

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

September 16, 2022

Sent by Email Only

Peter Vroom
Deputy Director Public Utilities Department
City of San Diego
2392 Kincaid Road
San Diego, CA 92101
pvroom@sandiego.gov

In reply refer to:
248796:F0sibodu

Subject: Settlement Offer No. R9-2022-0148 Related to Violations of Order No. R9-2017-0007, NPDES No. CA0107409 for the City of San Diego E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant, Discharge to the Pacific Ocean Through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall

Dr. Vroom:

The City of San Diego (Discharger) is hereby notified of alleged violations of Order No. R9-2017-0007, NPDES No. CA0107409, *Waste Discharge Requirements and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for the City of San Diego E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall*, and of the opportunity to participate in an expedited settlement process to address liability that may be assessed pursuant to California Water Code (Water Code) section 13385.

ALLEGED VIOLATIONS SUBJECT TO THIS OFFER

As detailed in the attached Notice of Violations of Order No. R9-2017-0007 (Exhibit A), the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board) alleges that the Discharger has violated Order No. R9-2017-0007. Exhibit A is incorporated into and made part of this Settlement Offer by reference.

STATUTORY LIABILITY

The Discharger is subject to the following statutory liabilities:

1. Water Code section 13385(h)(1) requires the assessment of a \$3,000 mandatory minimum penalty for each serious violation.¹
2. Water Code section 13385(i) requires the assessment of a \$3,000 mandatory minimum penalty for each non-serious violation, not counting the first three violations unless any of the defenses in Water Code section 13385(j) apply.²

¹ "Serious violation" is defined in Exhibit A.

² See Water Code section 13385(i) for a definition of applicable violations.

3. Water Code section 13385(c) allows for discretionary administrative civil liability of up to \$10,000 for each day in which the violations occur, and \$10 for each gallon discharged but not cleaned up in excess of 1,000 gallons.
4. Water Code section 13385(e) allows for the reimbursement of staff costs.

These mandatory minimum penalties and discretionary administrative civil liabilities may be assessed by the San Diego Water Board beginning with the date on which the violations first occurred.³

The formal enforcement action that the San Diego Water Board uses to assess such liability is an Administrative Civil Liability (ACL) complaint, followed by a public hearing on the matter, although the San Diego Water Board may instead refer such matters to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution. If referred to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution, the Superior Court may assess up to \$25,000 for each day in which the violations occur, and \$25 for each gallon discharged but not cleaned up in excess of 1,000 gallons.

SETTLEMENT OFFER

The Discharger can avoid a formal enforcement action and settle the alleged violations by accepting the San Diego Water Board's ACL Settlement Offer, as detailed herein. The Discharger may accept this Settlement Offer, waive its right to a hearing, and pay the mandatory minimum penalty of **\$54,000** for the alleged violations identified in Exhibit A. If the Discharger accepts this Settlement Offer, the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate, will execute the Settlement Offer, subject to the conditions below. Accordingly, the San Diego Water Board will forego issuance of an administrative civil liability complaint, will not refer the violations to the Attorney General's Office, will not charge incurred staff costs, and will waive its right to seek additional discretionary civil liabilities for the violations identified in Exhibit A.

The Expedited Payment Program does not address or resolve liability for any violation that is not specifically identified in Exhibit A regardless of the date that the violation occurred.

OPTIONS FOR RESPONSE TO OFFER

1. If the Discharger accepts this Settlement Offer, the Discharger shall complete and return the attached Acceptance of Conditional Resolution and Waiver of Right to Hearing for Settlement Offer No. R9-2022-0148, *City of San Diego, E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall* (Acceptance and Waiver, Exhibit B) on or before 5 p.m. on October 16, 2022.

³ No statute of limitations exists applicable to administrative proceedings to assess mandatory minimum penalties. See *City of Oakland v. Public Employees' Retirement System* (2002) 95 Cal.App.4th 29, 48; 3 Witkin, Cal. Procedure (2019 supp.) Actions, § 430(2).

- a. In lieu of paying all of the mandatory minimum penalty to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account, the Discharger may elect to apply up to **\$34,500** of the penalty to fund a supplemental environmental project (SEP). One SEP option is available to the Discharger in this settlement: a SEP that supplements the Bight Regional Monitoring Program (RMP), which is administered by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP). This SEP must supplement RMP work that would not otherwise be funded by the RMP's existing workplan(s). The [Bight RMP](#)⁴ is an ongoing marine monitoring collaboration that examines how human activities have affected the health of more than 1,500 square miles of Southern California's coastal waters. Monitoring objectives are designed to answer questions like "Is it safe to swim?" and "Are fish and shellfish safe to eat?" No funds will go to the Water Boards, and the Discharger's obligation to complete the SEP is released upon proof of payment to SCCWRP.
- b. If the Discharger does not choose to fund a SEP, they must pay the total mandatory minimum penalty amount to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account.

