



**CITY of GARDENA**

1700 WEST 162<sup>nd</sup> STREET / GARDENA, CALIFORNIA 90247-3778 / PHONE (310) 217-9500  
WEB SITE: [www.ci.gardena.ca.us](http://www.ci.gardena.ca.us)

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PETER L. WALLIN, *City Attorney*

June 27, 2013

Sam Unger P.E.  
California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Los Angeles Region  
320 W. 4th Street, Suite 200  
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Subject: Notice of Intent to Opt for an Individual Watershed Management Program

Dear Mr. Unger:

The **City of Gardena** is pleased to submit its Notice of Intent ("NOI") to the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board ("Regional Board") to:

1. Develop an Individual Watershed Management Program ("I-WMP") in accordance with Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board Order No. R4-2012-0175, NPDES Permit No., CAS0040, adopted on November 8, 2012 ("Order") and became effective on December 28, 2012, and
2. Participate in a Coordinated Integrated Monitoring Plan ("CIMP").

The NOI requires the completion of the following tasks under VI.C.4.B.ii:

1. Identify applicable interim and final trash water quality based effluent limitations (WQBELs).
2. Identify all other interim and final WQBELs.
3. Identify interim and final receiving water limitations, and

4. Identify watershed control measures (where possible) based on existing TMDL implementation plans to be implemented by the City, concurrently with the development of a WMP (an I-WMP in this case).

In addition to the foregoing, NOI also requires the following tasks to be performed if a permittee chooses to implement an I-WMP:

1. Demonstrate that a Low Impact Development (LID) ordinance is in place or begin development of one within 60 days of the Order (February 26, 2013);
2. Demonstrate that a Green Street Policy is in place or begin development of one that addresses "green street strategies for transportation corridors" within 60 days of the Order.

The attached provides a complete discussion of the NOI-related tasks.

Should you have any questions please feel free to call John Felix of my staff at (310) 217-9643, email, [jfelix@ci.gardena.ca.us](mailto:jfelix@ci.gardena.ca.us).

*"I certify under penalty of law that this document and all attachments were prepared under my direction or supervision in accordance with a system designed to assure that qualified personnel properly gather and evaluate the information submitted.*

*Based on my inquiry of the person or persons who manage the system, or those persons directly responsible for gathering the information, the information submitted is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, accurate, and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information, including the possibility, of a fine and imprisonment for knowing violations."*

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mitchell Lansdell  
City Manager

## Notice of Intent I. Individual Water Management Plan

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### 1. *Rationale for I-WMP*

The **City of Gardena** (City) has chosen the I-WMP, albeit with reservation, to meet TMDL and non-water quality standards (referred to collectively as “WQs”) for several reasons including but not limited to the following:

- i. The I-WMP allows the City to determine to what extent its existing stormwater quality management program (SQMP), which has been in effect since 2002, is meeting TMDLs and non-TMDL WQs, based outfall monitoring against ambient WQs. It is possible that the City has been meeting some or even most WQs. If outfall monitoring shows persistent exceedances the I-WMP will contain a mechanism for addressing it.
- ii. The City cannot justify an Enhanced Watershed Management Plan (E-WMP) at this time because: (1) there is no water quality monitoring data that would justify this extreme and costly option; (2) neither the County of Los Angeles (which wrote the E-WMP provision in the current MS4 permit) nor the City of Los Angeles has indicated what multi-benefit projects it is proposing to provide the “safe harbor”<sup>1</sup> that would enable participating permittees to achieve compliance even if exceedances of TMDLs and non-TMDL WQs occur<sup>2</sup>; (3) there is no guarantee that participating in an E-WMP could assure compliance with WQs; (4) there is no current funding mechanism for the E-WMP<sup>3</sup>; and (5) were the City to commit to an E-WMP, it would be required to enter into an MOU that could bind it to its requirements even if funding is not available.
- iii. The City has chosen the I-WMP, even though it still ties it to having to comply with strict waste load allocations (WLAs) at the outfall and apparently in the receiving water as well. The City would have preferred to meet WQs through the implementation of its stormwater management plan (SWMP) as is provided

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<sup>1</sup>Neither the County nor City of Los Angeles, which are encouraging permittees to participate in “regional multi-benefit” projects that would provide the safe harbor, has yet disclose what those projects are.

