

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
LOS ANGELES REGION
February 22, 2024
Resolution No. R24-001

2023 - 2025 Triennial Review
Selection of Basin Planning Projects

WHEREAS, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (Los Angeles Water Board) finds that:

1. A Water Quality Control Plan for the Santa Clara River Basin was adopted by the Los Angeles Water Board on March 3, 1975 and was amended on April 26, 1976, March 27, 1978, March 27, 1989, and October 22, 1990.
2. A Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles River Basin was adopted by the Los Angeles Water Board on March 10, 1975 and was amended on April 26, 1976, November 27, 1978, March 27, 1989, and June 3, 1991.
3. In 1994, the Water Quality Control Plans for the Santa Clara River Basin and Los Angeles River Basin were comprehensively updated and combined into one plan, entitled "Water Quality Control Plan – Los Angeles Region" ("Basin Plan").
4. The updated Basin Plan was adopted by the Los Angeles Water Board on June 13, 1994, and approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) on November 17, 1994 and by the State Office of Administrative Law (OAL) on February 23, 1995.
5. The Basin Plan contains the region's water quality standards, which consist of beneficial uses and water quality objectives to protect those uses, as well as an anti-degradation policy. The Basin Plan also contains programs of implementation, including total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for surface waters, management measures for salts and nutrients in groundwater basins, certain discharge prohibitions, and references to other statewide plans and policies applicable to the region's waters, descriptions of water quality monitoring and surveillance, and non-regulatory descriptions of the region covered by the Plan.
6. State and federal laws mandate the periodic review of basin plans. Specifically, California Water Code (CWC) section 13240 states that basin plans "shall be periodically reviewed and may be revised." In addition, section 303(c)(1) of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires that a state review its water quality standards and, as appropriate, modify and adopt standards, at least once every three years. This process is known as a triennial review. The primary purpose of a triennial review is to review water quality standards to ensure they are based on current science, methodologies, and U.S. EPA directives, recommendations and guidance, as well as to take public comment on issues the Los Angeles Water Board should address in the future through the Basin Plan amendment process.
7. The triennial review process is cyclical, meaning that at the end of one three-year review period, the review process begins again with the next three-year period. In this

sense, the review process is on-going, reflecting the continuing planning process adhered to by the State and Regional Water Boards. The process does not necessarily involve the revision of all or any particular component of the water quality standards every three years. Moreover, identification of an issue during a triennial review does not necessarily mean that any Basin Plan amendment will be made over the course of the three-year review cycle. While the Los Angeles Water Board is required to conduct a review of its Basin Plan, neither federal nor state law imposes a duty to revise or modify it. (*City of Arcadia v. State Water Resources Control Bd.* (2010) 191 Cal.App.4th 156).

8. The decision on whether or not to proceed with a proposed Basin Plan amendment is only made after the Los Angeles Water Board reviews the technical and legal considerations associated with an issue and determines that development of a Basin Plan amendment is supported by evidence and appropriate. Federal or state law or regulations may preclude changes that might otherwise be deemed desirable by stakeholders. Therefore, it is common for water quality standards to remain unchanged as a result of a triennial review process. Even where changes are appropriate and lawful, the State's continuing planning process¹ and other federally approved documents, recognize that the process of modifying water quality standards is resource intensive, and typically limited by staffing and budgetary constraints. As such, the triennial review process assists in identifying the most important or compelling projects and allows the states to prioritize those as resources allow.
9. In recent years, the Los Angeles Water Board conducted triennial reviews of the Basin Plan in 2001-2004, 2005-2007, 2008-2010, 2011-2013, 2014-2016, 2017-2019, and 2020-2022. Between 1997 and 2022, a total of 132 Basin Plan Amendments have been adopted, consisting of 85 TMDLs and TMDL revisions and 47 administrative and regulatory updates to the Basin Plan. The most recent Basin Plan Amendments that were undertaken during the last triennial review between 2020 and 2022 included: (1) an update to Bacteria Objectives according to Statewide Bacteria Provisions, completed in February 2020 (Resolution No. R20-001), and (2) an update to Chapter 2 "Beneficial Uses", along with the addition of three new beneficial uses – Tribal Tradition and Culture (CUL), Tribal Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB) and Subsistence Fishing (SUB), completed in March 2022 (Resolution No. R22-001).
10. This resolution identifies a number of projects that the Los Angeles Water Board has determined are the most appropriate priorities to undertake during the current triennial review period. The Los Angeles Water Board's Basin Planning Program currently operates with 1.7 Person Years (PYs) per year. Carrying out the projects identified during this triennial review process is only one of the responsibilities of those staff whose time comprises the 1.7 PYs each year. During the 2023-2025 triennial review cycle, 0.5 Basin Planning PYs will be required to participate in statewide Basin Planning initiatives and support other Los Angeles Water Board programs, leaving 1.2 Basin Planning PYs available to address the selected projects.
11. In accordance with CWA section 303(c)(1), section 131.20(a) of title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and CWC section 13240, the Los Angeles Water Board has initiated its 2023-2025 triennial review of water quality standards contained in the

¹ The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires each state to have in place a "continuing planning process" (CPP) approved by the U.S. EPA [CWA §303(e)].