Both options are represented in the enclosed Acceptance and Waiver.

2. If the Discharger chooses to contest the violations alleged in Exhibit A, the Discharger shall submit a written response that identifies the specific violations and details the basis for the challenge (factual error, affirmative defense, etc.) to the San Diego Water Board on or before 5 p.m. on October 16, 2022. The San Diego Water Board will evaluate the contested violations and take one of two actions:
 - a. If the San Diego Water Board determines the violations are not supported, it will expunge the alleged violations, take no further action against the Discharger for the alleged violations, and notify the Discharger in writing of that determination; or
 - b. If the San Diego Water Board determines the alleged violations are meritorious, it will notify the Discharger of that determination. The Discharger will be given 30 days from the date of receipt of the San Diego Water Board determination to either accept the Settlement Offer by completing and returning the Acceptance and Waiver to the San Diego Water Board, or to reject the Settlement Offer.
3. If the Discharger does not respond to or rejects this Settlement Offer, the San Diego Water Board will initiate a formal enforcement action to resolve the alleged violations. In a formal enforcement action, the liability amount sought and/or imposed may exceed the liability amount set forth in this Settlement Offer. Moreover, the staff costs of investigating the violations and proceeding with a

⁴ <https://www.sccwrp.org/about/research-areas/regional-monitoring/southern-california-bight-regional-monitoring-program/bight-program-documents/>

formal enforcement action are factors that will be considered in assessing the liability amount.

CONDITIONS FOR SAN DIEGO WATER BOARD ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION

Pursuant to title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, section 123.27(d)(2)(iii), the San Diego Water Board is required to publish and allow the public 30 days to comment on any settlement of an enforcement action addressing alleged violations of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit conditions. Upon receipt of the Discharger's Acceptance and Waiver, the San Diego Water Board will publish a notice of the proposed resolution of the violations.

If no comments are received within the 30-day comment period, and unless there are new material facts that become available to the San Diego Water Board, the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate, will execute the Acceptance and Waiver as a stipulated order assessing the uncontested mandatory minimum penalty amount pursuant to Water Code section 13385(h) and/or (i).

If, however, significant comments are received in opposition to the settlement, this Settlement Offer may be withdrawn. In that case, the Discharger's waiver pursuant to the Acceptance and Waiver will also be treated as withdrawn, and the violation(s) will be addressed in a liability assessment proceeding before the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate. At the liability assessment hearing, the Discharger will be free to make arguments as to the alleged violations, and the Discharger's agreement to accept this Settlement Offer will not in any way be binding or used as evidence against the Discharger. The Discharger will be provided with further information in advance of the liability assessment proceeding.

In the event the Acceptance and Waiver is executed by the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate, full payment of the assessed amount shall be due within 30 calendar days of the San Diego Water Board's, or its delegate's, execution. Failure to pay the full liability within the required time period may subject the Discharger to further liability.

In the subject line of any response, please include the following: 248796:FOsibodu. For questions or concerns regarding this letter, please contact Fisayo Osibodu by phone at 619-521-8036 or by email at Fisayo.Osibodu@waterboards.ca.gov.

Respectfully,

Kelly Dorsey, P.G.
Assistant Executive Officer
San Diego Water Board

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Notice of Violation(s) of Order No. R9-2017-0007, NPDES No. CA0107409, Subject to Mandatory Minimum Penalties, City of San Diego, E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall

Exhibit B: Acceptance of Conditional Resolution and Waiver of Right to Hearing for Settlement Offer No. R9-2022-0148, City of San Diego, E.W. Blom Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean through the Point Loma Ocean Outfall

cc by email:

David Barker, San Diego Water Board, David.Barker@waterboards.ca.gov
Chiara Clemente, San Diego Water Board, Chiara.Clemente@waterboards.ca.gov
Brandi Outwin-Beals, San Diego Water Board, Brandi.Outwin-Beals@waterboards.ca.gov
Rachel Davenport, City of San Diego, RDavenport@sandiego.gov
Brian Nece, SCCWRP, bryann@sccwrp.org

Tech Staff Info & Use	
Order Nos.	R9-2017-0007(Order), R9-2022-0148 (EPL)
Party ID	8709
WDID	9 000000275
NPDES No.	CA0107409
Reg. Measure ID	414988 (R9-2017-0007)
PIN	248796