<sup>2</sup>The MS4 permit asserts that the E-WMP provides compliance with WQs and even with some minimum control measures (viz., the 6 core programs that form the stormwater management program required under federal law). There is reason to believe that this provision is extra-legal and could be voided either under administrative or judicial challenge. For one thing, an E-WMP is not a water quality based effluent limitation (WQBEL) which would translate a WSS into a compliance action. Perhaps it could have been one had the MS4 permit made clear that the E-WMP contains BMPs capable of meeting all the numeric WQs over time. Instead, the MS4 permit incorrectly uses WQBEL to mean the same thing as a waste load allocation. Further, the EWMP’s regional multi-benefit project requirement cannot guarantee compliance with WLAs measured at the outfall if the project is located outside of permittee’s MS4. Even if the MS4 permit survives challenge, there is no guarantee that the E-WMP and its safe harbor provision will carry-over to the next MS4 permit. MS4 permits are five years in duration and the next Regional Board has the authority change permit requirements. It could not be argued that the anti-backsliding provision of Clean Water Action Section 402(o) would compel the next Regional Board to continue the E-WMP. This is because anti-backsliding only applies to WQs, not to the means of achieving them. Further, 402(o) contains other anti-backsliding exemptions.

<sup>3</sup>The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors indicated at its March 12, 2013 public hearing on the Clean Beaches, Clean Water Fee Initiative that it does not intend to re-try this proposition as a 218 parcel fee. Instead, they suggested that if another fee measure is attempted it would be through a regular tax vote.

under the Receiving Water Limitation (RWL) section of the MS4 permit. The RWL can be interpreted to mean that if a permittee implements its SWMP in a timely and complete manner it will be in compliance with WQSs. If persistent exceedances of WQSs are detected from outfall discharges the permittee shall report them to the Regional Board along with a plan for improving BMPs to address the exceedances. This constitutes an “iterative process.” However, the MS4 permit appears to over-ride the RWL provision by requiring permittees to meet the WQSs by any means necessary by interim TMDL deadlines. Nevertheless, just to err on the side of caution, the City has chosen the I-WMP because it will provide more time for compliance with interim WLAs. It is expected that by the time compliance with interim TMDLs is due, the administrative petition and state-wide RWL language (expected to be decided by the State Water Resources Control Board some time in February of 2014), will have been resolved. Although Gardena is opting for an I-WMP and CIMP, it shall work in cooperation with the following permittees on a watershed basis:

Watershed/Sub-watershed	Participating MS4s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominguez Channel (unlined portion above Vermont)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Gardena</li> <li>• Lawndale</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominguez Channel (unlined portion below Vermont)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Compton</li> <li>• City of Carson</li> </ul>

Each participating MS4 will be responsible for preparing its own individual WMPs and conducting its own monitoring. However, because each of these permittees shares the same consultant, cost-sharing of I-WMP and CIMP development shall result in de facto terms.

## 2. Water Quality Based Effluent Limitations and Receiving Water Limitations

Dry and wet weather interim and final water quality based effluent limitations (WQBELs) and receiving water limitations (RWLs) are discussed below. There is a definitional problem with these terms, however. Neither the MS4 permit nor state and federal law define or refer to an interim or final WQBEL or RWL. Nor is there a definition of a dry or wet weather WQBEL and RWL. However, based on conversations with Regional Board staff it appears that a dry and wet weather WQBEL is synonymous with a dry and wet weather waste load allocation in a TMDL, but applied to outfalls. And, it appears that a dry and wet weather RWL are TMDL WLAs applied to a receiving water. The use of the term RWL is confusing because it does not square with its use under the Receiving Water Limitation section of the MS4 permit. Further, the MS4 permit defines a RWL to mean:

*Any applicable numeric or narrative water quality objective or criterion, or limitation to implement the applicable water quality objective or criterion, for the receiving water as contained in Chapter 3 or 7 of the Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region (Basin Plan), water quality control*

*plans or policies adopted by the State Water Board, or federal regulations, including but not limited to, 40 CFR § 131.38.*

Nevertheless, the foregoing definition is deficient to the extent that is limited only to water quality objectives (WQOs), which are State standards. The definition should only have referenced WQs, which are federal standards and according to the Los Angeles Region Basin Plan also includes WQOs. Or it should have just added WQs in the sentence, thereby making it clear that WQs and WQOs are RWLs. This is an important distinction because a WQO cannot be interpreted to mean or apply to a TMDL.

