



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDER NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST
937 NO. HARBOR DR.
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92132-0058

Public Comment
Storm Water Program Workplan and Implementation
Deadline: 7/24/15 by 12:00 noon

IN REPLY REFER TO:
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July 24, 2015

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

Dear Ms. Townsend:



We are pleased to comment on the draft documents comprising the Stormwater Strategic Initiative. We understand that much of this remains conceptual and as such will offer our comments to the overall concept.

First, we are pleased with the recognition that stormwater will be considered a valuable resource, and not merely a transport vehicle for pollutants. This is more in line with how California has treated the air around us. With this consideration we agree that the focus of a stormwater program should be working to remove pollutants from the watershed especially given the wide dispersal of pollutants through aerial deposition and mobile sources such as transportation.

We agree that at a time of extreme drought and climate uncertainty, the role of stormwater and the return of stormwater to beneficial use should be a very high priority. We believe this overriding goal should govern the overall program. In this context, the highest priority should be to capture and make beneficial use of stormwater, and ensure that this stormwater has minimal contact with pollutants along its journey through a watershed.

This approach stands in marked contrast to past regulatory efforts. At our bases in San Diego, for example, we faced a requirement in the near past to not allow discharge into San Diego Bay of any toxic stormwater. Given the ubiquity of toxic contaminants in any urban stormwater, and deficiencies in the test; this would have required capture and diversion of stormwater to the already strained San Diego sewage system at great expense. Notwithstanding that much of that toxicity came from sources over which we had little if any control.

Much of the contamination can be prevented from entering the watersheds of our bases under the new direction you are proposing in the long-term. As many of these contaminants comes from the transportation sector, we hope you will work with CARB and others involved in clean transportation alternatives. The Department of Navy for example is currently looking to purchase 300-600 electric vehicles within California which represents a far cleaner means of transportation relative to water quality. We continue to believe that the proposed strategy is weak on achievable reductions from transportation and land use. This project could likely fit in with the work already being done by other agencies through the AB 32 process, and would be a worthy project in and of itself.

Overall we believe that limited resources would best be spent on long-term efforts to remove pollutants. For example, as we continue to redevelop our installations we can incorporate infiltration technology which over time will result in the retention and replenishment of water resources. Carried throughout a watershed, and given a time frame equivalent to how long it has taken to make huge progress with California's air pollution; we believe this represents the long-term direction for success. Your proposed strategy is a significant move in this direction.

We support the identified effort to develop "Alternative Compliance Approaches for Municipal Storm Water Permit Receiving Water Limitations." Rather than strict numerical compliance requirements which are difficult if not impossible to meet at this time, we believe as discussed above, that a long-term watershed approach would better direct resources to create a coordinated attack of this problem which will result in significant pollution reduction, beneficial reuse of stormwater, and co-benefits through projects like cleaner transportation.

We also agree with examining the regulatory process for efficiency. We have consistently stated in numerous hearings that sampling requirements of permits do not provide useful information in a consistent format that enables watershed based decision-making. We believe regional sampling programs and consistent framework could reduce the costs to permittees while providing better information for new policy alternatives. We further agree that recognition of permittee's actions that result

in source reduction should be incentivized otherwise, all of our limited resources go towards permit compliance. In this context, we would suggest that these projects be made a high priority rather than the current medium priority.

Finally, returning to the subject of toxicity and stormwater, we have consistently raised concerns that overly conservative toxicity testing and standards creates public perception that reuse of stormwater is not appropriate. If the intent of this initiative is to foster the beneficial reuse of stormwater, we suggest not labeling stormwater as "toxic". We do not seek to minimize the importance of considering the pollution load of stormwater. Rather, using very conservative test protocols, who's science is still being discussed, does not give an accurate reading of pollution and certainly doesn't make the reuse of stormwater easier. The phrases "Toilet to Tap" has caused a decade of challenges to the recycling of highly-treated sewage effluent. Proposals to let "toxic" stormwater infiltrate into the ground could pose similar challenges, even though the toxicity is really no different than the runoff from someone's driveway.

We should all agree the future is in source reduction, clean transportation, and other means discussed in your plan. We look forward to seeing more of these details emerge in the coming months.

If further information is required, my point of contact is Mr. Randal Friedman; who can be reached at (916) 930-5605 or email Randal.Friedman@navy.mil

Sincerely,



C. L. STATHOS
By direction