



South Orange County Wastewater Authority

October 20, 2011

Jeanine Townsend
Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814



Re: California Ocean Plan Amendments

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on some of the proposed amendments to the California Ocean Plan (COP). The South Orange County Wastewater Authority is a joint powers authority providing wastewater treatment, water recycling for its ten member agency Cities and Water Districts and the 500,000 residents and businesses served in southern portion of Orange County. The comments provided below pertain to non-substantive administrative changes and proposed Model Monitoring Program related to point source discharges.

Item 1 – Non-Substantive Administrative Changes

The proposed COP amendment corrects the location of the South Orange County Wastewater Authority's Aliso Creek Ocean Outfall. However the proposed amendment refers to the outfall as the Aliso Water Management Agency, Aliso Ocean Outfall. In 2001 the Aliso Water Management Agency and Southeast Regional Reclamation Authority were consolidated into a single joint powers agency, the South Orange County Wastewater Authority. To avoid confusion the coastal maps included in the Ocean Plan on pages 65 and 66 should reference the outfalls as the South Orange County Wastewater Authority, Aliso Creek Ocean Outfall and the South Orange County Wastewater Authority, San Juan Creek Ocean Outfall.

Item 2 – Point Source Model Monitoring

We agree in concept with increasing the use of regional monitoring programs like the Southern California Bight program which our agency has participated in for many years. We are very concerned about the potential costs associated with the pursuit of infinitely open-ended questions such as; *what is the ultimate fate of the discharge plume?* Scientific advances in the ability to detect constituents at ever lower concentrations guaranties that such questions will never fully be answered. The model monitoring program should be focused on monitoring discharge impacts, not focused on plume analysis for the sake of plume analysis with no defined purpose.

Many of the monitoring elements included in the Point Discharge Model Monitoring program have been incorporated in our permit monitoring programs for many years. At the request of the Regional Board some of the once per permit cycle monitoring elements have been dropped and the monies have been used for Regional Board directed special studies. As a relatively small agency this funding arrangement for special water quality studies has been beneficial because it provides us with a predictable budget for water quality monitoring. However a predominantly

question driven monitoring program will lead to drastic increases in water quality monitoring costs without any assurance that water quality questions will be answered.

In response to information included in the Staff Report Substitute Environmental Document for the Amendments to the Ocean Plan, I have comments to the following sections:

Item 3 3.1.7 Reasonable Means of Compliance

At this early development stage the use of remote submersible vehicles or gliders are not a reasonable means of collecting water column water quality data. The cost of employing these technologies can not be justified when compared to the costs of conventional water column monitoring methods. While the glider technology holds promise they are not sufficiently developed enough to be considered commercially available at a reasonable cost. The staff report suggests that monitoring programs could or should include the use of this technology. Due to the uncertainty of the results generated by this technology and its extremely high cost, I believe it is inappropriate to promote this specific product as a means of conducting water column testing. Our agency recently received bids for conducting quarterly remote glider monitoring analysis around one of our ocean outfalls and the proposed cost of glider deployment was more than three times what our agency current spends annually to meet permit required offshore monitoring requirements.


Item 4 MPA Manager Notification

Required NPDES water quality monitoring, other than benthic and bioaccumulation monitoring, should not trigger requirements for sample collection plans, or twenty-four hour Marine Protection Area Manager Notification requirements. Routine water quality testing which poses little or incidental take should not trigger any notification requirements.

In summary these proposed Model Monitoring Program provisions will result in drastic increases in spending for ocean discharge monitoring without providing any mechanism for cost oversight or a means of ensuring that the additional monitoring results in greater protection of water quality or beneficial uses. If you have any questions about these comments please feel free to contact me at (949) 234-5421 or via email at bflahive@socwa.com.

Sincerely,

South Orange County Wastewater Authority



Brennon Flahive
Environmental Compliance Administrator

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cc: File