

CONSERVATION CORNER

Benefits and Challenges of Preventing Storm Water Pollution

Storm water is the rain water that passes over city streets, roofs, and driveways picking up pollutants contained in litter, fertilizer, tires, and many other everyday objects. La Verne's storm water flows to gutters and catch basins and eventually makes its way to water bodies like Puddingstone or the Pacific Ocean. The storm water then pollutes the surface waters making them less suitable for fishing or recreation. As one of the largest developed areas in the United States, Los Angeles County cities are being held to a very high standard when it comes to surface water pollution. The passage of Los Angeles Region Water Quality Control Board Order No. R4-2012-0175 means that preventing metals, chemicals, and other pollutants from entering into our washes, lakes, creeks, and rivers is a responsibility primarily required of cities, like La Verne.

There are important benefits to maintaining high water quality standards in surface waters as they make their way to Southern California's beaches. High surface water quality means that businesses near the coast and along recreational waterways, like Puddingstone, can operate without fear of closures or unsafe conditions. Habitats near the rivers and along protected forests will become healthier as the water near them remains clean. Storm water management also has the long-term potential to increase water supply reliability, reducing the fear of water shortages in the future. Taken on its own, all this makes storm water management an attractive prospect to ensure water security during drought, to maintain long-term economic development in Los Angeles County and to protect our local environment. However, storm water management, despite its several environmental and long-term economic benefits also has many administrative, legislative and short-term economic challenges.

The new permit is significantly stricter on individual cities, like La Verne, than past permits. Both financial costs for cities and the required administrative framework for compliance are more significant. Extensive efforts will have to be put forth by lawmakers, residents and city staff throughout the State of California in order to deal with the problem while being both environmentally and fiscally responsible. A positive effect on the environment, local businesses operating with safe water conditions and increased drought resilience are huge positives, but come with huge costs. The high end estimate of storm water compliance costs for La Verne is up to \$150,000,000 through 2026. Balancing this cost of compliance without overextending the budget of taxpayers is one of La Verne's major goals in storm water compliance. In order to take steps towards complying with the Water Board's Order the City of La Verne has modified much of the administrative framework around storm water. This includes joining a regional Watershed Management Program with neighboring cities, instituting an extensive monitoring program to characterize pollutants, ensuring that development projects follow Best Management Practices, promoting commercial and residential low impact development, conducting inspections of qualifying industrial and commercial facilities and expanding educational outreach.

Even with the creation or revision of all these programs to fit the requirements of the Order the greatest task is ensuring that monitored pollutants are below the required numeric water quality standard. La Verne is analyzing the monitoring data and options for infrastructure necessary for storm water compliance for our region. However, juggling the high water quality standards with financial responsibility will make this difficult. If the City is forced to invest heavily in these infiltration projects without significant monetary assistance from the State, County, or private sources, both La Verne and its residents could be strained financially. Managing storm water requires coordination between public agencies, private agencies and the public will to support through legislative and legal challenges. Furthermore, effective fiscal management and resources from the state, regional, county, and local level are necessary to reduce the potentially large and unsustainable costs for La Verne and residents.

La Verne Household Hazardous Waste Event

Please collect your hazardous waste (pesticides, old batteries, used automotive fluids, used cleaning products, etc.) and electronic waste products (computers, old televisions, and broken cell phones) for a FREE collection event in La Verne on December 17, 2016 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Brackett Field, Fairplex Dr. & West McKinley Ave., La Verne, 91750. All L.A. County residents are welcome to participate. If you can't make it to these events, there is a roundup nearly every weekend in L.A. County. The entire schedule and more details are posted at www.888cleanla.com.

