Water Quality Report Card

Copper, Lead, and Zinc in Chollas Creek

Regional Water Board:	San Diego, Region 9
Beneficial Uses Affected:	WARM, WILD
Implemented Through:	NPDES Permits, MS4 Regional Permit
Effective Date:	October 22, 2008
Attainment Date:	October 22, 2028
STATUS	Conditions Improving
Pollutant Type:	Point Source
Pollutant Source:	Urban Storm Water Runoff Atmospheric Deposition

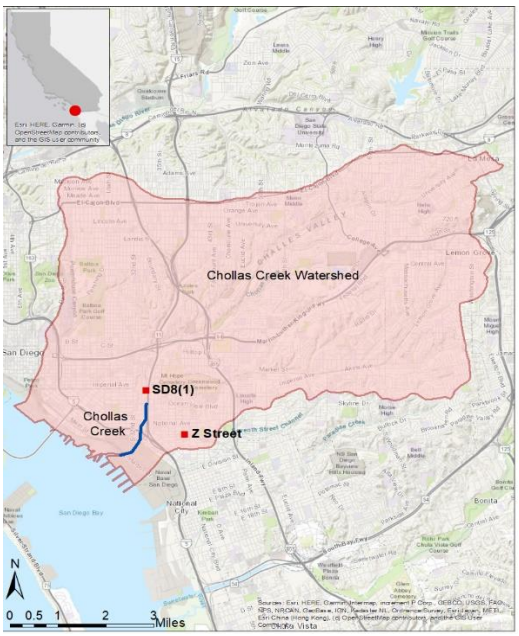
Water Quality Improvement Strategy

Chollas Creek is an urban coastal stream in southern San Diego County, and a tributary to San Diego Bay. National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) dischargers in the Chollas Creek watershed include municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) co-permittees, Caltrans, the U.S. Navy, industrial dischargers, and construction dischargers. Chollas Creek was placed on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments for dissolved metals (copper, lead, and zinc) in 1996 due to potential toxic effects on aquatic organisms. Point source discharges from freeways and commercial and institutional land uses were identified as contributing the highest loads of these metals. In October 2008, the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin (Basin Plan) was amended to include Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) protective of aquatic life in Chollas Creek for copper, lead, and zinc.

In 2010, data were collected and evaluated to update the copper and zinc water quality objectives (WQOs) with site-specific water effect ratios (WERs) (for wet weather) that consider the physical and chemical characteristics of the water in Chollas Creek. Results showed the toxic effects are approximately 7 and 1.7 times less than originally estimated for copper and zinc, respectively.

In February 2017, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted an amendment to the Basin Plan to update the Chollas Creek copper and zinc TMDLs with the site-specific WERs and their corresponding WQOs. The amendments were approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (September 2019) and by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (March 2020).

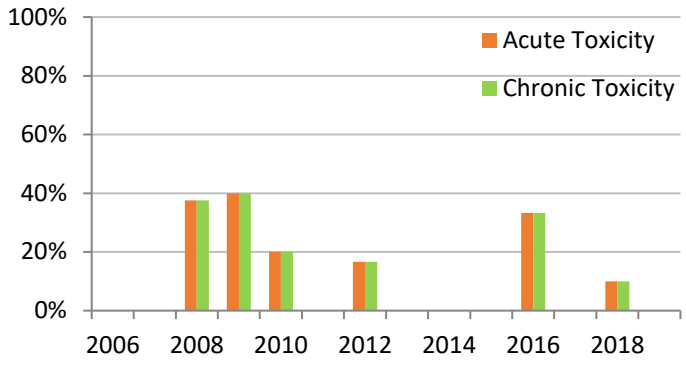
Chollas Creek Watershed



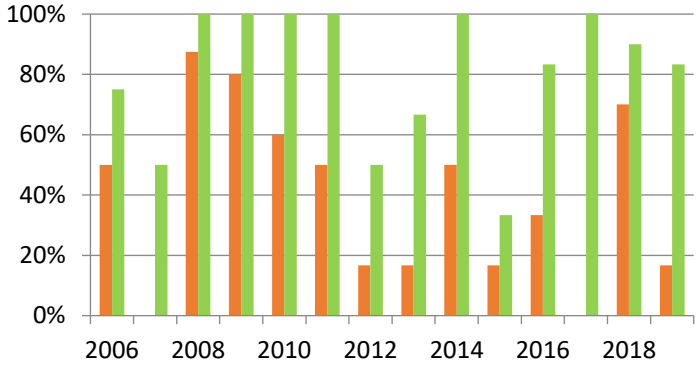
Water Quality Outcomes

- *Copper and zinc WQO exceedances are based on a default WER value of 1. Beginning March 5, 2020 copper and zinc WQOs for all samples collected will be based on the recently approved site-specific WERs.*
- *Lead concentrations in Chollas Creek, in general, do not exceed WQOs for acute and chronic toxicity.*
- *The City of San Diego installs and maintains best management practices (BMPs) to reduce the amount of metals and other pollutants entering Chollas Creek. These include curbside filtration strips, biofiltration basins, subsurface runoff detention basins, porous pavement, catch basins, and street sweeping.*

Zinc WQO Exceedances in Chollas Creek



Copper WQO Exceedances in Chollas Creek



Released October 2020