching a Falcon 9 rocket requires water to suppress noise, heat, and vibrations. Before launching, water is present within the flame bucket below the rocket motors. Just prior to and during rocket liftoff, water is sprayed downward into the rocket exhaust from towers positioned around the rocket. Heat from the rocket motors flashes much of the water into steam. Most of the steam is funneled through the flame bucket below the rocket, then outward. Mobilized water that is still liquid generally flows along the concrete-lined flame duct that begins at the flame bucket below the rocket motors and terminates at a concrete-lined retention basin. Water from this retention basin is pumped to a spray field where it is discharged to land. During the rainy season, rainwater/stormwater becomes incidentally comingled with the launch related water and is discharged to land along with launch related water.

JANE GRAY, CHAIR | RYAN E. LODGE, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Enrollment into the General Waiver is based on the information provided by SpaceX in the Report of Waste Discharge (ROWD)¹ including the water quality data provided in Figure I-12 of the ROWD and preliminary groundwater monitoring data² collected by the VSFB Installation Restoration Program (IRP), at the request of the Central Coast Water Board. The information provided confirms that the planned rocket launch wastewater discharges present no significant threat to water quality. Therefore, it is appropriate to enroll SpaceX in the General Waiver provided that SpaceX complies with the General Conditions as presented in the General Waiver and the Central Coast Water Board's Notice of Applicability (NOA) and Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) No. R3-2026-0011.

A copy of the NOA for SpaceX's enrollment in the General Waiver, Section D, Order R3-2024-0035 and MRP Order No. R3-2026-0011 can be found on the Central Coast Water Board's tentative orders page at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_decisions/tentative_orders/

A copy of the General Waiver for Specific Types of Limited-Threat Discharges, Order No. R3-2024-0035 can be found on the Central Coast Water Board's adopted orders page at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2024/r3_2024_0035.pdf

PUBLIC HEARING

The Central Coast Water Board will hold a public hearing to consider SpaceX's enrollment in the General Waiver. The meeting information is provided below:

Meeting: Central Coast Water Board Meeting
Date: April 16-17, 2026
Location: Central Coast Water Board Offices
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Information about participating in the meeting remotely via video or teleconference can be found at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_info/remote_meeting/index.html

The final meeting agenda notice and staff report will be available at least 10 days before the Board meeting at the link below. The agenda notice will provide the specific date this item will be considered during the Board meeting, indicate the anticipated order of all agenda items, and may include staff revisions to the proposed order.

https://waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_info/agendas/2026/2026_agendas.html

¹ SpaceX's SLC-4 ROWD is available at: <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?url=omnyf>

² May-June 2025 preliminary/draft/unvalidated analytical results from wells tested for hydrocarbons: <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?url=m0tsr>. Finalized analytical results will be uploaded upon quality assurance/quality control validation.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Interested persons are invited to submit comments in writing to the Central Coast Water Board in writing on or before **February 26, 2026**. Comments should be addressed to:

Central Coast Water Board, Attn: Don Eley
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
email: rb3-dodprogram@waterboards.ca.gov
(805) 542-4626

All comments received prior to **February 26, 2026** will be considered in the formulation of staff recommendations regarding the waste discharge. The Central Coast Water Board will not accept written comments or other written submittals on the proposed waste discharge requirements after **February 26, 2026**, unless the Chair of the Central Coast Water Board rules that exclusion would create a hardship, and that the late submission will not prejudice any party or the Central Coast Water Board. Any person submitting late comments or other submittals must explain why such materials were not submitted by **February 26, 2026**. The Chair of the Central Coast Water Board will rule on late submittals at or before the hearing. Late submittals that consist of evidence (as opposed to policy statements or comments) are generally prejudicial unless all parties and Central Coast Water Board staff have time to consider the evidence before the hearing. Interested persons are invited to attend the hearing and may make oral comments relevant to the proposed action. Oral comments should summarize written comments. The Chair of the Central Coast Water Board will impose time limits on oral comments. Please share this public notice with any persons who would be interested in this matter.

This public notice is available in Spanish and English. Interested persons may also request that the NOA and MRP Order No. R3-2026-0011 be translated into Spanish, dependent upon available resources. Please submit any questions or requests to Don Eley at (805) 542-4626, or via email to rb3-dodprogram@waterboards.ca.gov.