



San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

Action on Request for Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification and Waste Discharge Requirements

PROJECT: City of San Diego E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean Through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall, Certification Number R9-2025-0145, WDID: 9000000275

APPLICANT: City of San Diego
Attention: Juan Guerreiro
Director, Public Utilities Department
City of San Diego
9192 Topaz Way
San Diego, CA 92123

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant is an advanced primary treatment facility with a capacity of 240 million gallons per day (MGD). The treated effluent is discharged to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall, under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit with waiver of secondary treatment requirements pursuant to subdivisions (h) and (j)(5) of Clean Water Act Section 301. Digested sludge from the treatment process is pumped to the Metro Biosolids Center (MBC) for dewatering and disposal.

By letter dated September 11, 2025, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requested a water quality certification of the federal 301(h)-modified NPDES permit for the discharge of pollutants from the E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant pursuant to 40 CFR section 124.53.

1 STANDARD CONDITIONS:

The following three standard conditions apply to all Certification actions, except as noted under Condition 3 for denials (Action 3).

- 1.1 This Certification action is subject to modification or revocation upon administrative or judicial review, including review and amendment pursuant to section 13330 of the California Water Code and section 3867 of Title 23 of the California Code of Regulations (23 CCR).

- 1.2 This Certification action is not intended and must not be construed to apply to any discharge from any activity involving a hydroelectric facility requiring a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license or an amendment to a FERC license unless the pertinent Certification application was filed pursuant to 23 CCR subsection 3855(b) and the application specifically identified that a FERC license or amendment to a FERC license for a hydroelectric facility was being sought.
- 1.3 This Certification is conditioned upon total payment of any fee required under 23 CCR section 3833 and owed by the applicant, unless otherwise stated in writing by the certifying agency.

2 ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS:

In addition to the three standard conditions, City of San Diego (City) must satisfy the following general conditions:

- 2.1 The City shall, at all times, fully comply with the Waste Discharge Requirements contained in Order No. R9-2025-0005 and NPDES Permit No. CA0107409, which serve as State of California (State) and federal NPDES permits authorizing the Discharger to discharge from the E.W. Blom Point Loma Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall.
- 2.2 This Certification will continue in effect as long as Order No. R9-2025-0005, NPDES Permit No. CA0107409 is in effect.
- 2.3 This Certification is not transferable in its entirety or in part to any person except after notice to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board) Executive Officer in accordance with the following change in ownership requirements.
The City must notify the San Diego Water Board of any change in ownership of the project. Notification of change in ownership must include, but not be limited to, a statement that the City has provided the purchaser with a copy of the Section 401 Water Quality Certification and that the purchaser understands and accepts the certification requirements and the obligation to implement them or be subject to liability for failure to do so; the seller and purchaser must sign and date the notification and provide such notification to the Executive Officer of the San Diego Water Board within **10 days** of the transfer of ownership .
- 2.4 In the event of any violation or threatened violation of the conditions of this Certification, the violation or threatened violation must be subject to any remedies, penalties, processes or sanctions as provided for under State law. For purposes of section 401(d) of the Clean Water Act, the applicability of any

- State law authorizing remedies, penalties, processes, or sanctions for the violation or threatened violation constitutes a limitation necessary to assure compliance with the water quality standards and other pertinent requirements incorporated into this Certification.
- 2.5 In response to a suspected violation of any condition of this Certification, the San Diego Water Board may require the holder of any permit or license subject to this Certification to furnish, under penalty of perjury, any technical or monitoring reports the San Diego Water Board deems appropriate, provided that the burden, including costs, of the reports bear a reasonable relationship to the need for the reports and the benefits to be obtained from the reports.
- 2.6 In response to any violation of the conditions of this Certification, the San Diego Water Board may add to or modify the conditions of this Certification as appropriate to ensure compliance.
- 2.7 The San Diego Water Board adopted a *Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin* (Basin Plan) on September 8, 1994, that designates beneficial uses, establishes water quality objectives, and contains implementation programs and policies to achieve those objectives for the Pacific Ocean and other receiving waters addressed through the Basin Plan. Subsequent revisions to the Basin Plan have also been adopted by the San Diego Water Board and approved by the State Water Resources Control Board. The City shall fully comply with the Basin Plan.
- 2.8 The State Water Resources Control Board adopted the *Water Quality Control Plan for Ocean Waters of California, California Ocean Plan* (Ocean Plan) in 1972 and amended it in 1978, 1983, 1988, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018. The State Water Board adopted the latest amendment on August 7, 2018. The United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 (USEPA) approved the amendment on March 22, 2019, and it became effective on March 22, 2019. The City shall fully comply with the Ocean Plan.

3 CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT FINDINGS:

This project involves an existing discharge from an existing facility. The issuance of this Certification is categorically exempt from the requirements for preparation of environmental documents under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Article 19, Section 15301 of the California Code of Regulations, which exempts projects involving negligible or no expansion of existing use.

