



LOS ANGELES WATERKEEPER®

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Water Sample Results from “First Flush” Rain Shows Illegal and Dangerous Levels of Pollution

Los Angeles Waterkeeper Investigates Industrial Facilities Discharging Fecal Bacteria and Heavy Metals to LA’s Surface Waters

December 9, 2013 (Los Angeles, CA) — Los Angeles Waterkeeper is investigating over two dozen industrial facilities throughout Los Angeles County suspected of violating federal and state clean water laws. Storm water samples collected at these facilities during the first rain of the season in October show dangerously high levels of fecal bacteria and heavy metals, including aluminum, copper, iron, mercury, and lead, demonstrating once again the significant environmental impacts of storm water pollution and the pressing need for a lasting solution of this persistent problem.

Storm water is the main source of pollution in the Santa Monica and San Pedro Bays, endangering aquatic life and public health, and negatively impacting our tourist economy. In Los Angeles, storm water generally receives no treatment and flows directly over streets, parking lots and industrial and construction sites carrying on its way large amounts of various dangerous pollutants into the rivers, creeks and coastal waters every time it rains. Industrial facilities including scrap metal yards and waste transfer stations are required to obtain a Clean Water Act permit, which sets limits on the amount of pollutants that are discharged from their site. However, Los Angeles Waterkeeper has found that many facilities in Los Angeles are either routinely violating their permit or operating without one.

“Obtaining Clean Water Act permits and complying with these permits is not a matter of formality,” said Tatiana Gaur, Staff Attorney at Los Angeles Waterkeeper. “Industrial storm water pollution is detrimental to public health, aquatic life and impacts negatively entire communities and that is precisely why we at Los Angeles Waterkeeper work to ensure discharges of toxic metals, bacteria, trash and other dangerous contaminants, regulated by Clean Water Act permits, are controlled and eliminated at all industrial sites during storm events.”

Water samples were collected at the suspected facilities and analyzed at state-certified labs to determine if they exceed legal limits, which are based on the level of pollution that is safe for human body-contact and consumption, and aquatic life. Lab results from one site showed the facility was discharging storm water containing fecal bacteria levels hundreds of times over the legal water quality standards limit. The results from storm water samples collected at other facilities revealed aluminum concentrations thousands of times over the limit, as well as copper, iron, mercury and lead also well above safe levels. Many of these pollutants are on the list of chemicals published by the State of California as known to cause cancer, birth defects, and developmental or reproductive harm. Discharges of polluted storm water via the storm drain system pose carcinogenic and reproductive toxicity threats to the public and adversely affect the aquatic environment.

The data collected during the recent first flush demonstrates clear violations of state and federal laws, and is being used by Los Angeles Waterkeeper to take action to stop the pollution. If necessary, Los Angeles Waterkeeper will proceed with their own litigation, with an end goal of forcing facilities to eliminate their storm water pollution discharges, achieve compliance with water quality standards, and meet the monitoring and reporting requirements aimed to protect public health and the environment in communities in throughout I Los Angeles County.

For further information, please contact Rachel Stich at (310) 394-6162 x108.

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ABOUT LOS ANGELES WATERKEEPER

Founded in 1993, Los Angeles Waterkeeper's mission is to protect and restore Santa Monica Bay, San Pedro Bay, and adjacent waters through enforcement, fieldwork, and community action. It works to achieve this goal through litigation and regulatory programs that ensure water quality protections in waterways throughout L.A. County. Los Angeles Waterkeeper's Litigation & Advocacy, Marine, and Water Quality teams conduct interconnected projects that serve this mission.