EXHIBIT A

NOTICE OF VIOLATIONS OF ORDER NO. R9-2017-0007, NPDES NO. CA0107409, SUBJECT TO MANDATORY MINIMUM PENALTIES, CITY OF SAN DIEGO, E.W. BLOM POINT LOMA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT DISCHARGE TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN THROUGH THE POINT LOMA OCEAN OUTFALL

The following table lists the alleged violations subject to mandatory minimum penalties (MMPs) pursuant to Water Code section 13385(h) and/or (i). For additional information about the alleged violations listed in the table:

1. Refer to the [State Water Resources Control Board Public Reports](#) webpage;
2. Choose the "MMP Report" link located under the "Violations Reports" category; and
3. Enter the search criteria.

Violation ID	Occurrence Date(s)	Violation Type	MMP Type	Violation Description
1106735	6/01/2022 through 6/30/2022	OEV, AM	CHRON	Turbidity exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 75 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU) with a result of 82.1 NTU.
1106736	6/01/2022 through 6/30/2022	AM	CHRON	Total Suspended Solids (TSS) concentration exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 60 milligrams per liter (mg/L) with a result of 79.8 mg/L.
1106737	6/01/2022 through 6/30/2022	M	CHRON	TSS system-wide percent removal was below the minimum required average monthly system-wide percent removal of 80 % with a result of 79.1 %.
1105874	5/01/2022 through 5/31/2022	OEV, AM	CHRON	Turbidity exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 75 NTU with a result of 90.4 NTU.
1105873	5/01/2022 through 5/31/2022	AM	CHRON	Oil and grease concentration exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 25 mg/L with a result of 30 mg/L.
1105877	5/01/2022 through 5/31/2022	CAT 1, AM	SIG, CHRON	TSS concentration exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 60 milligrams per liter (mg/L) with a result of 118 mg/L.
1105876	5/01/2022 through 5/31/2022	M	CHRON	TSS facility percent removal was below the minimum required average monthly facility percent removal of 75 % with a result of 66.2 %.

Violation ID	Occurrence Date(s)	Violation Type	MMP Type	Violation Description
1105875	5/01/2022 through 5/31/2022	M	CHRON	TSS system-wide percent removal was below the minimum required average monthly system-wide percent removal of 75 % with a result of 66.8 %.
1105879	5/07/2022	OEV, AW	CHRON	Turbidity exceeded the average weekly effluent limitation of 100 NTU with a result of 107 NTU.
1105871	5/07/2022	AW	CHRON	Settleable solids exceeded the average weekly effluent limitation of 1.5 milliliters per liter (mL/L) with a result of 1.8 mL/L.
1105878	5/04/2022	IM	CHRON	Oil and grease concentration exceeded the instantaneous maximum effluent limitation of 75 mg/L with a result of 85.5 mg/L.
1105872	5/04/2022	CAT 1, IM	SIG, CHRON	Settleable solids exceeded the instantaneous maximum effluent limitation of 3.0 mL/L with a result of 7.0 mL/L.
1104711	4/01/2022 through 4/30/2022	OEV, AM	CHRON	Turbidity exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 75 NTU with a result of 83.4 NTU.
1104713	4/30/2022	OEV, AW	CHRON	Turbidity exceeded the average weekly effluent limitation of 100 NTU with a result of 108 NTU.
1104710	4/01/2022 through 4/30/2022	CAT 1, AM	SIG, CHRON	TSS concentration exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 60 mg/L with a result of 128 mg/L.
1104709	4/01/2022 through 4/30/2022	AM	CHRON	Oil and grease concentration exceeded the average monthly effluent limitation of 25 mg/L with a result of 28.5 mg/L.
1104712	4/01/2022 through 4/30/2022	AM	CHRON	TSS facility percent removal was below the minimum required average monthly facility percent removal of 75 % with a result of 62 %.

Violation ID	Occurrence Date(s)	Violation Type	MMP Type	Violation Description
1104714	4/01/2022 through 4/30/2022	M	CHRON	TSS system-wide percent removal was below the minimum specified average monthly system-wide percent removal of 80 % with a result of 62.7 %.
1103679	3/1/2022 through 3/31/2022	M	N/A	TSS system-side percent removal was below the minimum required average monthly facility percent removal of 80 % with a result of 75.5 %.
1103678	3/1/2022 through 3/31/2022	M	N/A	TSS concentration exceeded the monthly average effluent limit of 60.0 mg/L with a result of 83.7 mg/L.
1100006	12/14/2021	IM	N/A	Settleable solids exceeded the instantaneous maximum effluent limit of 3.0 ml/L with a result of 3.5 ml/L.

