

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

NOTICE OF CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Proposed Amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin to Update Bacteria TMDLs in the San Diego Region

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board) will hold a CEQA scoping meeting to receive input on a proposed amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin (Basin Plan). The proposed Basin Plan amendment would update the following Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Fecal Indicator Bacteria (FIB):

- Project I – Revised Twenty Beaches and Creeks in the San Diego Region (Including Tecolote Creek) and
- Project II – Baby Beach and Dana Point Harbor and Shelter Island Shoreline Park in San Diego Bay.

The San Diego Water Board is considering three options for project development:

- Update one TMDL at a time. Project I would be prioritized, and Project II would be updated at a future date;
- Update both TMDLs at the same time; or
- Update and combine both TMDLs into one.

Staff is seeking input on:

- The range of project actions and alternatives;
- Reasonably foreseeable methods of compliance;
- Significant and cumulative impacts, if any; and
- Mitigation measures that would reduce impacts to a less than significant level to be analyzed prior to the decision-making process on the proposed Basin Plan amendment.

The San Diego Water Board invites the public to submit comments regarding scoping elements. Written comments will be accepted through **March 6, 2026**. Written comments received after the deadline may not be considered.

Meeting Information

Participants may attend the CEQA scoping meeting either in person or remotely by registering at the link provided below.

The meeting will be held at the following location and time:

February 17, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
San Diego Water Board Hearing Room
2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92108

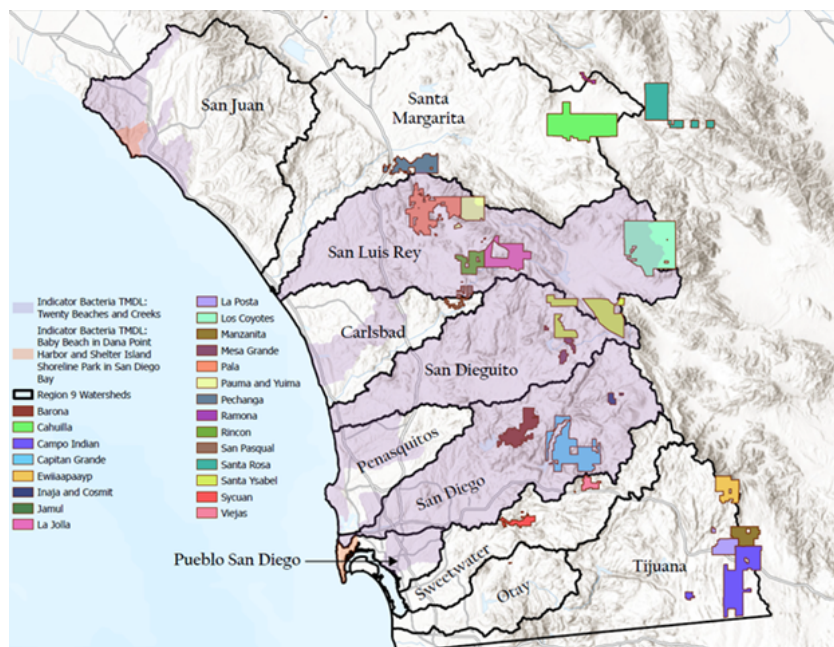
Those interested in attending the workshop virtually must register using the following link: https://waterboards.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KPT7psytTlqS7JiPmOYkKw

Members of the public are invited to participate in the meeting. The scoping meeting will provide participants with an opportunity to comment on the appropriate scope and content of the Substitute Environmental Document (SED) that will be prepared.

While a quorum of the San Diego Water Board may be present, the Board will not take formal action at the meeting.

Project Area

The project area includes portions of the following Hydrologic Units: San Juan, San Luis Rey, Carlsbad, San Dieguito, Los Peñasquitos, San Diego, and Pueblo San Diego. Tribal Reservations are shown on the map for informational purposes only. The San Diego Water Board does not regulate discharges on Tribal Reservations.



Proposed Project

Revisions to the FIB TMDLs are needed to update the numeric water quality targets to be consistent with updated statewide bacteria water quality objectives and to incorporate the latest information concerning sources of human fecal contamination. This effort is intended to ensure improvement in the regulatory alignment and public health protection provided by the TMDLs. In addition, it supports the development of targeted and cost-effective actions, particularly in urbanized watersheds with multiple sources.

