

Good afternoon. My name is Sheri McPherson. I'm with the County of San Diego Water Quality Program, but I'm before you today as a representative of the Project Clean Water Basin Planning Issues Workgroup. As I think you're aware, Project Clean Water was established by the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors in July 2000 to provide an extended forum for stakeholder input on water quality issues of regional significance.

Over the past two years, various Project Clean Water forums have provided important input into the substance and direction of water quality programs in this region -- including many of the new and revised programs implemented under the Municipal Stormwater Permit. A Basin Planning Issues Workgroup -- established in September 2002 -- was a natural outgrowth of those efforts. Since September, this Workgroup has provided a forum for soliciting and discussing the input of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders -- all of these meetings have included the active participation of Regional Board staff. I would like to applaud the efforts of Board staff in this process -- their informative presentations and participation in group discussions have helped many of us to better understand the Triennial Review process.

I'd also like to thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on this Triennial Review. Because the Basin Plan is front and center of all efforts to protect and enhance the quality of this region's receiving waters, we all share Board staff's desire to make this review as meaningful and productive as possible. Like you, we're here today to listen. Our written comments will reflect the both stakeholder input we've received and what we learn today. I would, however, like to briefly address a few things that the Workgroup has already concluded.

- First, a stakeholder-driven and scientifically valid approach must be reflected in this review process, and applied in the specific projects that result from it. When our Workgroup began meeting, Board staff asked that we identify a few priority projects that we would be willing stand behind and commit to working cooperatively with Board staff to implement. We will provide that specific input in our written comments. We respectfully request that the Board likewise commit to a process that emphasizes local datasets and stakeholder input. Basin Plans are local documents -- and must avoid an over-reliance on data and information that do not reflect local conditions. Our initial analysis supports a more focused effort on updating the Water Quality Standards for Total Dissolved Solids and Nitrates.
- Second, a crucial need exists to better integrate existing and future data sets into our regulatory programs. This became particularly evident during the nearly completed update of the region's section 303(d) list. It's no one's fault that we currently lack the data and information necessary to adequately support these processes, but it's everyone's responsibility to fix it. Because the Basin Plan is at the core of all other key programs, this issue must be reflected in the outcome of this review. The Basin Planning Issues Workgroup will continue to work cooperatively with Board staff to identify and address key data gaps.

- Third, I'd like to point out important parallels between the necessary outcomes of this Triennial Review and the RWQCB's current funding priorities -- as identified in the **List of Priority Projects for State Water Resources Control Board Grants** currently posted on your website. As an example, the projects identified by the RWQCB for 205j funding, especially item numbers 2 and 4, emphasize the need to more effectively monitor and assess the ambient conditions of our watersheds on a regional scale – this is crucial to effective Basin Planning and oversight of regulatory programs. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the RWQCB and others in seeking grant funding to support the collection of data needed to support the continued improvement of this Region's Basin Plan. Not doing so would be to miss an important opportunity.

Finally, active stakeholder participation is crucial to the success of our long-term efforts - - but understanding the Basin Plan process is not easy. To help provide a more in-depth understanding of these issues, the County and City of San Diego are cooperatively developing a Water Quality Standards Course that will be made available to interested parties within the next 2 months.

As we've expressed repeatedly since September 2000, it is our desire to continue acting as a resource and a sounding board for Regional Board staff throughout the remainder of this Triennial Review process – and during the implementation of specific projects developed pursuant to it.

Thank you.