

The Monterey Coastkeeper
3098 Stewart Ct.
Marina, CA 93933



Ms. Rachel Fatoohi
Senior Civil Engineer
Storm Water Management Section
Department of Public Works
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Comments on the Santa Cruz County Stormwater Management Plan

Dear Ms. Fatoohi,

Thank you for including the Monterey Coastkeeper in your list of interested parties regarding the County of Santa Cruz's Stormwater Management Plan. We are offering the following comments as constructive feedback in an effort to assist in the development of a SWMP that will result in the improved water quality in Santa Cruz County, and consequently, throughout the Monterey Bay region.

First of all, we commend the County on its efforts to develop a well thought out plan. The overview and summary of Pollutants of Concern, County geography and local points of relevance are thorough and the inclusion of detailed maps and charts documenting information such as impaired water ways and the departments responsible for different actions is extremely helpful.

That said we are concerned with the structure of the SWMP plan itself. It seems that the plan was written with the real intention to improve stormwater management and reduce pollution. However, the selection and phrasing of Best Management Practices (BMP), Implementation details and Measurable goals leaves the reader generally unsure as to how these intentions will be translated. Many of the goals are simply a stated plan to make a future plan.

The foundation of this issue seems to be the lack of well defined BMPs. For example, in chapter three, which addresses public education, table 3-1 lists BMPs, Implementation details, Measurable Goals, and a timeline of years 1-5. The first BMP reads: "Brochures".

BMPs are by definition *practices*: the action or process of performing or doing something. The SWMP very rarely sets forth clear, actionable practices; rather the column is filled with general categories of potential practices. "Brochures" in itself is not a practice; it could mean "Develop a brochure", "Distribute an existing brochure", "Research brochures to distribute", etc. There are many practices that the County could carry out involving brochures, but what, exactly, the County intends to do, and how that unknown action will contribute to cleaner stormwater remains unclear.

It is understandable then that the concurrent Implementation plans and Measurable goals are equally vague. The Implementation Details for BMP "Brochures" simply notes that brochures can be a useful way to reach community members, but provides no details as to why, how, the potential content of brochures, who the target community that might receive these brochures is, or any other sort of useful information that would qualify it as a practice. The only actionable part of the plan is included parenthetically; the brochures will be included on the website in order to minimize waste.

Furthermore, the measurable goals that accompany this practice would be much clearer if the practice itself were more clearly defined. The first measurable goal that is listed regarding Brochures is "Compile the number of brochures distributed". In order for the goal to be measurable however, a quantity needs to be assigned. The County has identified the fact that measuring the number of brochures distributed could be a useful indicator of the success of a practice involving brochures, however unless the County sets a numerical goal, there is no way to determine whether or not the goal has been met. Compiling data about the distribution of the brochures is an action that can be carried out; it might be an aspect of the implementation plan, or even part of a separate BMP focused on assessing the effectiveness of the SWMP program; it is not however an acceptable goal. The measurable goal must establish a goal that the County is striving to achieve; for example, a number of citizens to be targeted through a brochure campaign, the number of brochures distributed, etc. Although the second listed goal for this BMP is "Reach 15% of the target audience each year", the plan never clarifies what the target is. Unfortunately a percentage of an unknown quantity is not a measurable goal.

In addition to unclear BMPs and goals, our second major concern is the tendency to plan to make a plan. For example, BMP "Illicit Discharge Program" lists its implementation details as: "Develop program to identify potentially polluting businesses and operations not otherwise regulated or inspected routinely". Although we recognize that developing an effective program is not a task to be taken lightly, we feel that such a program should be included in the SWMP. Planning to develop a

program at an unspecified later date does not, in our opinion, meet the Maximum Extent Practicable as required by the permit. If the task of developing a program is truly unachievable in the span of the SWMP, then at the very least the plan to make a plan should be concrete, with set deadlines, responsible parties, and a framework for what the program must include. In the case of developing a program to identify potentially polluting businesses, this is not such an onerous task that it could not be included in the plan that is submitted for approval. This would involve fleshing out other vague points of the SWMP such as implementing the water quality hotline (which could include receiving complaints and reports of illicit discharges), assigning responsibility for investigation, and creating a database to record and monitor cases of illicit discharge.

Furthermore, we feel that the County does not meet the Maximum Extent Practicable regarding public outreach and participation, implementing ordinances for construction sites, and modifying ordinances regarding post construction stormwater runoff (specifically regarding Low Impact Development and Hydromodification Standards). At the present, the plan rarely pushes beyond the minimum requirements. For example, the minimum setback from riparian areas is 30 feet. The SWMP however is a perfect opportunity for the County to commit to practices that encourage environmental stewardship and low impact development. Although the Monterey Coastkeeper recognizes the 30 foot minimum buffer, we encourage all parties to consider buffers of up to 100 feet, as is appropriate to locale.

Another area where there is room for improvement is the procedure for enforcement regarding violations of ordinances and regulations. At most, the County commits to sending violators a letter, with no real procedure for follow up. For example, regarding inspection of setbacks from riparian zones, the plan sets as a goal: "Issue non-compliance letters to applicants if violations occur. Track the number issued per year." (BMP 2, Table 6-1). There is no mention of follow through other than a parenthetical note to inspect sites more "if necessary" based on non-compliance in a later, equally vague goal. If the County does have a procedure for dealing with non-compliance, it needs to be detailed in the plan. If it does not, one should be developed.

Overall, while the SWMP seems to reflect the intent of improving water quality in the Santa Cruz County region, in order for this intent to be translated into an effective program with tangible results, the plan itself needs to be tightened substantially.

The Monterey Coastkeeper recognizes that the development of a Stormwater Management Plan is a long and complex process. It is our intention to provide feedback and commentary throughout the process to push for a plan that results in

cleaner water for everyone, and we hope that our comments are taken as such. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you in the further development of your SWMP. Feel free to contact us with any comments or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allison Ford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Allison" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Ford".

Allison Ford
Program Associate