

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT

March 13, 2024

ITEM 6

SUBJECT

Hearing for the Tentative Waste Discharge Requirements and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for the City of San Diego E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall (Tentative Order No. R9-2024-0004, NPDES No. CA0107409) and the Tentative Decision Document for a variance from secondary treatment requirements pursuant to Clean Water Act (CWA) sections 301(h) and (j)(5). (*Joann Lim*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Receive comments on the Tentative Order No. R9-2024-0004 (Tentative Order/Permit, **Supporting Document No. 1**) and Tentative Decision Document¹ from the City of San Diego (City).

KEY ISSUES

1. The San Diego Water Board will conduct this public hearing on the Tentative Order/Permit at this board meeting to receive and discuss comments related to the Tentative Order/Permit and Tentative Decision Document. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) will join this state-led meeting as this is a consolidated issued permit. The San Diego Water Board will not adopt either at this hearing but will formally act on the Tentative Order/Permit and Tentative Decision Document at a subsequent Board meeting. The USEPA will also issue its decision at a later date.
2. Adoption of the Tentative Order/Permit which incorporates the Tentative Decision Document to grant a variance from secondary treatment requirements pursuant to CWA sections 301(h) and (j)(5) (Secondary Treatment Waiver) and issuance of a Final Decision Document would extend the Secondary Treatment Waiver for the term of the Tentative Order/Permit.
3. The City continues its commitment to implementing a comprehensive water reuse program called Pure Water San Diego, which results in an increase of potable water reuse and a reduction in the quantity of suspended solids discharged by the City into the marine environment. It is recognized that Pure Water San Diego will significantly reduce and improve the ocean discharge while producing water suitable for potable reuse. The Tentative Order/Permit includes the City's schedule of tasks to complete Pure Water San Diego Phase 1 and continue the progress for Pure Water San Diego Phase 2 that will occur during the term of the Tentative Order/Permit.

¹ A copy of the Tentative Decision Document can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/ca0107409-city-san-diego-ew-blom-point-loma-wastewater-treatment-plant-301h-variance>

PRACTICAL VISION

Consistent with the mission of the *Strategy for Healthy Waters* chapter of the *Practical Vision*,² the Tentative Order/Permit integrates all applicable technology-based requirements, water quality-based effluent limitations, and receiving water quality standards to optimize protection of water quality and beneficial uses in the Pacific Ocean. The Tentative Order/Permit also requires that the City continue to implement its schedule for Pure Water San Diego during the term of the Tentative Order/Permit. Pure Water San Diego will ultimately produce potable water to advance the State of California's (State's) water recycling goals, consistent with the *Strategy for a Sustainable Local Water Supply* chapter of the *Practical Vision*. Pure Water San Diego will also systematically reduce wastewater flows and total suspended solids (TSS) loading to the ocean and thus further the goals of the *Strategizing for Healthy Waters* chapter of the *Practical Vision*. Additionally, the Tentative Order/Permit has provisions allowing for participation in regional monitoring and assessment programs in keeping with San Diego Water Board Resolution No. R9-2012-0069, *Resolution in Support of a Regional Monitoring Framework*.

DISCUSSION

The City owns and operates the E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant (Facility), an advanced primary treatment plant on the Point Loma peninsula in San Diego, California that serves as the terminal treatment facility of the San Diego Metropolitan Sewerage System (Metro System). The Metro System collects and treats wastewater from the City of San Diego and 12 participating agencies within a 450-square mile service area throughout San Diego County. See **Supporting Document No. 2** for the location of the Facility and Metro System.

The City is currently discharging advanced primary treated wastewater from the Facility to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall pursuant to Order No. R9-2017-0007 and Order No. R9-2022-0078 (Addendum No. 1 to Order No. R9-2017-0007) / NPDES No. CA0107409 (Current Order/Permit). Because the terminus of the Point Loma Ocean Outfall, approximately 4.5 miles offshore, lies within federal waters and the potential exists for migration of the treated wastewater to State waters, the Current Order/Permit serves as a joint consolidated State and federal NPDES permit pursuant to title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR) section 124.4(c)(2). The Current Order/Permit expired on September 30, 2022, but was administratively extended until the adoption of new waste discharge requirements and NPDES permit.

