

## Construction Dewatering Operations—Dewatering Under the Caltrans Permit

This bulletin concludes the series on managing construction dewatering operations. This bulletin reviews requirements for dewatering discharges under the *National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Statewide Storm Water Permit and Waste Discharge Requirements for the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans Permit No. CAS000003)*.



Dewatering of accumulated precipitation may be allowed under the Caltrans Permit.

### What Dewatering is Allowed?

Each of the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) regulates dewatering discharges to storm drains or surface waters within its Region. Generally, dewatering discharges under the Caltrans Permit are allowed when all of the following conditions are met:

- The water is being discharged to a storm drainage system or a surface water.
- The project is in RWQCB Regions 3 through 9 and the discharge consists solely of accumulated precipitation OR the project is in RWQCB Region 3, 5, 7, or 9 and is a qualifying discharge of non-storm water.
- Sediment control and other appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) are employed as the water is discharged.

### Dewatering Accumulated Precipitation

Discharging accumulated precipitation to a storm drain or surface water is allowed under the Caltrans Permit in RWQCB Regions 3 through 9. To qualify, the discharge must consist solely of accumulated precipitation and cannot have combined with groundwater or any other type of non-storm water. The water must also be free of pollutants other than sediment.

In Region 1 (North Coast) and Region 2 (San Francisco Bay), concurrence of the RWQCB is required prior to discharge of accumulated precipitation under the Caltrans Permit, or the RWQCB may require a separate discharge permit.

### Non-Storm Water Discharges

Non-storm water discharges include groundwater, water from cofferdams or diversions, storm water combined with non-storm water, and any uncontaminated water used during construction that must be removed from a work area.

Discharges of non-storm water are allowed under the Caltrans Permit only in RWQCB Regions 3, 5, 7, and 9 as follows:

- In Region 3 (Central Coast), Region 5 (Central Valley), and Region 7 (Colorado River Basin), a discharge qualifies if it has a volume of less than 250,000 gallons per day and is of less than four months duration.
- In Region 9 (San Diego), an unpolluted discharge of groundwater with a volume of less than 100,000 gallons per day is allowed to the storm drain or to a surface water other than San Diego Bay.

### The Discharge Doesn't Qualify

If the dewatering discharge does *not* qualify for discharge under the Caltrans Permit, contact the RWQCB for guidance. The RWQCB may require a separate General or site-specific Permit. Refer to the May 2001 bulletin for more information.

### It Qualifies – Now What?

If the discharge qualifies on all counts, the contractor must implement BMP NS-2, Dewatering Operations, to ensure compliance with the Caltrans Permit. Details of the BMP are contained in the *Construction Site BMPs Manual*, which requires the following:

- **Sediment Treatment:** If the water is visibly clear, it can be discharged without treatment. If the water is not visibly clear, sediment control BMPs must be implemented.
- **Monitoring and Maintenance:** The dewatering operation must be monitored and maintained to ensure that sediment controls are functional and that erosion is prevented at the outfall.



Several RWQCBs allow qualifying discharges of groundwater to be regulated under the Caltrans Permit.

- **Record Keeping:** All records related to monitoring and maintenance of the dewatering operation must be kept with the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) or Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP).

### ***Dewatering Field Guide***

The *Caltrans Field Guide to Construction Site Dewatering* provides the Resident Engineer with step-by-step instructions for overseeing dewatering operations on the construction site. All aspects of dewatering are addressed, from the selection of an appropriate dewatering management option to ensuring compliance with NPDES permit requirements for operations, maintenance, and reporting.

The Field Guide is currently available at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/construc/stormwater.html>.

