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## **Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board Proposes General Waste Discharge Requirements for Groundwater Recharge Projects**

The Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board has issued draft General Waste Discharge Requirements to regulate the use of imported State Water Project water, Colorado River water, and imported well water to recharge groundwater basins. The proposal could impact the cost and availability of water supplies in those portions of Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties that comprise the Santa Ana Region.

### **Background**

The storage of imported water in groundwater basins has long been a necessary component of the water supply in the Santa Ana Region. By storing imported water in groundwater basins within their service areas, local water suppliers are able to maintain a readily-available supply of water in sufficient quantities to serve customer demands without the need to build costly surface reservoirs.

The Santa Ana Regional Board's new proposal builds upon major amendments to

its Basin Plan in January 2004 that focused on protecting the quality of the groundwater subbasins throughout the region. The 2004 amendments established water quality objectives and management strategies for total dissolved solids ("TDS") and nitrogen in each of the defined subbasins, referred to as management zones. As a result of the 2004 amendments, those public agencies that replenish groundwater basins with treated wastewater are required to implement specified projects to maintain water quality consistent with the new TDS and nitrogen objectives.

### **Proposed Waste Discharge Requirements**

The Regional Board is now proposing to expand the 2004 regulations to cover all entities that replenish groundwater with State Water Project water, Colorado River water, and "imported" well water (well water pumped from one management zone for groundwater replenishment use in another). The Regional Board's proposal would serve to coordinate existing and new

wastewater and imported water recharge projects within each management zone.

The new proposal treats water suppliers that recharge local groundwater supplies with imported water the same as dischargers of pollutants to the groundwater basins. They would have to obtain the Regional Board's authorization to use imported water to recharge groundwater basins within their service areas.

Rechargers would be restricted from replenishing groundwater with imported water supplies containing constituents in excess of established TDS and nitrogen concentration limits. Based on historical water quality, State Water Project water and Colorado River water supplies are expected to exceed the limitations on occasion. In cases where the imported water supplies do not meet the established water quality parameters, water suppliers would have to divert stormwater runoff for recharge or take some other action to assure that the quality of the recharge waters satisfies the water quality standards and does not

degrade the receiving groundwaters.

The Regional Board proposes numeric and narrative limits for several constituents expected to be present in the imported water supplies besides TDS and nitrogen (1-4 Dioxane, Total Trihalomehtanes (“THM”), N-Nitrosodimethylamine (“NDMA”), Methyl-tert-butyl ether (“MTBE”), and Perchlorate).

Groundwater rechargers would also be required to implement a monitoring and reporting program approved by the Santa Ana Regional Board on a project-by-project basis. The Regional Board’s proposal includes a “Typical Monitoring and Reporting Program” that covers imported water and stormwater recharge. The Regional Board may instead require a recharger to obtain individual waste discharge requirements prior to using imported water to recharge groundwater basins.

The Regional Board originally requested comments by May 1, 2006. In response to numerous requests by interested parties, the Regional Board has extended the comment period to June 26. The Regional Board is expected to consider the proposal at its July 14 meeting.

For more information about the Santa Ana Regional Board’s proposal, contact **Michele Staples** at 949.851.7409, or [mstaples@jdtplaw.com](mailto:mstaples@jdtplaw.com).



**Michele A. Staples** concentrates in advising and representing landowners, agricultural businesses, developers, and private and public water suppliers in the areas of water rights, water supply, endangered species, CEQA, and land use planning, feasibility and entitlements, before courts, public agency boards, city councils and boards of supervisors.

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