

Project Description

COWABUNGA CREEK METALS TMDLS

Description of the Proposed Activity

The proposed activity is the adoption of an amendment to the San Diego Regional Water Board's Basin Plan, to incorporate total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for copper, lead, and zinc in the Cowabunga Creek watershed. The Basin Plan designates beneficial uses of water bodies, establishes water quality objectives for the protection of these beneficial uses, and outlines a plan of implementation for achieving and maintaining those objectives and protecting water quality. In addition to establishing total maximum daily loads for copper, lead, and zinc, this Basin Plan amendment allocates those loads to sources and includes an implementation plan and compliance schedule for reducing pollutant loading to meet the allocations and reduce the amounts of copper, lead, and zinc to levels that protect the beneficial uses of the water in the Cowabunga Creek watershed.

The Cowabunga Creek watershed is located in the northern portion of Compliant County, and runs generally to the west from the ridgeline of the Mucky Mountain range to the Pacific Ocean. The TMDL applies to all surface waters within the entire watershed and its subwatersheds, including all of the named and unnamed tributaries to Cowabunga Creek. Several general land uses exist in the watershed, including urban and suburban uses in the vicinity of Silly City, military uses at Bravo Base, rangeland uses, and parklands. A map of the watershed is attached.

Two beneficial uses exist in Cowabunga Creek that are sensitive to, and subject to impairment by elevated concentrations of dissolved metals in the water column. Warm Freshwater Habitat and Wildlife Habitat require water quality suitable for the protection of aquatic life and aquatic-dependent wildlife. Dissolved copper, lead, and zinc can be toxic to aquatic life and can inhibit the growth of aquatic vegetation, decreasing spawning areas and habitats for fish and other living organisms. Wildlife living in rivers and in riparian areas can be harmed by the toxic effects of ingesting or coming into contact with dissolved copper, lead, and zinc. The water in Cowabunga Creek does not currently support its beneficial uses for warm freshwater habitat or wildlife habitat because the levels of dissolved copper, lead, and zinc are above water quality objectives.

The San Diego Regional Water Board's goal in adopting TMDLs through this amendment is to eliminate the water quality problems caused by copper, lead, and zinc in Cowabunga Creek, and specifically to ensure that the levels of these three metals in the water column do not interfere with attainment of these two beneficial uses. Adoption of a TMDL is required by section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act.

The TMDLs for copper, lead and zinc, and their derivation, are discussed in the Technical Report, section 6. This section contains the technical and environmental characteristics of the TMDLs. The TMDLs will be implemented primarily through regulation of urban runoff via waste discharge requirements, adopted by the San Diego

Regional Water Board, which implement federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System regulations. The primary dischargers are municipalities located in the Cowabunga Creek watershed, the California Department of Translocation, and the U.S. Navy. The amendment establishes wasteload allocations for dischargers that can be met over a phased compliance schedule and that should result in attainment of water quality standards. The wasteload allocations and their derivation are discussed in the Technical Report, section 8. The Implementation Plan and compliance schedule are discussed in the Technical Report, section 11. The economic analysis is contained in the Technical Report, section 12.

As described in section 11 of the Technical Report, implementation actions by the dischargers will primarily include construction and operation of retention and treatment facilities for stormwater runoff from industrial, military, suburban, and urban sources, and remediation of existing hazardous waste cleanup sites. Some implementation actions will likely require that the dischargers obtain various federal, state, or local permits, including as examples dredge and fill permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, streambed alteration agreements from the Department of Fish and Game, waste discharge requirements from the State Water Board and San Diego Regional Water Board, and local grading permits issued by Compliant County and Solar City. The San Diego Regional Water Board is consulting with these governmental agencies in developing these TMDLs. These agencies may use this environmental documentation, and are expected to conduct more detailed environmental analyses as appropriate, when approving specific implementation actions once those actions are identified and proposed by the dischargers.