Beyond this, if the Regional Board intended interim and final RWLs to mean WLAs that require compliance in receiving waters, based on in-stream monitoring, it is mistaken. As RWL language in the Order at V.A.1 explains: *Discharges from the MS4 that cause or contribute to the violation of receiving water limitations are prohibited.* From this, it would be unreasonable to conclude that an RWL can be expressed in interim or final terms. It has been suggested that the RWL is merely a compliance standard, expressed as a WLA, applied to the receiving water that must be complied through in-stream measurements. However, it is a clear from Order section V.A.1 that determining violations of RWLs can only be determined by measuring discharges from the MS4 (viz., an outfall or end-of-pipe).

i. *Interim and Final WQBELs for Dominguez Toxics TMDL (wet weather only)<sup>4</sup>  
Applicable to the City of Gardena*

Toxics/Metals TMDL	Wet Weather Interim WLA	Deadline	Wet Weather Final Interim	Deadline
• Total Copper	207.51 µg/L	March, 2012	1300.3 g/day	March 2032
• Total Lead	122.88 µg/L	March, 2012	5733.7 g/day	March 2032
• Total Zinc	898.87 µg/L	March, 2012	9355.5 g/day	March 2032
• Toxicity	2 TUc	March, 2012	1 TUc	March 2032

ii. *Interim and Final RWLs for Dominguez Toxics TMDL (wet weather only)<sup>5</sup>  
Applicable to the City of Gardena*

Toxics/Metals TMDL	Wet Weather Interim WLA	Deadline	Wet Weather Final Interim	Deadline
• Total Copper	207.51 µg/L	March, 2012	1300.3 g/day	March 2032
• Total Lead	122.88 µg/L	March, 2012	5733.7 g/day	March 2032
• Total Zinc	898.87 µg/L	March, 2012	9355.5 g/day	March 2032
• Toxicity	2 TUc	March, 2012	1 TUc	March 2032

<sup>4</sup>Dominguez Channel freshwater allocations are set for wet weather only because no dry weather exceedances were recorded.

<sup>5</sup>See footnote 4 above.

Should additional WCMs be required, based on monitoring data indicating persistent exceedances detected at the outfall against ambient standards, the City will rely on implementation plans already developed for TMDLs by a number of permittees, including the County of Los Angeles Watershed Management Division. Specifically, it will review both structural and non-structural BMPs in the various implementation plans. The BMPs will undergo a reasonable assurance analysis using an appropriate performance-predicting model. Selection of the final BMP or suite of final BMPs will be based on the extent of the pollution problem (viz., the frequency and level of exceedances) and their individual or combined efficacy in addressing the exceeded WLAs.

#### 4. *Demonstration of an Low Impact Development Ordinance*

The City has begun development of the LID order to the extent that: (1) it has reviewed the City and County of Los Angeles' versions; and (2) is considering a more abbreviated ordinance of its own. The City's experience with the Standard Urban Stormwater Management Program (SUSMP) ordinance is that the more requirements specified in a code can result in less flexibility that could, as a result, pose a problem to enforcement. The City, therefore, is leaning towards code language that will be brief and will defer to LID guidelines that the City plans to develop at a later date, just as was the case for the SUSMP ordinance. It was the stormwater quality management plan (SQMP) development planning/SUSMP guidelines under the previous Order that actually determined how compliance was to be specifically achieved. Further, guidelines can be easily amended as opposed to amending the code.