PENALTY AMOUNT

MMP Amount for Effluent Violations

3 Serious Violations × \$3,000 per Serious Violation = \$9,000

15 Non-serious Violations × \$3,000 per Non-serious Violation = \$45,000

Total MMP Amount for Serious and Non-serious Violations = \$9,000 + \$45,000 = \$54,000

Penalty Amount = \$54,000

DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
AM	Effluent exceeds average monthly limitation.
ATOX	Violation of an acute toxicity effluent limitation.
AW	Effluent exceeds average weekly limitation.
CAT 1	Violation of an effluent limitation for a Group I pollutant by more than 40%.
CAT 2	Violation of an effluent limitation for a Group II pollutant by more than 20%.

TERM	DEFINITION
CHRON	Chronic violation as defined by Water Code section 13385(i). To be counted as a chronic violation, there must be 3 preceding violations (serious or non-serious) within a 180-day period. The fourth and any subsequent non-serious violation that occurs within the 180-day period is an MMP violation.
CIWQS	California Integrated Water Quality System database.
CTOX	Violation of a chronic toxicity effluent limitation.
DM	Effluent exceeds daily maximum limitation.
DREP	Deficient reporting violation. This will only result in an MMP if the report is so deficient as to make determination of compliance impossible for that reporting period.
GROUP	The list of pollutants is based on Appendix A to section 123.45 of title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
IM	Effluent exceeds instantaneous maximum limitation.
LREP	Late reporting violation. Every 30 days a discharge monitoring report is late counts as one serious violation (SIG).
M	Reported value below minimum required average for the month
MMP Type	Classification of the type of MMP violation.
N/A	Not Applicable
Occurrence Date(s)	Date that a violation occurred. For continuing violations, such as a monthly average, the days of the reporting period are used. If the occurrence date is unknown, the date is entered as the day it was first discovered by staff, the discharger, or a third party. For deficient or late reports, the occurrence date is the day after the report was due.
OEV	Violation of any constituent-specific effluent limitation not included in Group I or Group II.
Q	Effluent exceeds limit for quarterly reporting period.
S	Effluent exceeds limit for semi-annual reporting period.
SIG	Serious violation as defined by Water Code sections 13385(h)(2) and 13385.1, respectively. Waste discharge exceeds the effluent limitation for a Group I pollutant by 40% or more (CAT1), or a Group II pollutant by 20% or more (CAT2). Also, a failure to file a discharge monitoring report pursuant to Water Code section 13383 for each complete period of 30 days following the deadline for submitting the report, if the report is designed to ensure compliance with limitations contained in waste discharge requirements that contain effluent limitations. Each serious violation is an MMP violation.
Violation Description	Narrative description of the violation.
Violation ID	Identification number assigned to a violation in CIWQS.
Violation Type	Classification of a violation. Two types of violations relate to MMPs: 1) Late Reporting Violations (LREP, DREP) 2) Effluent Violations (ATOX, CTOX, CAT1, CAT2, OEV)

EXHIBIT B

ACCEPTANCE OF CONDITIONAL RESOLUTION AND WAIVER OF RIGHT TO HEARING FOR SETTLEMENT OFFER NO. R9-2022-0148, CITY OF SAN DIEGO E.W. BLOM POINT LOMA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT, DISCHARGE TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN THROUGH THE POINT LOMA OCEAN OUTFALL

By signing below and returning this *Acceptance of Conditional Resolution and Waiver of Right to Hearing* (Acceptance and Waiver) to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board), the City of San Diego (Discharger) hereby accepts the *Offer to Participate in the Expedited Payment Program* and waives the right to a hearing before the San Diego Water Board to dispute the alleged violations identified in Exhibit A of the Settlement Offer, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

The Discharger agrees that the Settlement Offer shall serve as a complaint pursuant to Article 2.5 of the Water Code and that no separate complaint is required for the San Diego Water Board to assert jurisdiction over the alleged violations through its Chief Prosecutor. The Discharger agrees to pay the penalties required by Water Code section 13385(h) and/or (i), in the sum of **\$54,000** (Penalty Amount), which shall be deemed payment in full of any civil liability pursuant to Water Code section 13385 that otherwise might be assessed for the violations identified in the Settlement Offer. The Discharger understands that this Acceptance and Waiver waives the Discharger's right to contest the allegations in the Settlement Offer and the amount of civil liability for such violation.

