



## *City of San Clemente Clean Ocean Program & Fee* **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **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: A treatment system was constructed and is maintained to filter and kill bacteria in the runoff before it reaches the beach. Construction was completed in March of 2009. The system treats up to 1.1 million gallons per day. Weekly water quality tests indicate that the UV treatment removes between 95% - 99% of the bacteria in the storm drain runoff before it discharges to the beach. The current water quality grade at Poche Beach is an A+.
  - North Beach: A system was constructed to divert dry weather runoff away from North Beach and send it to the City's Water Reclamation Plant for treatment. The system started operating on June 1, 2009. It diverts and filters about 350,000 gallons per day. The current water quality grade at North Beach is an A+.
  - Underground storm drain units were installed to remove trash, oil & grease and sediment from runoff before it gets to the beach. Six units have been installed. They are located near Calafia Beach, in the Pier Bowl area, at the west ends of El Portal, at the end of Linda Lane and at Mariposa. In 2013, 35 cubic yards of material was captured and removed by these units. This is material that would have otherwise have ended up in the ocean.
- *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 22,000 tons of material has been collected over the last ten several years, enough to fill 550 large (40 cubic yard) trash bins.
  - Catch Basin Inspection and Cleaning: the City inspects at least 2,205 catch basins annually, cleaning them as needed. In 2013, 2,432 catch basins were cleaned and a total of 914 cubic feet of material was removed.
  - Water Quality Testing: water samples from over 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.
  - Special Studies: the City consulted with scientists to conduct an in depth investigation to find sources of bacteria in the Poche Beach watershed. A year long study which included molecular

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marker testing culminated in focused recommendations and a strategic plan for reducing bacteria at Poche Beach. The final report of the study is located on the Clean Ocean Program website at [www.sccleanocean.org](http://www.sccleanocean.org).

- **Commercial, Industrial and Construction Site Inspections:** Inspections of businesses, industrial facilities and construction sites are conducted to make sure these sites are using proper Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent pollution from entering the storm drain system and reaching the beach. Over 9,000 inspections have been completed in the last 10 years.
- **Spill Cleanups and Storm Drain Maintenance:** A 24/7 hotline number (**366-1553**) is in place to respond to and cleanup spills or investigate reported illegal discharges. In addition, the City performs ongoing maintenance to ensure proper function of the storm drain system and inspects all public catch basins annually and removes materials that might be discharge into the system.
- **Enforcement of Anti-pollution Ordinances:** Dedicated officials enforce 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 \$2.2 million per year.

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

The City could be liable for large fines 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 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 an additional six and one-half (6.5) years, and would expire on June 30, 2020.

### **How much will the fee increase over the next 6.5 years?**

The continued Clean Ocean Fee would be fixed and would not increase over the entire period.

### **Why are property owners voting on this fee?**

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

**What is the change from the existing to the proposed Clean Ocean Fee?**

<b>Single Family Residential Monthly Fee</b>		
	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed New Fee</b>
Private street	\$ 4.39	<b>\$ 5.10</b>
Public street	\$ 5.02	<b>\$ 6.23</b>

<b>Multi-Family Residential Monthly Fee</b>		
	<b>Current Fee (per residential unit)</b>	<b>Proposed New Fee (per residential unit)</b>
Private street	\$3.51	<b>\$4.08</b>
Public street	\$4.01	<b>\$4.98</b>

<b>Non-Residential (Commercial, Industrial, Business Park) Monthly Fee</b>		
	<b>Current Fee (per acre or fraction thereof)</b>	<b>Proposed New Fee (per acre or fraction thereof)</b>
Private street	\$43.90	<b>\$51.00</b>
Public street	\$50.20	<b>\$62.30</b>
Note: Almost all non-residential streets within the City are public streets.		

<b>Undeveloped, Graded Property Monthly Fee</b>				
	<b>Current Fee</b>		<b>Proposed New Fee</b>	
	<i>2 acres or less</i>	<i>Each acre over 2 add:</i>	<i>2 acres or less</i>	<i>Each acre over 2 add:</i>
Private street	\$2.20	\$0.44	<b>\$2.55</b>	<b>\$0.51</b>
Public street	\$2.51	\$0.50	<b>\$3.12</b>	<b>\$0.62</b>
Note: There is no clean ocean fee charge for undeveloped, ungraded parcels.				

**Note:** Properties on private streets are charged a lower rate since the City doesn't provide street sweeping service on private streets.

**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 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. Since the fee was last approved, the State revised and adopted a new stormwater permit for the south Orange County area that contains more rigorous requirements. Also, the State recently adopted new requirements for bacteria pollution for which the City must comply.

**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.

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**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. The ballots will be mailed to property owners on October 25, 2013. Return ballots are due on December 10, 2013.

**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](http://www.sccleanocean.org). You may also call the Environmental Programs Section at (949) 361-8204 or send an email to [cleanwater@san-clemente.org](mailto: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.

**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 include monitoring to compare water quality before and after treatment.
- The City tracks the number of enforcement actions and inspections to document these efforts.

**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](http://www.sccleanocean.org) or [www.ocwatersheds.com](http://www.ocwatersheds.com).

To learn about potential volunteer opportunities (e.g. beach cleanups), please visit [www.scwatersheds.com](http://www.scwatersheds.com).