#### 5. *Demonstration of Green Street Policy Development*

The Green Street Policy shall be based on the requirements of the Order which applies to the **Land Use Development Program** and its subject new development and redevelopment projects:

*Street and road construction of 10,000 square feet or more of impervious surface area shall follow USEPA guidance regarding Managing Wet Weather with Green Infrastructure: Green Streets (December 2008 EPA-833-F-08-009) to the maximum extent practicable. Street and road construction applies to standalone streets, roads, highways, and freeway projects, and also applies to streets within larger projects.*

This provision clearly directs permittees to follow USEPA guidance to the maximum extent practicable<sup>6</sup> and is applicable to 10,000 square feet or more of impervious surface. The City shall apply it to new transportation corridors in areas of new development which are defined as *standalone streets, roads, highways, and freeway projects, and also applies to streets within larger projects*. It shall not, as specified in

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<sup>6</sup>MEP will be based on, among other factors, cost and infiltration rates and shall allow for infiltration of street runoff through other media such as porous concrete.

the Order, apply to routine maintenance for subject redevelopment projects necessary to:

*maintain original line and grade, hydraulic capacity, original purpose of facility or emergency redevelopment activity required to protect public health and safety. Impervious surface replacement, such as the reconstruction of parking lots and roadways which does not disturb additional area and maintains the original grade*

The City's commitment to this policy shall be expressed through: (1) the Land Use Development element of its Stormwater Management Program ("SWMP"), which includes this and five other minimum control measures; and through (2) its General Plan Transportation Element at the time of its next update. The policy shall be effectuated as a type of infiltration best management practice (BMP) permittees have been incorporating into new and redevelopment projects under the previous Order's SUSMP since 2006.

The City sees no necessity in placing or implementing its green street program in its I-WMP. This is because green infrastructure is associated with the Land Use Development Program which is a mandatory core SWMP component that would be implemented even if a permittee only chose to rely on its minimum control measures ("MCMs") to achieve compliance with TMDLs and other water quality standards.

#### 6. *Technical Advisory Committee*

The MS4 permit specifies a technical advisory committee ("TAC") that will "advise and participate" in the development of WMPs and E-WMPs. It is not clear if the MS4 permit intended the TAC to also include I-WMPs. Further, although the TAC is to be comprised of representatives of watershed management areas ("WMAs") it does not specify a procedural mechanism for choosing them. The previous MS4 permit specified watershed management committees which were structured to make decisions based on majority rule. These committees were not carried over to this MS4 permit. A similar decision-making mechanism will need to be developed for selecting the TAC.

END SECTION I

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Notice of Intent II. Coordinated Integrated Monitoring Plan

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The City declares its preference for participation in a Coordinated Integrated Monitoring Plan ("CIMP"). The CIMP will include participation with other MS4 permittees according to watersheds as mentioned above. The CIMP will address all of the monitoring requirements specified in the MS4 permit's Monitoring and Reporting Program ("MRP") element. The purpose of the CIMP is to: (1) characterize watersheds/sub-watersheds relative to WQSSs; (2) determine to what extent MS4 permittees are meeting or not meeting WQSSs; and (3) achieve monitoring cost savings through collective participation with other permittees sharing common watershed location.

The City takes the position that a comparison of outfalls discharges against ambient referents is the only legally valid monitoring requirement for determining compliance. To this end, the City shall collect outfall samples in accordance with the MRP and measure them against ambient standards.<sup>7</sup> Ambient standards have been used by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board's Surface Water Ambient Program (SWAMP) for Dominguez Channel, Los Angeles River, and Machado Lake. It should be noted, however, that the Regional Board has not adhered to a consistent definition of ambient water quality monitoring. Although it references ambient in the Los Angeles River metals and bacteria TMDLs, it has not done so for the Dominguez Channel Harbors Toxics TMDL and for the Machado Lake Nutrients and Toxics TMDLs.

Ambient water quality monitoring is generally understood to mean collecting water quality samples during dry weather either during the dry season or during the wet season following a storm event. This has been confirmed by the Regional Board's SWAMP. SWAMP indicated that initially it performed ambient monitoring between 48 and 72 hours after a storm event. It later chose to conduct ambient during the spring and summer because there was no significant difference between the two sampling periods.

Measuring outfall discharges against wet weather WLAs is not required under federal or state law.<sup>8</sup> This argument is also reflected in the City's administrative petition challenging the MS4 permit. Nevertheless, the City shall compare outfall discharges against wet weather WLAs and data generated from existing in-stream stations relative to applicable TMDLs as well as against ambient discharges for purposes of reference and comparison rather than compliance.

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END SECTION II

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<sup>7</sup>It is well established that water quality standards, including California Toxics Rule standards, are ambient standards.

<sup>8</sup>See State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ 2001-15, page 10-11.