

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

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
APRIL 8, 2026**

ITEM 4

SUBJECT

NPDES Permit Amendment: Amendment of Waste Discharge Requirements for the City of San Diego South Bay Water Reclamation Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean Through the South Bay Ocean Outfall (Tentative Order No. R9-2026-0006, NPDES No. CA90109045). (Riley Nolan)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Tentative Order No. R9-2026-0006.

KEY ISSUES

Order No. R9-2021-0011 (NPDES Permit) was adopted by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board) on May 12, 2021, to regulate the discharge of secondary-treated wastewater from the City of San Diego (City) South Bay Water Reclamation Plant (SBWRP). The City's NPDES Permit will expire on June 30, 2026, at which point it will be administratively extended, but cannot be amended. The full reissuance of the City's NPDES Permit is not expected to take place within the next year, due to the City's joint operation of the South Bay Ocean Outfall (SBOO) with the United States section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP). Due to the joint operation of the SBOO, the City's NPDES Permit is generally reissued on the same schedule as USIBWC's NPDES Permit, which will be delayed due to the SBIWTP expansion to 50 million gallons per day (MGD).

PRACTICAL VISION

The Tentative Order is part of the San Diego Water Board's core regulatory work of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program. The SBWRP is a critical supplier of recycled water for South Bay communities, providing dependable and locally controlled water for irrigation, manufacturing, and other non-potable purposes. The augmentation of our region's water supply with recycled water advances Chapter 6 of the San Diego Water Board's Practical Vision¹, "Strategize to Achieve a Resilient Local Water Supply." Furthermore, the Tentative Order contains critical ocean monitoring and reporting provisions that are used to assess and communicate water quality conditions of the Pacific Ocean. This advances Chapter 2 of the San Diego Water Board's Practical Vision, "Monitor and Assess," producing information that

¹ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/practical_vision/

supports the protection and restoration of water quality resources, communicating resource conditions, and providing information to evaluate success.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this amendment is to make several changes in advance of the NPDES Permit's expiration, that would otherwise be delayed until the permit's reissuance. If adopted, the Tentative Order would update the City's NPDES Permit to reflect 1) changes to pH monitoring requirements; 2) reduced frequency of the local limits evaluation to once per five years; 3) use of 24-hour composite or grab samples for the following parameters in effluent monitoring: ammonium, total nitrogen, total organic nitrogen, nitrate (as N), nitrite (as N), total phosphorus (as P), phosphate, total organic carbon, dissolved inorganic carbon, total iron, dissolved iron, alkalinity, and salinity; 4) reporting of nitrate and nitrite as N; 5) changes to the deadline to submit receiving water monitoring results to the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) to align with the deadline for interim or biennial receiving water monitoring reports; 6) updates to flow, outflow operations, and dilution factor in the SBOO in response to the 10-MGD expansion of the neighboring SBIWTP; 7) correcting the description of the SBOO; 8) clarification that the City is only required to submit receiving water monitoring data that is accepted by CEDEN until such a time that CEDEN is updated to accept all receiving water monitoring data; 9) elimination of the duplicate reporting requirement for the annual plume tracking progress report as a standalone report and as a component of the biennial receiving water monitoring report; 10) updates to the methodology and reporting of kelp bed monitoring; and 11) removal or updating of outdated information.

Tentative Order No. R9-2026-0006 and a version of the NPDES Permit including the original proposed changes were made available for a 30-day public review and comment period from January 14, 2026, to February 13, 2026. The San Diego Water Board received comment letters from the City of San Diego and the San Diego Unified Port District. Both comment letters were supportive of the Tentative Order. The San Diego Water Board made several minor changes to the Tentative Order in response to the City's comments. These changes include: 1) clarification that the City is only required to submit receiving water monitoring data that is accepted by CEDEN until such a time that CEDEN is updated to accept all receiving water monitoring data; 2) elimination of a duplicate reporting requirement for the annual plume tracking progress report as a standalone report and as a component of the biennial receiving water monitoring report; and 3) updates to the methodology and reporting of kelp bed monitoring.

COMPLIANCE RECORD

The City has not reported any exceedances of effluent limitations since its permit for the SBWRP was reissued in 2021. In calendar year 2025, the City reported three violations for deficient monitoring, taking corrective action to address the violations. None of the

City's violations threatened receiving water quality or indicate inadequate operations or maintenance of the SBWRP.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The San Diego Water Board included this item in its notice and agenda for the April 8, 2026, meeting.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. Tentative Order No. R9-2026-0006
2. Attachment 1 to Tentative Order No. R9-2026-0006
3. Attachment 2 Response to Comments on Tentative Order No. R9-2026-0006
4. City of San Diego Comment Letter*
5. San Diego Unified Port District Comment Letter*

*For a copy of this document, please email a request to our records administrator at rb9_records@waterboards.ca.gov.