San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP COMMENTS

Water Quality and Biological Integrity in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin of San Diego Bay

Held May 7, 2026

The public was invited to share expectations and priorities for healthy aquatic habitats in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin

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To provide comments on this summary, please send an email to *sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov* Attn: JHaas, CW-879375 **by September 10, 2026.**

For more information please locate “Shelter Island Yacht Basin Dissolved Copper TMDL” at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/tmdls/

Meeting Summary

Purpose of Workshop

The May 7, 2026, Shelter Island Yacht Basin community workshop was held to discuss and gather feedback on environmental conditions, ecological health concerns, and monitoring expectations to inform future TMDL and management actions. The comments and discussion will be used to prepare a discussion draft of goals for waters in the Shelter Island Yacht Basin. The workshop was held by staff from the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board and hosted by the Port of San Diego. Approximately 40 members of the public attended in person and online.

On the topic of the workshop's goal, most participants felt that using an ecosystem-based assessment is a practical approach for making regulatory decisions. However, no clear ecosystem or habitat expectations were identified. Rather, there were several types of monitoring questions identified that could help the community better understand existing conditions, trends, and justify the effort of additional pollutant control practices.

Outstanding Workshop Questions

While the presentations and discussion centered on expectations and priorities for healthy aquatic habitats, comments also raised several questions regarding broader regulatory issues. These included:

- Will the current Dissolved Copper TMDL be rescinded or replaced?
- What are the implications of taking no additional actions to reduce copper levels?
- Is the water quality objective appropriate for conditions in this yacht basin?
- How are the Regional Water Quality Control Boards coordinating their activities?

Common Comment Themes

1. Environmental Improvements Observed

Participants widely agreed that basin conditions across multiple types of habitats seem to have improved over the past ~20 years. Reported observations include clearer water, reduced odors, increased wildlife (birds, dolphins, mussels, and other invertebrates), and cleaner conditions due to active debris removal and improved management practices.

2. Better Boater Practices

Attendees noted meaningful improvements in boating behavior and stewardship — fewer trash and fuel discharges, increased education on paints and maintenance, and abandonment of historic problematic practices.

3. Appreciation for Regulatory Approach

The community expressed gratitude for a collaborative, “common-sense” approach. Several felt the TMDL has produced benefits even if numeric objectives (e.g., dissolved copper) have not been met. Participants inquired about use of alternative interventions such as increasing basin flushing.

4. Unique Characteristics of Shelter Island Yacht Basin

The Yacht Basin’s unique history and geometry may complicate comparisons to other marinas, however participants are interested in comparisons to other basins.

5. Numeric Target Challenges (3.1ug/L dissolved copper)

The copper objective was described as difficult to apply to the Yacht Basin’s unique hydrodynamics. Requests included a clearer justification for the current standard and use of alternative indicators such as multi-metric assessment approaches.

6. Data Sources & Monitoring Tools

Participants expressed interest in additional habitat assessments and suggested expanding monitoring partnerships and exploring platforms such as cameras, visual observation tools, apps (e.g., FishBrain.com), and other tools.

7. Water Quality & Discharge Pathways

Participants raised concerns about land-based runoff, coastal intrusion, contamination movement, and differences between the Shelter Island Yacht Basin and other marinas. Many supported more frequent and broader water-quality monitoring.

8. Ecological & Biological Questions

Key concerns included questions about species health, native vs. invasive species, sediment invertebrates, biodiversity, species distribution (tidal/subtidal), and potential bioaccumulation. Participants also expressed interest in seasonal patterns and indicator species.