Public Comment
Rec. Std. Amend - Santa Ana RWB
Deadline: 10/1/12 by 12 noon

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL
AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

September 25, 2012

RECEIVED
9-28-12
SWRCB Clerk

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

Dear Ms. Townsend:

Re: Comment Letter - Recreation Standards Amendments by the Santa Ana Regional Water Board

The Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) is the Principal Permittee on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit (Order No. R8-2010-0033, NPDES No. CAS 618033). In addition to the District, the Permittees to the MS4 Permit are the County of Riverside (County) and the Cities in Riverside County within the Santa Ana Region (collectively referred to herein as "Permittees").

On behalf of the Permittees, the District submits this letter of support for the State Water Resources Control Board's approval of the amendment of the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan with respect to recreation uses. The amendments approved by the Regional Board are the product of a comprehensive stakeholder task force process facilitated by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority since 2003.

This deliberation was the most thorough consideration of recreational use standards ever undertaken in California, or perhaps anywhere. Active participants included the major municipal stormwater permittees, water and wastewater agencies, environmental advocates, and Regional Board and US EPA staff. The task force's approach has been to work within the existing law, to understand the science underlying the standards, and to agree upon an approach to standards that is appropriate, enforceable, achievable, and that focuses effort on reducing the actual risk of illness.

The amendments will allow local agencies responsible for surface water quality to focus their attention on those areas where recreation actually occurs, thus being more efficient with public resources and likely reducing public health risks. In addition, the amendments expressly acknowledge the continuing requirement to protect beneficial uses not only at a particular location, but downstream from that location. The amendments address only fresh water, and therefore, do not affect the standards that apply at ocean beaches.

Currently, numeric standards apply at all times, everywhere throughout the watershed, and without consideration of how the Santa Ana River's highly variable flows affect the risk of exposure. In addition, most stormwater quality best management practices are not effective in achieving the numeric standards, either because they do not effectively remove the bacteria, or because other uncontrollable factors cause

exceedences in the waterbodies. With the amendments, compliance will still require significant investments, but those expenditures can at least be focused on protecting swimmers where they swim. In addition, the amended standards are achievable. Therefore, the amendments will improve the protection of public health and make the standards more appropriate.

For these reasons, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District urges the State Board to approve the amendments. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

JASON UHLEY
Chief of Watershed Protection Division

ec: Santa Ana MS4 Permittees

SH:cw
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