



CALIFORNIA
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ALLIANCE

TRASH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION TALKING POINTS

The Trash Policy sets the ambitious goal of no trash in California waterways by 2030. Achieving that goal will require strong coordination between community members, local governments, and the Regional Water Boards to ensure that policy provisions are incorporated into local permits and enforced on the ground in a timely and effective manner.

For Your – CITY COUNCIL

- ◆ Studies show that California communities are spending over \$400 million every year to clean up trash and marine debris. That number does not include the tourism and recreation revenue lost when river banks and beaches are covered in trash. We know that 80% of marine debris comes from land, carried into our ocean and waterways by rain running off our streets and sidewalks.
 - ◆ We can reduce cleanup costs and improve recreation opportunities by preventing the flow of trash into our waterways.
 - ◆ There are two ways to do this: by reducing the amount of trash on land through street sweeping, trash cans, and litter education campaigns, or by intercepting trash before it hits our rivers and streams by installing screens in storm drains or using bioswales and other nature-based solutions that reduce polluted runoff.
- ◆ The Trash Policy adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board in 2015 offers two tracks to provide locally-tailored approaches for cutting off trash pollution mobilization. It's up to cities and communities themselves to decide what is the best approach.
- ◆ Track 1 compliance requires the installation of full-capture devices on 100% of storm drains. It doesn't require compliance monitoring, only a demonstration that devices are installed and regularly maintained.
 - ◆ This track provides a clearer path to compliance for permittees, though it may be better suited in denser, urban areas.
 - ◆ For Track 1 compliance, 'full-capture devices' are defined to include multi-benefit stormwater capture projects like bioswales. It's not a great idea to deliberately divert trash pollution into stormwater capture areas, but it does help encourage green stormwater infrastructure.

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- ◆ Track 2 compliance allows the self-selection of the best combination of strategies to reduce trash. This can include full-capture devices at critical locations, increased street sweeping and trash cans, or educational campaigns on littering. This track does require monitoring to prove that trash has been reduced to the same extent it would be under the Track 1 compliance pathway.

For Your – REGIONAL BOARD

- ◆ The goal of the Trash Policy adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board in 2015 is to ensure there will be 'no trash present in California waterways by 2030.' This goal is stated as an enforceable Water Quality Standard, which must be incorporated into all stormwater permits.
- ◆ The impetus of the Trash Policy was to address the 73 water bodies listed as having impaired water quality due to the ongoing presence of large amounts of trash. This pollution harms birds, fish, and other aquatic wildlife, poses a threat to human health, and overall reduces access and enjoyment of our waterways. Rather than create 73 separate TMDLs in each of trash-clogged waterway individually, the State Water Board designed the Trash Policy to serve essentially as one, statewide TMDL.
- ◆ The Policy was adopted in April 2015 (effective December 2015). It gives communities until May 2020 to incorporate policy requirements into their stormwater permits and until December 2030 to come into compliance. Even if the 2020 deadline is not met, a permittee must still comply by 2030.
 - ◆ As such, permits should be updated and adopted as soon as possible to give permittees a longer window in which to come into compliance.
- ◆ Track 1 provides a much clearer path to compliance than Track 2. For Track 2, communities must show that they have reduced trash to the same extent that they would under Track 1. There are no good monitoring programs in place yet to accurately prove this.
 - ◆ It's likely that some communities will try to get away with doing less because visual monitoring (the best option for Track 2 compliance) is not enforceable. As such, the Regional Board is going to need to develop guidelines for effectively monitoring trash and find ways to enforce against those communities that are shirking their responsibilities under Track 2.
- ◆ The primary responsible parties for the Trash Policy are municipalities. The Policy covers high density residential areas, public transportation stations, and industrial and commercial zones.
 - ◆ Caltrans is also responsible for meeting Trash Policy requirements, under Track 2, on their high-density highways, on and off ramps, and rest areas. Industrial and commercial sites have an absolute prohibition on trash discharges.

For Your – COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- ◆ California has a serious trash problem. At last year's Coastal Cleanup Day, over 700,000 pounds of plastic bags, bottles, straws and other trash were removed from our beaches and coastal waters. Currently 73 of California's waterways are considered impaired by trash. This has serious impacts for birds, fish and other aquatic wildlife, including entanglement and the mistaken consumption of trash as food, and for public health, as trash introduces pathogens into our waterways and microplastics in our drinking water supplies. It's also costing our communities millions in cleanup costs.

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- Historically, we've been focused on addressing trash at the beginning and end of its journey, through source control (ex. plastic bag bans) and cleanups. Those remain critical trash pollution prevention spots, but we also need to work to stop the flow of trash that's already out there into our waterways. For example, 80% of marine debris comes from land, carried into our waterways by rain running off roads, sidewalks, parking lots, and other urban surfaces.
- The goal of the Trash Policy – no trash present in California surface waters by 2030 – is enforceable under the Clean Water Act. It means that the state can act to support, or force when necessary, communities that are failing to meet the goal. It's arguably the most ambitious water quality objective in the country.
- The Trash Policy allows communities to choose locally-tailored actions to meet their obligations. For some communities, especially more urban ones, the best option will be to install screens on storm drains that capture all trash before it flows into the sewer system. For communities that require more flexibility (or are perhaps more dispersed), the community can implement a combination of strategies to stop trash including requiring more trash cans and street sweeping, developing educational campaigns on littering, installing trash capture devices in certain, critical locations, or enacting local ordinances on single-use plastic and littering.



For more information, please contact
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