Basin Plan. The triennial review will conform to the processes described in the State's continuing planning process.

12. In adopting this resolution, the Los Angeles Water Board is not required to consider the factors of CWC section 13241. Consideration of the factors is required when "establishing water quality objectives." Here, the Los Angeles Water Board is not establishing water quality objectives. Instead, as required by CWA section 303(c)(1), the Los Angeles Water Board is *reviewing* its water quality standards. (See *City of Arcadia v. State Water Resources Control Bd.* (2010) 191 Cal.App.4th 156).
13. On December 28, 2022, the Los Angeles Water Board sent out a triennial review notification letter to interested persons and entities inviting them to submit data, information, documents and other evidence regarding suggested revisions or additions to water quality standards applicable to waters in the Los Angeles Region that could be addressed during the 2023–2025 triennial review. The comment submission deadline was February 6, 2023. The Los Angeles Water Board received nine comment letters.
14. The Los Angeles Water Board has satisfied the outreach requirements set forth in Water Code section 189.7 by conducting outreach in potentially affected disadvantaged and tribal communities.
15. When adopting or modifying water quality objectives, Water Code section 13149.2 of the California Water Code requires the Los Angeles Water Board to make a concise, programmatic finding on potential environmental justice, tribal impact, and racial equity considerations related to the adoption. The triennial review process does not include the adoption or modification of a water quality objective, thus no findings are required pursuant to section 13149.2. Los Angeles Water Board staff prepared a Staff Report describing (i) the triennial review process, (ii) the status of projects from the previous (2020–2022) triennial review, (iii) the current issues of concern to stakeholders and the Los Angeles Water Board, and (iv) the recommended list of Basin Planning projects to be addressed during the 2023-2025 triennial review period.
16. On September 7, 2023, the Los Angeles Water Board distributed the tentative resolution and draft Staff Report for the 2023-2025 triennial review to all known interested persons to allow a 30-day public comment period in advance of the public hearing.
17. The Los Angeles Water Board held a public hearing on February 22, 2024, for the purpose of receiving testimony on this triennial review and on the need for revisions to the water quality standards (i.e., beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and antidegradation policy) and related water quality standards implementation provisions established in the Basin Plan. Notice of the public hearing was sent to all known interested persons.
18. The Los Angeles Water Board has considered the entire record, including oral comments, in adopting the 2023-2025 triennial review list of Basin Planning priority projects for investigation, as set forth in the following resolves to this Resolution, for the current review period.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. Pursuant to CWC section 13240, CWA section 303(c)(1), and 40 CFR section 131.20, and in consideration of public comments, the Los Angeles Water Board hereby identifies the following list of Basin Planning priority projects to be addressed during the current triennial review period. The projects are more fully described in the Staff Report supporting this Resolution. These projects were selected in consideration of the Los Angeles Water Board's Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Framework and are intended to implement the Los Angeles Water Board's core value of protecting water quality in disadvantaged communities and environmental justice areas.

- Continue the process of updating freshwater ammonia objectives consistent with the CWA section 303(c) recommended water quality criteria
- Continue the coordination with State Board on updating the freshwater quality objectives for copper using Biotic Ligand Model consistent with the CWA section 303(c) recommended water quality criteria and evaluate steps necessary to address zinc in a similar manner
- Continue the work of developing site-specific objective for chloride in Los Angeles River Reach 6 consistent with the CWA section 303(c) recommended water quality criteria
- Continue tribal outreach efforts for potential waterbody-specific designations of the tribal beneficial uses
- Continue to coordinate with stakeholders on the re-evaluation of the Basin Plan's temperature water quality objectives
- Initiate re-evaluation of the chlorine residual water quality objectives
- Continue to coordinate the development of Salt and Nutrient Management Plans (SNMPs), per the Statewide Water Quality Control Policy for Recycled Water, including the incorporation of management measures from the SNMPs into the Basin Plan
- Consider any amendments to the Basin Plan's toxicity objectives that may be necessary in response to the Statewide Toxicity Provisions
- Initiate efforts towards developing region-specific biological objectives provisions
- Provide support for the implementation by the State Water Resources Control Board of the Los Angeles River Flow Study
- Initiate the 2026-2028 triennial review process

In addition, as resources allow, the Los Angeles Water Board directs staff to continue to provide support to other Los Angeles Water Board programs and statewide standards-related initiatives, and to address legal and regulatory mandates that may arise during the triennial review period.

2. The Los Angeles Water Board will, to the best of its capability and within budgetary constraints and staffing resources, address the priority issues as detailed in the Staff Report and will prepare, as appropriate, amendments to the Basin Plan.
3. The areas of the Basin Plan not identified as needing investigation and possible revisions are hereby affirmed as adequate; however, this determination does not preclude the consideration of other issues for possible revision or amendment of the Basin Plan. The Executive Officer is authorized to re-prioritize basin planning projects based on legal and/or regulatory mandates that arise during the triennial review period.

4. The entire Basin Plan shall remain in effect until such time that appropriate and specific amendments are adopted by the Los Angeles Water Board and approved by the appropriate review authorities.
5. A copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to the State Water Board and U.S. EPA.

I, Susana Arredondo, Executive Officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of the resolution adopted by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region, on February 22, 2024.

for Susana Arredondo
Executive Officer