
Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON THE AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE SANTA ANA RIVER BASIN TO INCORPORATE REVISED TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR NUTRIENTS IN LAKE ELSINORE AND CANYON LAKE, RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region (“Santa Ana Water Board”) will hold a public hearing consider a resolution to approve the draft amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Santa Ana River Basin (Basin Plan) to incorporate Revised Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Nutrients in Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake (“Basin Plan amendment”). The proposed public hearing is currently scheduled for the February 14, 2025 during the Santa Ana Water Board meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

The Santa Ana Water Board will hold a public hearing to consider adoption of the draft Basin Plan amendment. An overview of the draft amendment will be provided with the opportunity for questions and comments from interested parties. The public hearing will be held at the following date, time, and location:

DATE: February 14, 2025
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
LOCATION: [City of Loma Linda](#)
25541 Barton Road
Loma Linda, CA, 92354

The hearing will be recorded. A copy of the recording will become part of the administrative record. The hearing will occur in a physical meeting location with an option for the public to participate from a remote location. To participate in the workshop remotely, please register by 5:00 pm February 12, 2025, via the Zoom registration link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EZNMMxN1RT-3uftVR410UA

After submitting the online registration form, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the workshop. Please join the Zoom Meeting at least 15 minutes before the meeting start time to resolve any technical issues. Remote attendees will be able to submit oral comments through Zoom. For those who do not intend to actively participate, the meeting will be livestreamed via [Cal-Span](#).

BACKGROUND

TMDLs are plans to restore and maintain water quality. In general, a TMDL is the sum of waste load allocations (WLAs for point source discharges, such as discharges from wastewater treatment plants) plus load allocations (LAs for non-point sources, such as runoff from open spaces) and incorporates a margin of safety (MOS) to account for uncertainty in the TMDL. TMDLs are not self-implementing and require implementation through regulatory measures such as discharge permits.

On December 20, 2004, the Santa Ana Water Board adopted [Resolution R8-2004-0037](#) (Username: rb8download; Password: Region8_public), approving an amendment to the Basin Plan to incorporate TMDLs for nutrients in Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake. The 2004 TMDLs are referred to as Phase I (2005-2020) and required attainment of the TMDLs as soon as possible but no later than December 31, 2020. During Phase I, Santa Ana Water Board staff and watershed stakeholders determined that the 2004 TMDLs should be revised based on new data and information. Tentative Resolution R8-2024-xxxx would approve a Basin Plan amendment to revise the 2004 TMDLs with new targets, new waste load and load allocations, milestones, a new final attainment date, and a new implementation plan. These changes are collectively called the 2024 Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake Nutrient TMDLs (2024 Nutrient TMDLs).

The 2024 Nutrient TMDLs, if adopted, will establish and implement phased TMDLs. Phased TMDLs are appropriate when there is significant data uncertainty and when it is anticipated that numeric targets and allocations may be revised by the Santa Ana Water Board as additional information is included. The 2024 Nutrient TMDLs include interim numeric targets and milestones, final allocations, and an implementation plan and schedule for each phase. Phasing the TMDLs allows for new data, new technology, and changes in watershed land use or hydrology to be assessed prior to the beginning of the next phase of implementation. Each phase will include studies intended to address data uncertainty, data gaps and questions identified during TMDL development and implementation.

- Phase I (2004-2020) – Phase I was addressed by the 2004 Nutrient TMDLs.
- Phase II (effective date through 20 years from effective date) – Phase II includes new milestones and interim numeric targets that are to be achieved as soon as possible but no later than 20 years from the effective date of these TMDLs. The Phase II milestones and the extended attainment date are necessary because the final numeric targets, total TMDLs, waste load allocations (WLAs) and load allocations (LAs) identified in Phase III are set at very conservative levels that may not reflect actual watershed conditions. Further Phase II milestones are necessary due to data uncertainty. During Phase II, studies and data collection will be performed to address data uncertainty and to review the appropriateness of the final numeric targets, total TMDLs, WLAs and LAs. Because of the length of Phase II, the implementation plan for these TMDLs includes a schedule for reconsideration by the Santa Ana Water Board at least

twice during the twenty-year period. In the interim, dischargers subject to these TMDLs will implement the Phase II Tasks and Schedule, as applicable.

- Phase III – (20 years from effective date through 30 years from effective date) Phase III includes final numeric targets, TMDLs, WLAs and LAs based on conservative estimations of the reference watershed conditions that must be achieved as soon as possible but no later than 30 years from the effective date of these TMDLs.

If reconsideration of these TMDLs during Phase II does not revise or alter the TMDLs or is not yet completed, Phase III will commence 20 years from the effective date. Subject to resource constraints, Phase III includes TMDL reconsiderations no later than 30 years from the effective date of these TMDLs and every ten (10) years thereafter.

The Lake Elsinore/San Jacinto River Watershed, located in Riverside County, includes the following major waterbodies: Lake Hemet, San Jacinto River, Mystic Lake, Salt Creek, Canyon Lake, and Lake Elsinore. The total drainage area of the San Jacinto River watershed is approximately 782 square miles, or approximately 450,000 acres. Over 90 percent of the watershed (735 square miles) drains into Canyon Lake, which is a man-made reservoir built in the late 1920's (originally referred to as Railroad Canyon Reservoir). Lake Elsinore is the terminus of the San Jacinto River watershed. The local tributary area to Lake Elsinore, consisting of drainage from the Santa Ana Mountains and the City of Lake Elsinore, is 47 square miles.

Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake are not attaining water quality standards due to excessive nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus). In 1994, the Santa Ana Water Board placed Lake Elsinore on the 303(d) list of impaired waters (303(d) list) due to excessive levels of nutrients and organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen. In 1998, the Santa Ana Water Board added Canyon Lake to the 303(d) list of impaired waters due to excessive levels of nutrients. Excess nutrients impair warm freshwater habitat (particularly aquatic life) and recreational beneficial uses for both lakes. The 2004 TMDLs were established to address the impaired water body listings for nutrients in both lakes.

In 2005, the Lake Elsinore and San Jacinto Watersheds Authority (LESJWA) formed the Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake TMDL Task Force (TMDL Task Force). The TMDL Task Force was composed of stakeholders that were subject to the 2004 TMDLs to coordinate and share the cost of TMDL implementation efforts. The TMDL Task Force includes nearly all dischargers identified in the 2004 TMDLs, including: Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permittees, wastewater treatment plants, agricultural operators, concentrated animal feeding operations (e.g., dairies), and other state, federal, and tribal agencies that own land or operate facilities that discharge nutrients into the San Jacinto Watershed.

Since its creation, the TMDL Task Force has developed and implemented a comprehensive water quality monitoring program, implemented the tasks in the 2004

TMDL, and commissioned numerous special studies to better understand impacts of nutrient loading under various conditions on the lakes. Additional studies have also been performed by others, including LESJWA and Santa Ana Water Board staff. Collectively, the monitoring data and studies further describe the impact that nutrients have on the recreational and warmwater aquatic life beneficial uses of Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake.

However, as new data and information was developed during implementation of the 2004 TMDLs, much was learned with respect to the understanding of how nutrient loading affects the lakes under natural/undeveloped and current land use conditions. Newer scientific studies demonstrated that many of the modeling assumptions used to develop the 2004 TMDLs were not accurate and that attainment of the 2004 WLAs and LAs would not result in attainment of the numeric targets.

Starting in mid-2015, the TMDL Task Force, with Santa Ana Water Board support, accepted responsibility for developing the documentation needed to update and amend the 2004 TMDLs. In December 2018, a draft *TMDL Technical Report: Revision to the Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake Nutrient TMDLs* (LESJWA 2018) was released for public comment and formal peer review. The Santa Ana Water Board held a public workshop on the draft TMDL Technical Report on May 3, 2019. On October 22, 2019, the Santa Ana Water Board received peer review comments from six different peer reviewers on the draft TMDL Technical Report on several technical issues associated with the models used and assumptions used within the models. Santa Ana Water Board staff worked with the TMDL Task Force to revise the 2018 draft TMDL Technical Report.

Recently, the TMDL Task Force submitted a Revised Draft TMDL Technical Report to Santa Ana Water Board staff, titled “Proposed Revisions to the Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake Nutrient TMDLs,” (LESJWA 2024), which describes the past and current nutrient related problems in Canyon Lake and Lake Elsinore in greater detail and discusses the technical basis for updating and revising the 2004 TMDLs. Specifically, the Revised Draft TMDL Technical Report finds that the 2024 TMDLs are necessary because they better reflect lake dynamics. The 2024 TMDLs were derived from over 20 years of scientific research that reflect knowledge gained on the following key issues: 1) better understanding of the San Jacinto River watershed, 2) highly managed nature of Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake and influence of these management actions on expected water quality and biological conditions, 3) water quality conditions related to naturally occurring hydrologic cycles that include water quality and aquatic biological expectations, especially for Lake Elsinore, 4) dynamics of sediment and nutrient retention and their influence on conditions in each lake, and 5) role that natural background levels of nutrients in the watershed have on water quality in Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake.

The 2024 Report describes the technical basis for the 2024 Nutrient TMDLs, which would be incorporated into the Basin Plan if adopted by the Santa Ana Water Board.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The public may participate either in person at the physical meeting location or virtually via the Zoom meeting platform. Instructions concerning how to participate virtually are available on the Santa Ana Water Board's [Remote Participation](#) webpage. For those who do not intend to actively participate, the meeting will be livestreamed via [Cal-Span](#).

Interested persons may attend and express their views orally on this matter at the public hearing. Oral statements should be brief to allow all interested persons time to be heard. Such comments will generally be limited to three minutes, though the Board Chair may grant additional time on a case-by-case basis.

The Santa Ana Water Board's agenda for the Board meeting will be available on the Santa Ana Water Board's Agenda webpage at least ten days prior to the meeting. Please check the [Santa Ana Water Board's](#) website for the most up-to-date public hearing date and location, as they are subject to change.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

Please click on the link below for directions and public parking:
[City of Loma Linda](#)

LANGUAGE SERVICES AND ACCESSIBILITY

If you require language interpretation or sign language services, please email a request to Jessica Baenre at jessica.baenre@waterboards.ca.gov or (951) 782-3285 at least 5 business days prior to the meeting.

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please direct questions about this notice or to obtain copies of the Basin Plan amendment and supporting documents to Lauren Briggs, Environmental Scientist, at (951) 320-6375, or by e-mail at Lauren.Briggs@waterboards.ca.gov.

December 26, 2024

Date

Jayne Joy, P.E.
Executive Officer