The Discharger understands that this Acceptance and Waiver does not address or resolve liability for any violation that is not specifically identified in the Settlement Offer.

Upon execution by the Discharger, the completed Acceptance and Waiver shall be submitted by email to SanDiego@waterboards.ca.gov, attention 248796:FOsibodu or by mail to the following address:

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region
2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92108-2700
ATTN: 248796:FOsibodu

The Discharger understands that federal regulations set forth at title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, section 123.27(d)(2)(iii), require the San Diego Water Board to publish notice of and provide at least 30 days for public comment on any proposed resolution of an enforcement action addressing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit violations. Accordingly, this Acceptance and Waiver, prior to execution by the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate, will be published as required by law for public comment.

During the public comment period, if no comments are received that cause the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate, to question the Settlement Offer, the San Diego Water Board, or its delegate, will execute the Acceptance and Waiver.

The Discharger understands that if significant comments are received in opposition to the Settlement Offer, the offer may be withdrawn. In that circumstance, the Discharger

will be advised of the withdrawal and an administrative civil liability complaint may be issued and the matter may be set for a hearing before the San Diego Water Board. For such a liability hearing, the Discharger understands that this Acceptance and Waiver executed by the Discharger will be treated as a settlement communication and will not be used as evidence in that hearing.

The Discharger further understands that, in lieu of full payment of the assessed mandatory minimum penalty to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account, a portion of the penalty payment may be made by the Discharger toward a supplemental environment project (SEP). The SEP option available to the Discharger is the Bight SEP Fund, which supplements Regional Monitoring Program (RMP) studies that would not otherwise be conducted through the RMP's existing cost allocations.

The Discharger further understands that once the Acceptance and Waiver is executed by the San Diego Water Board or its delegate, full payment is due no later than 30 days after the date of execution, as a condition of this Acceptance and Waiver. The Discharger shall pay the assessed civil liability to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account and/or the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP, for the Bight SEP Fund) in accordance with the payment option selected below.

The Discharger agrees to pay the amounts indicated below to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account and, if the applicable payment option is selected, the Bight SEP Fund, in accordance with the Payment Instructions below. The Discharger understands that the San Diego Water Board will consider the Discharger to have fulfilled its SEP obligation when SCCWRP receives the Discharger's contribution to the SEP Fund.

Payment Instructions:

SCCWRP Bight RMP SEP Fund

Payments must be made to SCCWRP and made out to the "Southern California Coastal Water Research Project" with the Settlement Offer Number (R9-2022-0148) written on the check. Payment must be mailed to the following address:

SCCWRP
Attn: Bight RMP SEP Funds
3535 Harbor Blvd., Suite 110
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account

Payments must be made to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account and made out to the "State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account" with the Settlement Offer Number (R9-2022-0148) written on the check. Payment must be mailed to the following address:

Exhibit B
Acceptance of Conditional Resolution and Waiver
of Right to Hearing and Settlement Offer
No. R9-2022-0148

B-3

State Water Resources Control Board, Accounting Office,
Attn: ACL Payment
P.O. Box 1888
Sacramento, CA 95812-1888

Verification of Payment

For tracking purposes, a copy of any issued checks must also be provided to the San Diego Water Board via email to SanDiego@waterboards.ca.gov, attention 248769:FOsibodu, or by mail to:

San Diego Water Board
Attn: 248796:FOsibodu
2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100,
San Diego, CA 92108

Payment Options:

Mark **one** of the "Option" boxes below and fill in the blank fields as appropriate. Electing to pay all or a portion of the assessed liability to the SEP Fund will not change the total amount to be paid.

Option 1: Pay all or a portion of the assessed liability to the Bight RMP SEP Fund:

Amount to be paid to the SEP Fund (cannot exceed \$34,500)

\$

Amount to be paid to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account (\$54,000 minus amount inserted above)

\$

\$ 54,000 Total assessed mandatory minimum penalty (sum of amounts above).

Or

Option 2: Pay the total assessed mandatory minimum liability (\$54,000) to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account.

ORDER NO. R9-2022-0148, EXHIBIT B SIGNATURE PAGE

I hereby affirm that I am duly authorized to act on behalf of and to bind the Discharger in the making and giving of this Acceptance and Waiver.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO

By: _____
Signed Name Date

Printed or Typed Name Title

IT IS SO ORDERED PURSUANT TO WATER CODE SECTION 13323 AND
GOVERNMENT SECTION 11415.60 ON BEHALF OF THE CALIFORNIA REGIONAL
WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD, SAN DIEGO REGION

By: _____
DAVID W. GIBSON Date
Executive Officer