

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's Role in Cross-Border Issues

What is the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board?

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board) was established with California's Water Quality Control Act (the Dickey Act) of 1949, which instituted nine regional water pollution control boards located in each of the state's major California watersheds. The regional boards have primary responsibility for overseeing and enforcing the state's water quality laws and policies. In 1969, the California State Legislature revised its water quality laws by enacting the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, the cornerstone of today's water protection efforts in California. The new state law was so influential that Congressional authors used sections of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act as the basis of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 (also known as the federal Clean Water Act). The regional boards also enforce these regulations.

The San Diego Water Board covers a region of approximately 3,900 square miles of surface, referred to as the San Diego Region. The western boundary of the Region consists of the Pacific Ocean coastline which extends approximately 85 miles north from the United States and Mexico border. The northern boundary of the Region is formed by the hydrologic divide starting near Laguna Beach and extending inland through El Toro and easterly along the ridge of the Elsinore Mountains into the Cleveland National Forest. The eastern boundary of the Region is formed by the Laguna Mountains and other lesser known mountains located in the Cleveland National Forest. The southern boundary of the Region is formed by the United States-Mexico border.

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's current role in cross-border watershed issues is primarily focused in four areas:

- Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team and Recovery Strategy
- Wastewater Treatment Regulation
- Total Maximum Daily Loads
- Cleanup and Abatement Grant Management

Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team and Recovery Strategy

The San Diego Water Board has formed a Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team with stakeholders to address cross-border trash and sediment impacts in a collaborative manner. A key result of the Recovery Team's efforts has been the development and release of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Strategy. The purpose of the Recovery Strategy is to concisely summarize the first phase of actions in a way that will allow stakeholders, policy makers, and potential funding sources to have a clear understanding of both the problems and the solutions and help the Recovery Team to achieve its vision of a healthy Tijuana River Watershed in a manner that is credible, durable, and acceptable to the communities on both sides of the border. This strategic vision includes seven Priority Action Areas with 27 specific projects focused on successfully reducing the sediment and trash currently degrading water quality, exacerbating flooding, affecting sensitive habitat, and impacting recreation. For additional information, please visit the following link:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/tijuana_river_valley_strategy/index.shtml

Wastewater Treatment Regulation

The federal Clean Water Act requires National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for wastewater treatment plants. In 1996, the San Diego Water Board issued an NPDES permit to the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section (IBWC) for up to 25 million gallons per day of effluent from the International Wastewater Treatment Plant to the South Bay Ocean Outfall. Per the permit, IBWC is required to meet specific effluent limitations and conduct regular monitoring of receiving waters (Pacific Ocean) to identify potential impacts from the effluent. The San Diego Water Board ensures that the NPDES permit requirements are being met by conducting plant inspections and reviewing monitoring reports submitted by IBWC. For additional information, please visit the following link:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_decisions/adopted_orders/1990/1996_0050.pdf

Total Maximum Daily Loads

The federal Clean Water Act requires states to identify and make a list of surface water bodies that are polluted. These water bodies, referred to in law as "water quality limited segments," do not meet water quality standards. States are required to compile these water bodies into a list, referred to as the "Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments" (List). States must also prioritize the water bodies on the list and develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). These TMDLs are incorporated into permits with the goal of controlling pollutants and restoring/maintaining the water bodies' beneficial uses. The San Diego Water Board is the state agency that identifies impaired bodies and develops TMDLs for the San Diego Region.

The Tijuana River is currently on the List for the following impairments: eutrophic, indicator bacteria, low dissolved oxygen, pesticides, phosphorus, sedimentation/siltation, selenium, solids, surfactants (MBAS), synthetic organics, total nitrogen as N, toxicity, trace elements, and trash. TMDL completion is scheduled for 2019-2021. The Tijuana River Estuary is currently on the List for the following impairments: eutrophic, indicator bacteria, lead, low dissolved oxygen, nickel, pesticides, thallium, trash, and turbidity. TMDL completion is scheduled for 2019. For additional information, please visit the following link: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml

Cleanup and Abatement Grant Management

The San Diego Water Board manages a \$700,000 State Water Resources Control Board Cleanup and Abatement Fund grant which was awarded to the City of San Diego. The grant has funded studies in the Tijuana River Valley on trash and sediment characterization, hydrology and hydraulics, and trash and sediment loading. The grant has also funded trash and sediment removal efforts.