



WATERSHED UPDATE:

The City of Signal Hill

March 2019

LOCAL INSPECTIONS

Construction Inspections:

NPDES inspections are required to be conducted monthly for active construction sites one acre or larger. Signal Hill has two (2) active construction sites that are currently subject to these inspections. Good housekeeping practices are necessary to keep sediment on-site and out of storm drains.



Location: Construction on Walnut Avenue.
Inspection (9/27/18): Sand bags were observed lining the perimeter of the site, indicating that proper sediment controls were being implemented. No discharges or other illicit activities were noted.

Industrial/Commercial Inspections:

The City previously completed the required two cycles of industrial and commercial business inspections at nearly 200 sites. Industrial Waste (IW) inspections continue to ensure that observed violations are corrected.

NEXT MS4 PERMIT STATUS

The five-year term of the 2012 MS4 Permit nominally expired in December 2017, but its requirements continue until a new Permit is in effect. The Regional Board is currently developing the next Permit with the intent to have a single permit covering both Ventura, Los Angeles Counties, and Long Beach. The Regional Board plans to hold a series of workshops (most likely two or three) beginning in April to present the initial concepts of the next Permit and solicit public comment. The new permit is likely to be adopted in early 2020.

VACANT PARCEL ORDINANCE (VPO)

Effective since October 2017, the Vacant Parcel Ordinance (VPO) was developed to prevent sediment discharge by requiring the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) at all vacant parcels one acre or larger. The City has completed compliance plans and installed the BMPs for the ten sites it owns that are subject to the VPO. A majority of the private (non-City-owned) sites subject to the VPO have submitted compliance plans to the City. Several have since received approval and are in the process of BMP installation.

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ANNUAL REPORT

The City's NPDES MS4 Annual Report for the fiscal year (July 2017 – June 2018) was submitted to the Regional Board by the December 15, 2018 deadline. The submittal was in two parts: 1) the City's individual stormwater pollution prevention programs and projects, and 2) the Watershed Management Group's cumulative efforts.

MS4 PERMIT LITIGATION

In late December 2018 and early January 2019, the Court released rulings for two lawsuits challenging the 2012 MS4 Permit. Both of these rulings are likely to be appealed. In brief:

1. Two cities (Duarte and Gardena) filed a 2015 lawsuit challenging the Permit on the grounds that the Regional Board did not take economic impacts into consideration in the 2012 MS4 Permit, and therefore exceeded the requirements of the federal Clean Water Act. The courts ruled that the 2012 MS4 Permit did exceed the Clean Water Act provisions, asserting that the Regional Board's acknowledgement that the Permit would be costly to implement did not demonstrate a good faith consideration of economic impacts. Furthermore, the courts ruled that while industrial dischargers are required to meet numeric effluent limitations, municipal dischargers are not.
2. The environmental group L.A. Waterkeeper appealed a previous 2012 MS4 Permit ruling that a city is considered in compliance with the Permit if it is implementing a Watershed Management Program. This is referred to as "Safe Harbor," which effectively limits lawsuits that could be filed against cities by third parties. The courts ruled in favor of the cities, and further ruled that the anti-degradation provisions of the Permit, which prevented the Regional Board from issuing a compliance standard lesser than those in previous Permits, are invalid. The Regional Board can thus no longer use the anti-degradation provisions to defend implausible TMDL limits.

LA RIVER TRASH TMDL

In August 2018, the Regional Board approved the City's request to reduce the frequency of Daily Generation Rate (DGR) trash studies from annually to once every 5 years. The 2018 trash study was conducted during the summer by walking through specific sections of the City, collecting trash, and then weighing the trash collected over a 30-day period. The next trash study is scheduled for 2023. The study indicated that the City achieved a 99.82% combined reduction of trash from baseline load allocations.

LLAR TMRP

To comply with the LA River Trash TMDL requirements, the Lower Los Angeles River Trash Monitoring and Reporting Plan (LLAR TMRP) was submitted to the Regional Board on March 14, 2018. The TMRP outlines a plan to monitor trash twice a year at nine representative locations within the main river channel and tributaries of the LLAR Watershed. The First Report from August 2018 noted that trash was largely absent from the flowing channel, suggesting that trash is not sourced from stormwater outfalls. Study methodology and results were impacted by homeless populations.

