



Fact Sheet

Water Board Achievements 1991-2011

The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) – formally established on July 17, 1991 – recently celebrated its 20th year by highlighting a long list of achievements. Below, are highlights of some significant actions by the State and Regional Water Boards' (Water Boards) since 1991.

Mono Lake Restoration

In 1994, The State Water Board issued Decision 1631, which modified existing permits to set conditions protecting Mono Lake. This Decision ended many decades of conflict between conservationists and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's diversion of water from four streams that are tributary to Mono Lake. As required by the Decision, Mono Lake levels have risen, protecting wildlife and water quality, the fishery in the four streams has improved, and restoration efforts continue.

Restoration of the Bay Delta

The Water Boards have used both their water quality and water rights authority to address some of the most pressing environmental problems in the Bay Delta. As a part of the water quality control planning process, State and Regional Water Boards have adopted water quality objectives and implementation plans that are administered through water right orders, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, and other regulatory tools to address more diffuse discharges around the Delta.

Cleaning Up Impaired Water Bodies

During the last decade, the Water Boards have approved strategies to reduce the discharge of pollutants that continue to impair water quality, beneficial uses and the clarity of key California surface water locations such as Lake Tahoe, along the scenic Klamath River and in the Los Angeles River basin. The Water Boards have established total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) that are implemented through permits and other actions to reduce pollutants that can hinder aquatic and human uses of these once pristine locations.

Underground Storage Tank Program

For more than 20 years, the State Water Board has administered a program that assists businesses and property owners in cleaning up contamination from leaking underground storage tanks (UST) that contained petroleum products. During this time, more than \$2.9 billion has been distributed from a designated UST tank cleanup fund to assist businesses and individuals by providing reimbursement for expenses associated with the cleanup of leaking petroleum USTs. Since the beginning of the program, nearly 6,500 locations with identified contamination have been cleaned up for reuse.



Enforcement of Water Code Violations

Beginning in 2006, the State Water Board Office of Enforcement led the development of a statewide initiative to eliminate the backlog of 7,880 Mandatory Minimum Penalties (MMP) where a penalty had not been assessed. By May 2011, the Water Boards had addressed close to 12,400 MMP violations from 421 facilities (many with multiple violations) through notices of violation, expedited payment offers or administrative civil liability complaints. 99 percent of the facilities have responded to the enforcement action.

Managing Urban Runoff of Water Pollution

For nearly two decades, the Water Boards have regulated the runoff and treatment of stormwater in industrial, municipal and residential areas of California. The effort falls into several distinct categories of permits for construction, industrial and municipal activities, with the same goal to use stormwater as a resource and to reduce harmful pollutants, fertilizers, debris and other materials carried into storm drains, drainage systems and ultimately our rivers, lakes, and ocean. The Water Boards recognize that stormwater is an important resource and are encouraging the use of Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure techniques to both capture for reuse the water that runs off concrete and other non-permeable surfaces and infiltrate to replenish depleted groundwater supplies.

Funding Public Pollution Prevention and Water Quality Projects

The State Water Board has a two-decade long history of providing loans and grants for the construction of publicly-owned facilities such as wastewater treatment plants, sewage systems, stormwater treatment and collection basins through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). Some \$250 million is distributed, on average, every year to eligible projects. Many of the projects funded by the CWSRF program address wastewater discharge violations or enforcement orders from the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards. Every funded project is directly related to improving water quality and preventing pollution.

Once-through Cooling Policy Enacted

In May 2010, the State Water Board adopted a policy regarding the use of marine and estuarine waters for cooling purposes at electric-producing power plants in California. Based on the schedule set by the Board and an expert committee, the policy requires that once-through cooling power plants reduce ocean water intake by 93 percent. Once-through cooling is dangerous to marine life, with more than one billion gallons of ocean water used daily in California, which destroys marine life such as fish larvae at the base of food chain, adversely affecting the future of certain ocean species as well as recreational and commercial fishing.

Additional Resources:

For more information on the legacy, mission and responsibilities of the State Water Board, please visit the State Water Board home page at: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/>

Visit the Cal/EPA press release and fact sheet at:

<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/PressRoom/Releases/2011/Anniversary20.pdf>