Optimizing Storm Water

A supplement to CCEEB's "Clear Path" report that provides six recommendations to help guide the State Water Board in optimizing storm water for California's local water supplies.

OVERVIEW

Californians have worked tirelessly to improve water quality and the health of the environment. Yet new and complex problems related to climate change, water supply, nonpoint source pollution, and aging infrastructure are challenging our progress.

CCEEB – an organization whose mission is to find environmental and economic balance – has issued the report "Optimizing Storm Water" to recommend a strategy for sustainable, multi-benefit storm water solutions and integrated approaches to California's water supplies. The report's six recommendations complement the State's Strategy to Optimize Resource Management of Storm Water (STORMS). CCEEB proposes that the State Water Board's STORMS program be advanced in five-year increments, with input from scientific, economic, and legal experts, and a robust public process that incorporates lessons learned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Creative & Flexible Solutions

Clear compliance pathways should be developed to allow for creative and collaborative approaches to improve water quality, recognize the gap between available resources and implementation needs, prioritize effective source control, and focus on sustainable, multi-benefit solutions.

2. Optimize Use

Storm water should be regulated as a resource, not as a waste, by establishing program guidelines, implementation tools, and flexible regulatory frameworks that focus, where feasible, on optimizing the use of storm water as a cost-effective local water supply.

3. Identify Funding

Guidance and tools for identifying and securing funding for storm water programs should continue to be developed to help regulated agencies address Proposition 218 rate issues and increase access to funding sources such as California's State Revolving Funds or California Department of Transportation cooperative implementation agreements, among others.

4. Solid Economics

Guidelines should be developed to assess and incorporate economics into storm water programs and to explicitly acknowledge and address funding and financial considerations. Proposed methods should include a process similar to U.S. EPA's Financial Capability Assessment framework and guidance on how to prioritize multi-benefit storm water projects.

5. Sound Science

Best available science and engineering practices should underpin the State's efforts and be used to identify and fill key technical data gaps. Efforts may include identifying appropriate treatment standards based on end use, infiltration technology guidance, reasonable assurance analyses, and guidance on the use of compliance mechanisms such as trading, offsets, and variances.

6. Solicit Expertise

The Board should develop a process for soliciting expert technical and legal assistance, including utility practitioners, to develop general guidance and provide assistance on individual projects. Issues that should be addressed include barriers to storm water capture and use, legal issues related to water rights and liability, and appropriate in-stream flow requirements.

THE FULL REPORT CAN BE DOWNLOADED AT WWW.CCEEB.ORG

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