

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

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
JUNE 10, 2026**

ITEM 5

SUBJECT

Cannabis Cultivation Program Update. (*Victor Gonzalez and Maher Zaher*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Informational item only; no recommendation.

KEY ISSUE

This item provides an opportunity for the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board) and members of the public to learn about the State Water Resources Control Board's Cannabis Program and implementation of the *Cannabis Policy – Principles and Guidelines for Cannabis Cultivation*¹ (Cannabis Policy).

PRACTICAL VISION

Chapter 1 of the 2021 San Diego Water Board Practical Vision, *Strategize for Healthy Waters*, directs San Diego Water Board staff to prioritize outcome-focused work that protect key beneficial uses in key areas. This item reports on the measurable and long-term permitting and enforcement work of the South Coast Cannabis Unit (Unit), which protects stream habitats and ecosystems within the San Diego Region.

Chapter 4 of the 2021 Practical Vision, *Implement Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Measures* directs San Diego Water Board staff to identify and prioritize legacy areas within communities that have experienced past environmental injustices. This item reports on the Unit's efforts to develop equity in environmental protection by prioritizing actions in underserved communities and incorporating equity considerations into the Water Board's responsibilities. Additionally, this item provides an opportunity for the San Diego Water Board and the public to learn about cannabis cultivation regulation and environmental justice issues relevant to the protection of both water quality and public health.

DISCUSSION

The State Water Resources Control Board adopted WQ-2017-0023-DWQ, *General Waste Discharge Requirements and Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges of Waste Associated with Cannabis Cultivation Activities* (Cannabis General Order), and the Cannabis Policy in 2017, which were later amended by WQ 2019-0001-DWQ and 2023-0102-DWQ². The Cannabis General Order and Cannabis Policy establish requirements for the diversion and use of water, land disturbances, and discharges of waste related to cannabis cultivation. The requirements intend to minimize deleterious effects of cannabis

¹https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cannabis/docs/policy/final_cannabis_policy_with_attach_a.pdf

²https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2023/wqo2023-0102-dwq.pdf

cultivation activities on fisheries, wildlife, and water quality; maintain healthy riparian corridors; and protect springs, wetlands, and aquatic habitat. The Cannabis Policy established Regional Boundaries combining the San Diego, Santa Ana, and Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board to form the South Coast Cannabis Region.

Santa Ana Water Board staff working in the Unit lead the efforts to regulate the commercial cultivation of cannabis and investigate threats to water quality from unlicensed commercial cannabis cultivation operations in the South Coast Cannabis Region.

This item will update the San Diego Water Board on the implementation of the Cannabis Policy in the San Diego Region. The presentation includes the status of permitted commercial cultivation operations, as well as an overview of efforts the Unit has taken in the San Diego Region to protect beneficial uses and the watersheds from discharges of waste at unlicensed commercial cannabis cultivation operations. Further, the presentation will provide an overview of the pending San Diego County Socially Equitable Cannabis Program (Cannabis Equity Program), which will allow for new commercial cannabis businesses in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County, and the Unit's input and involvement in the development of the Cannabis Equity Program to ascertain protection of the San Diego Region watersheds and beneficial uses.

LEGAL CONCERNS

None.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None.