STORMWATER FUNDING

Measure W:

Measure W (the Safe, Clean Water Program) was approved in the November 2018 general election with a 69.45% majority vote. Measure W will levy a tax upon parcels to fund stormwater programs and projects. See the [Safe, Clean Water Program Elements](#) for details. Schools and municipal facilities will be exempted from the tax, and the funds will be allocated to regional programs/municipal programs/administration in a 50/40/10 arrangement. Steering committees are being established to allocate funds for regional projects. The County is currently developing the implementation ordinance, expected to be released in the coming months.

Prop 1 Funding:

Prop 1 (the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014) authorized \$7.545 billion in general obligation bonds for water projects throughout the state. These funds will be distributed through grant programs administered by a number of agencies and organizations, including the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Department of Water Resources.

Prop 68 Funding:

Prop 68 (the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018) authorized \$4 billion in general obligation bonds for state and local parks, environmental protection projects, water infrastructure projects, and flood protection projects. These funds will be distributed through grant programs administered by a number of agencies and organizations, including the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Ocean Protection Council.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT

The definition of "Navigable Waterways" in the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) has resulted in decades of litigation and legal wrangling. In December 2018, the Army Corps of Engineers released proposed changes to the wording and comments are due by April 15, 2019. Under the old definition, tributaries, drainage ditches, lakes, and ponds connected to a navigable waterway are potentially subject to the CWA and trigger an extensive Army Corps of Engineers permitting process for even the most minor maintenance and modifications. Under the proposed change, the definition would be relaxed so that large rivers, lakes and oceans would continue to be subject to the CWA, but small tributaries, ponds, constructed wetlands and stormwater treatment systems would generally be exempt from federal CWA regulations.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE (POP) OUTREACH

From December 2018 - January 2019, the City distributed educational stormwater pollution prevention materials to 13 POP businesses. These businesses (which include auto shops, hardware and home improvement stores, lawn and gardening centers, and pet stores) sell what are considered to be common contributors to stormwater pollution. The program encourages store owners to display and distribute materials that offer resources for proper management of stormwater pollutants to customers.



REGIONAL PROJECTS

Through the Lower Los Angeles watershed, projects which will indirectly benefit Signal Hill include:

DeForest Park:

The wetland restoration project at DeForest Park in Long Beach had its grand opening in June 2018. The project included multi-benefit best management practices, and will serve a drainage area within the Lower Los Angeles River Watershed, of which Signal Hill is a part.

Long Beach MUST:

The 90% design plans for the Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment (MUST) Recycle Facility are currently in development. Construction is anticipated to begin in March 2019 and be completed in 2020. The project will divert and treat urban and stormwater runoff, and will serve a drainage area within the Lower Los Angeles River Watershed, of which Signal Hill is a part.

Urban Orchard:

Design plans for the Urban Orchard project in South Gate are currently in development. The project will include the creation of an urban community garden that will be irrigated with captured stormwater, as well as other best management practices. The project will serve a drainage area within the Lower Los Angeles River Watershed, of which Signal Hill is a part.

STATEWIDE TRASH AMENDMENT – LOS CERRITOS CHANNEL

The Statewide Trash Amendment requires trash capture devices to be installed in all catch basins in “priority” land areas: high density residential, industrial, commercial, mixed urban, and public transportation stations.

The Regional Board sent out official notice letters on August 18, 2017. The City submitted a letter to the Regional Board by November 20, 2017 stating that the City would install, operate, and maintain full capture systems (trash baskets) in catch basins that capture runoff from one or more of the priority land uses. In February 2019, the City also submitted jurisdictional maps that identify the priority land use areas, drainage areas addressed by trash TMDLs, storm drain network, and proposed locations of all full capture systems. The final deadline is ten years from the start date of the program.

Preliminary reviews found that the city has approximately 116 catch basins that would be subject to installation of a trash capture device. The City has installed all 116 catch basin retrofits.