

City of San Clemente Clean Ocean Program & Fee
Frequently Asked Questions / Speaker Points

What is the Clean Ocean Program?

It is the City's effort to prevent stormwater and urban runoff pollution from entering the storm drain system and being discharged at the beach.

Why does the City need a Clean Ocean Program?

- To protect the environment (water quality in local channels and coastal waters);
- To protect public health and safety (from bacteria and other pollution that could reach the beach);
- To protect local quality of life (local business/tourism, "beach town" reputation, etc.); and
- To meet State Water Code and Federal Clean Water Act permit requirements issued to South Orange County cities by the State.

Who developed the Clean Ocean Program?

The City prepared an Urban Runoff Management Plan (URMP), which included participation and feedback from the community as well as the City's Coastal Advisory Committee (local citizens appointed by the City Council to consider and provide advice on coastal and water quality issues). The URMP guides the Clean Ocean Program, and outlines activities and projects to meet the State and Federal water quality requirements and protect local water quality.

What does the Clean Ocean Program include?

- *Runoff treatment projects*
 - Poche Beach: treatment system to filter runoff and kill bacteria in the runoff before it reaches the beach. Construction starts August 2007 and will be finished February 2008. The system will treat about 1 million gallons per day of runoff.
 - North Beach: system to divert runoff away from North Beach, and filter it before sending out to the ocean with treated wastewater from the City's Water Reclamation Plant. Construction is about 70% complete and the system will be running by October 2007. The system will divert and filter about 1 million gallons per day of runoff.
 - Underground storm drain units to remove trash, oil & grease and sediment from runoff before it gets to the beach. Units were installed near Calafia Beach, in the Pier Bowl area, and at the west ends of El Portal and Mariposa. They collect enough material each year to fill 5 city dump trucks.
- *Pollution prevention activities*
 - Street Sweeping: the City sweeps public residential streets twice per month and major streets and business areas about 3 times per week. Over 4,000 tons of material has been collected over the last several years, enough to fill 230 large (40 cubic yard) trash bins.
 - Water Quality Testing: water samples from about 20 locations throughout town are sampled each year to help identify potential problem areas and monitor quality progress over time. Flow measurements are also taken to help measure progress in reducing urban runoff flows.
 - Commercial, Industrial and Construction Site Inspections: inspections to make sure these sites are using proper Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent potential pollution from business and construction activities from entering the storm drain system and reaching the beach.
 - Spill Cleanups and Storm Drain Maintenance: a 24/7 hotline number (366-1553) to respond to and cleanup spills or investigate reported illegal discharges. Ongoing maintenance to ensure

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proper function of the storm drain system and remove materials that might be discharge into the system.

- Enforcement of Anti-pollution Ordinances: enforcement of water quality laws to identify and correct violations. Depending on the severity of the violation, enforcement may include verbal warnings, written correction orders, and/or fines of \$100, \$200, or \$500 per violation.
- Public Outreach and Education: efforts promote awareness of stormwater and urban runoff pollution impacts, and ways the public can help prevent this pollution from happening in the first place.

What is the cost of implementing the Clean Ocean Program?

The cost to implement the program is about \$2 million per year.

What is the cost of not implementing the Clean Ocean Program?

The City could be liable for fines up to \$32,500 per day, per violation, if the State finds that the City is not meeting the requirements of the stormwater permit regulations. Also, there are potential economic impacts (tourism, real estate values, etc.) if the City does not work to protect its healthy beach town reputation.

How is the Clean Ocean Program funded?

By a Clean Ocean utility fee charged to property owners. The fee is collected as a line item on the monthly utility bill for owners that get water service from the City. The fee is charged monthly but collected via a separate twice-yearly bill to San Clemente property owners that get water service from other providers (e.g. South Coast Water District or Santa Margarita Water District).

Why do property owners get charged the Clean Ocean Fee?

Developed and graded properties contribute runoff to the storm drain system (which includes pipes, channels, drain inlets and street gutters). This runoff contains or picks up pollution before it enters the storm drain, which the City must then address. Since providing storm drain and water quality services is like other utility services provided by the City (e.g. drinking water and sewer service), it is appropriate that property owners pay for the cost of this service.