Project Description

The proposed Basin Plan amendment would:

- Limit updates to existing TMDL waterbodies;
- Update numeric targets to be consistent with statewide bacteria objectives and expressed as concentrations;
- Update source analyses to reflect findings of special studies;
- Update the implementation plan to focus on anthropogenic sources and prioritize sources of human fecal contamination;
- Provide guidance on the use of human fecal source identifiers as a management tool; and
- Evaluate changes to compliance dates.

Background

In 2002, the Water Board identified and listed several waterbodies throughout the San Diego Region as impaired by fecal-indicator bacteria. In 2008 and 2010, the San Diego Water Board adopted Basin Plan amendments to incorporate TMDLs to address bacteria impairments in 22 waterbodies across the region. As part of these Basin Plan amendments, the San Diego Water Board prepared substitute environmental documents, which included a detailed technical report, environmental analysis, and a completed environmental checklist.

In 2018, the State Water Board revised water quality objectives for FIB for all surface waters except those with adopted TMDLs. Thus, the targets in the existing TMDLs no longer matched objectives for the rest of the region's waterbodies.

In a [2018 report](#), the San Diego Water Board acknowledged that existing FIB assessment methods have limitations that complicate their use in protecting the contact recreation (REC-1) beneficial use. These limitations contribute to the complexity of assessing water quality and developing effective regulatory responses. The Board and a working stakeholder group also noted that focusing efforts to reduce discharges of human sources of FIB would be the most efficient use of resources toward reducing public health risks in recreational waters.

Most strains of fecal indicator bacteria do not cause illness (i.e., they are not pathogens); rather, they indicate the presence of fecal contamination. Indicator bacteria have been historically used as indicators of human pathogens because these bacteria are easier and less costly to measure than the pathogens themselves. Pathogenic viruses and bacteria associated with human fecal contamination are known to cause illnesses in humans when exposed during contact recreation.

The use of indicator bacteria can introduce some uncertainty into assessing the true health risk, stressors, and sources of pathogens. If conditions are favorable, indicator bacteria can settle, grow, and multiply within various mediums once in the environment. Indicator bacteria growing in the environment may not pose health risks to humans since they may not be associated with pathogens. Furthermore, the relative health risks differ depending on the source of FIB with human sources (i.e. sewage) posing significantly more risk than natural sources (i.e. wildlife).

In recent years, the use of “genetic human markers” has proven valuable in detecting human sources of fecal contamination in receiving waters. Genetic human markers include gene segments of the bacteria that are mostly associated with human feces, not other (i.e., non-human) sources of bacteria.

The proposed Basin Plan amendment is consistent with the goal of the [2024/2025 Triennial Review](#) to clarify the TMDL goals, update the numeric targets, and use study results to address human sources of fecal bacteria in the TMDLs and implementation plan.

Submission of Written Comments

Please submit email comments to sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov, and include “Bacteria TMDLs CEQA Scoping: 650426” in the subject line. Written comments will be accepted through March 6, 2026.

Comments may also be mailed to:
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region
2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92108
Attn: Ms. Michelle Santillan

Document Availability

Interested persons may view documents pertaining to the proposed Basin Plan amendment at: [Water Recreation \(REC-1\) Water Quality Objectives](#)

Parking

For directions to the San Diego Water Board Office, please refer to: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/about_us/contact_us/. Two-hour free parking is available on a first-come first-serve basis, and long-term fee parking is available in an adjacent parking structure. The facility is accessible to persons with disabilities. The facility is also accessible via public transit.

LANGUAGE SERVICES

This meeting will be offered in English. To request translation of written documents, interpretation services in another language, or sign language services, please use one of the following options at least 10 business days before the meeting, if possible:

- Submit a [Language Services Request](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about_us/public_participation/language-access.html) online (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about_us/public_participation/language-access.html)
- Contact the Office of Public Engagement, Equity, and Tribal Affairs (OPEETA) at: 916-341-5254 or at: LanguageServices@waterboards.ca.gov

ACCESSIBILITY

Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD) users may contact the California Relay Service at (800) 735-2929 or voice line at (800) 735-2922.

Contact Information

Please direct any questions or concerns regarding the above subject to Michelle Santillan at RB9-TMDL@waterboards.ca.gov or (619) 516-1990.