4 PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT APPLICATION:

The San Diego Water Board and USEPA have notified the Discharger and interested agencies and persons of their intent to issue Waste Discharge Requirements and an NPDES permit for the discharge and have provided them with an opportunity to submit written and oral comments and recommendations. Details of notification are provided in the Fact Sheet of Order No. R9-2025-0005.

5 REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD CONTACT PERSON:

Joann Lim
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
2375 Northside Drive; Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92108
619-521-3362
Joann.Lim@waterboards.ca.gov

6 WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the proposed discharge from City of San Diego Point Loma Ocean Outfall to the Pacific Ocean [described in the City of San Diego's NPDES Permit Application and 301(h) and (j)(5) Application for Modification of Secondary Treatment Requirements dated March 24, 2022] will comply with the applicable water quality standards for the Pacific Ocean included in the Basin Plan and Ocean Plan, including any amendments to date.

I also hereby certify that the proposed discharge will not result in additional treatment, pollution control, or other requirement of any other existing point or non-point sources.

These conclusions are based on an analysis of the effluent plume behavior; a comparison of the quality of effluent from the Point Loma Ocean Outfall and receiving waters beyond the zone of initial dilution with applicable water quality standards; and the proximity of the Point Loma Ocean Outfall to other point and non-point sources in the area.

David W. Gibson
Executive Officer
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

Attachments:

1. Project Information
2. Distribution List
3. Location Map

ATTACHMENT 1: PROJECT INFORMATION

Applicant: City of San Diego
Attention: Juan Guerreiro
Director, Public Utilities Department
City of San Diego
9192 Topaz Way
San Diego, CA 92123

Applicant Representatives:
Same as above

Project Name:
City of San Diego Point Loma Ocean Outfall
Wastewater Discharge to the Pacific Ocean

Project Location:
The E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant is located at 1902 Gatchell Road, San Diego, CA 92106. The Point Loma Ocean Outfall discharges 23,472 feet from the shore at a depth of 300 to 320 feet below the water surface. The coordinates of the Point Loma Ocean Outfall diffuser wye are 32° 39' 55" N and 117° 19' 25" W.

Type of Project:
Municipal wastewater treatment plant discharge to the Pacific Ocean

Project Description:
The E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant is an advanced primary treatment facility with a capacity of 240 million gallons per day (MGD). The advanced primary-treated wastewater is discharged to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall, under the USEPA NPDES permit with waiver of secondary treatment requirements pursuant to subdivisions (h) and (j)(5) of Clean Water Act Section 301. Digested sludge from the treatment process is pumped to the Metro Biosolids Center (MBC) for dewatering and disposal.

Federal Agency/Permit:
USEPA/NPDES permit with waiver of secondary treatment requirements pursuant to subdivisions (h) and (j)(5) of Clean Water Act Section 301.

Other Required Regulatory Approvals:
California Coastal Commission

CEQA Compliance:

This project involves an existing discharge from an existing facility. The issuance of this Certification is categorically exempt from the requirements for preparation of environmental documents under the CEQA in accordance with Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Article 19, Section 15301 of the California Code of Regulations which exempts projects involving negligible or no expansion of existing use.

Receiving Water:

Pacific Ocean

Affected Waters of the United States:

Pacific Ocean

Affected Waters of the State:

Pacific Ocean

Related Projects Implemented/To Be Implemented by the Applicant(s):

None

Public Notice:

The San Diego Water Board and USEPA have notified the Discharger and interested agencies and persons of their intent to issue Waste Discharge Requirements and a NPDES permit for the discharge and have provided them with an opportunity to submit their written and oral comments and recommendations. Details of notification are provided in the Fact Sheet of Order No. R9-2025-0005.

Fees:

Included in waste discharge requirements annual fee for Order No. R9-2025-0005

CIWQS:

Place ID: 248796
Party ID: 39646

ATTACHMENT: 2 DISTRIBUTION LIST

California Coastal Commission

Casidy Teufel, Deputy Director, Cassidy.Teufel@coastal.ca.gov,
Heather McNair, Environmental Scientist, Heather.
McNair@coastal.ca.gov

California Department of Fish and Game

Melanie Burlaza melanie.burlaza@wildlife.ca.gov

USEPA, Region 9

Julie Song, Water Division, NPDES Permits Office, U.S. EPA Region 9
Song.Julie@epa.gov
Peter Kozelka, Kozelka.Peter@epa.gov

State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Quality

401 Water Quality Certification and Wetlands Unit,
Stateboard401@waterboards.ca.gov
NPDES Wastewater Permitting Unit,
NPDES_Wastewater@waterboards.ca.gov

ATTACHMENT 3: PROJECT LOCATION

City of San Diego Wastewater Facilities, Including E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant and Point Loma Ocean Outfall



GARY STRAWN, CHAIR | DAVID GIBSON, EXECUTIVE OFFICER