How much is the existing Clean Ocean Fee?

- Single family residential: public street = \$5.02 a month; private street = \$4.39 a month.
- Multi-family residential: public street = \$4.01 per dwelling unit a month; private street = \$3.51 per dwelling unit a month.
- Non-residential (commercial): \$50.20 per acre (or fraction thereof).
- Properties on private streets are charged a lower rate since the City doesn't provide street sweeping service on private streets.

Why is the existing Clean Ocean Fee being proposed to be continued?

The fee funds a stormwater quality program that the State requires the City to implement. The State will soon issue a new stormwater permit for the south Orange County area, so the City must continue to comply with State permit requirements for the next 5 to 6 years. Also, the State will soon adopt additional new requirements for bacteria pollution that the City must also comply with.

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What happens if continuation of the existing Clean Ocean Fee is not approved?

If the Clean Ocean Fee is not continued, the City will need to support the Clean Ocean Program with some other funding source. The most likely source would be the General Fund, which would result in about \$2 million each year that would not be available for other needed projects and programs within the City.

How long will the continued fee be in effect? When will it end?

If approved by San Clemente property owners, the existing Clean Ocean Fee would be continued for six (6) years, and would expire on December 31, 2013.

How much is the proposed continued Clean Ocean Fee?

The continued Clean Ocean Fee would be the same as the existing fee, and it would not be increased during the entire time it is in effect.

How is the fee calculated?

The fee is based on a parcel's expected contribution of runoff, which is determined by an estimate of the impervious area on that parcel. Impervious areas include such things as buildings and pavement, which prevent or restrict storm water from getting into the soil and increase runoff from a parcel.

Why are property owners voting on this fee?

Under the provisions of California Proposition 218, property owners must approve new property fees adopted by cities.

How and when will the vote occur?

All record owners of property within the City that are directly subject to the proposed fee will receive an official mail-in ballot with a postage paid addressed return envelope. A schedule for mailing of ballots, and returning completed ballots, will be finalized at the City Council's August 21, 2007 meeting. The vote is expected to happen some time between early/mid September and early/mid October.

How do I cast my vote?

Simply fill out the ballot and mail or deliver it to the San Clemente City Clerk by the due date noted on the ballot.

How do I get more information?

More information about the proposed fee continuation is available on the City's website at www.sccleanocean.org. You may also call the Environmental Programs Section at (949) 361-6143 or send an email to cleanwater@san-clemente.org.

What's the difference between storm drains and sewers – doesn't it all get treated?

Like most other cities, the City of San Clemente owns and operates a storm drain system, which is the network of channels and pipes that collect stormwater and urban runoff and discharges it into the ocean. Unlike sewer systems that send sewage to a treatment plant before being discharged, most storm drain systems, including the City's, were built to collect and convey runoff to prevent flooding but not to treat urban water runoff. Therefore, any pollutants that runoff carries into the storm drain system are discharged untreated along the City's shoreline.

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Do other cities have a Clean Ocean Program?

They may call it something else, but all cities in the urbanized areas of Southern California are required by the State to implement stormwater and urban runoff programs to prevent discharges of pollution to creeks, rivers and the ocean.

How do we know that the Clean Ocean Program is working?

- The City records amounts of trash picked up by street sweepers and removed from underground treatment devices.
- Larger treatment projects will include monitoring to compare water quality before and after treatment.
- The City tracks the number of enforcement actions and inspections to document these efforts.
- Beach water quality data show a trend of improving water quality at most San Clemente beaches—Poche Beach is the exception but a project is underway to address that area.

Why should San Clemente property owners pay to clean up pollution from upstream cities?

Unlike most cities in Southern California, San Clemente's city boundary is very similar to the local watershed boundary. This means that San Clemente is a self-contained watershed, and that there are no upstream cities that contribute pollution through our local watershed. So the pollution in our storm drains comes from San Clemente properties, and not from out-of-town areas.

How can I help?

To learn about simple tips to help prevent urban runoff pollution, please visit www.sccleanocean.org or www.ocwatersheds.com.

To learn about potential volunteer opportunities (e.g. beach cleanups), please visit www.scwatersheds.com.