The Facility provides advanced primary treatment, which is less than the secondary treatment requirements contained in section 301(b)(1)(B) of the CWA, 33 United States Code (U.S.C.) section 1311(b)(1)(B). The City has received a variance (also known as a "waiver" or "modification") under sections 301(h) and (j)(5) of the CWA, 33 U.S.C. sections 1311(h) and (j)(5) from the secondary treatment requirements.

The City submitted its renewal application to the San Diego Water Board and USEPA in March 2022 to reissue the waste discharge requirements and NPDES permit and request a renewal of its variance under sections 301(h) and (j)(5) of the CWA. The San Diego Water Board and USEPA have drafted the Tentative Order/Permit and USEPA has

² The Practical Vision can be found at the following website:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/practical_vision/

drafted a Tentative Decision Document. Adoption of the Tentative Order/Permit by the San Diego Water Board and USEPA and issuance of a Final Decision Document to grant a Secondary Treatment Waiver by USEPA would extend a Secondary Treatment Waiver for the term of the Tentative Order/Permit.

The Current Order/Permit includes an initial schedule of tasks for Pure Water San Diego. Pure Water San Diego has the goal of producing a safe, reliable, and cost-effective drinking water supply for the San Diego area through the application of advanced treatment technology to purify recycled water. This program is the result of collaboration between the City, the Metro Wastewater Joint Powers Authority, and an array of regional stakeholders. Through this program, the City plans a significant investment in potable water reuse and ancillary facilities to eventually produce 83 million gallons per day (MGD) of potable reuse water, an amount that the City equates to approximately one-third of the total City potable water demand. Pure Water San Diego will be completed in incremental stages by December 31, 2035. Pure Water San Diego would significantly reduce wastewater flows and pollutant loads discharged to the Pacific Ocean.

The City's renewal application included a schedule of tasks for Pure Water San Diego to demonstrate its continued commitment to reducing flows and TSS loading to the ocean and increasing indirect potable reuse. At the City's request, the Tentative Order/Permit includes the schedule of tasks to be completed during the term of the Tentative Order/Permit. Pure Water San Diego is currently designed to be implemented in two phases. Phase 1, North City Pure Water Project, implements an ultimate annual average daily production of 30 MGD of water suitable for potable reuse. Phase 2, Central Area Project, implements an ultimate annual average daily production of an additional 53 MGD of water suitable for potable reuse. The schedule of tasks in the Tentative Order/Permit includes the completion of Phase 1 and the continuation of Phase 2.

The following is a summary of the significant differences between the Current Order/Permit and the Tentative Order/Permit:

1. For the fifth year of the Tentative Order/Permit, the mass emissions limitation for TSS is more stringent than the requirements in the Current Order/Permit.
2. Based on new monitoring data for Aldrin, the Tentative Order/Permit replaces effluent limitations with performance goals and reduces the monitoring frequency from weekly to monthly.
3. The Tentative Order/Permit adds a requirement to develop and submit an Asset Management Plan to ensure the City properly operates and maintains its facilities and thus achieves compliance with the conditions of the Tentative Order/Permit.
4. The Tentative Order/Permit includes an updated schedule of tasks for Pure Water San Diego to be completed during the term of the Tentative Order/Permit to demonstrate the City's commitment to reduce wastewater flows and TSS loading to the ocean and increasing indirect potable reuse.
5. The Tentative Order/Permit modifies the influent monitoring description to account for the planned changes at the Facility to accept onsite stormwater flows to the Facility headworks, downstream of Monitoring Location INF-001.

6. The Tentative Order/Permit also adds effluent monitoring for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) compounds to identify and understand PFAS in the wastewater.
7. The San Diego Water Board and USEPA provided the Tentative Order and Tentative Decision Document to the City and interested parties for formal public review and comment on March 1, 2024. The public comment period will close on April 1, 2024.

LEGAL CONCERNS

None.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Tentative Order/Permit and Tentative Decision Document were noticed and released for formal public review and comment on March 1, 2024, by email to the City and interested parties and on the San Diego Water Board and USEPA websites (see **Supporting Document No. 3**). The agenda package for the March 13, 2024, board meeting also included an announcement of the public hearing and available documents. The oral public comment period will occur at the March 13, 2024, hearing and those who submit oral comments are encouraged to also submit their comments as written comments. The written public comment period will close on April 1, 2024.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. Tentative Order No. R9-2024-0004
2. Facilities Location Map
3. Public Notice