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## **San Diego Regional Water Board Approves Bacteria Cleanup Plans for Local Beaches** *Agency Vote Starts the Clock on Decade-long Effort*

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SAN DIEGO, CA – After five years of planning and public input, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board voted Wednesday to adopt Total Maximum Daily Loads for bacteria into the region's impaired beaches and creeks. The Board approval of these restoration plans is the beginning of a 10-year long regulatory process, but is a key step toward improving the water quality of the region's watersheds and ocean.

San Diego residents are all too familiar with the standard warning following a rain event – stay out of the water or face bacterial pollution that can lead to illness. The Board's action sets limits on the amount of bacteria entering the region's creeks and rivers, including those that drain to popular beaches. In limiting the amount of bacteria flowing into the watersheds, the adopted resolution will help prevent beach goers from getting sick. "For too long we've just accepted the risk of illness after going into the water as a fact of life. It's within our power to change that and these decisionmakers understood the need to move forward," said Livia Borak, a Coastkeeper Clinic Associate and frequent surfer.

Although last week's unanimous vote signaled the Board's commitment toward water quality, it has taken years to get this far, and the battle's not over yet. The State Water Board, Environmental Protection Agency and the Office of Administrative Law must all approve the Board's action. The Board's resolution is also contingent upon a future action to change the way the bacteria loads are calculated. The Board expects to consider such an amendment within six months. However, once the Office of Administrative Law approves

the Board's resolution, municipal dischargers will have to start developing plans for reducing the amount of bacteria they discharge into the sewer system.

Coastkeeper's Legal Director, Gabriel Solmer, recognized the slow start, "After working on this issue for four years, it is bittersweet to see regulators finally acknowledge the problem. We're hopeful that this action moves us towards the solutions we need to implement."

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Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper protects the region's bays, beaches, watersheds and ocean for the people and wildlife that depend on them. We balance community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.