

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

AUG 19 2019

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

August 19, 2019

File: Environmental Doc Review
San Bernardino County

Magda Gonzalez
San Bernardino County – Land Use Services Department
15900 Smoke Tree Street, Suite #1
Hesperia, CA 92345
Magda.Gonzalez@lus.sbcounty.gov

**Comments on the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for
Maida Gas Station Project, San Bernardino County, State
Clearinghouse No. 2019079107**

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) staff received an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the above-referenced Project (Project) on August 1, 2019. The IS/MND was prepared by San Bernardino County (County) and submitted in compliance with provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Water Board staff, acting as a responsible agency, is providing these comments to specify the scope and content of the environmental information germane to our statutory responsibilities pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15096. We thank the County for providing Water Board staff the opportunity to review and comment on the IS/MND and for taking the initiative to develop the IS/MND with considerations to potential effects on water quality and for integrating elements into the Plan that: (1) promote watershed management; (2) support "Low Impact Development" (LID); and (3) reduce the effects of hydromodification. Our comments on the proposed Project are outlined below.

WATER BOARD'S AUTHORITY

All groundwater and surface waters are considered waters of the State. All waters of the State are protected under California law. State law assigns responsibility for protection of water quality in the Lahontan Region to the Lahontan Water Board. Some waters of the State are also waters of the United States. The Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) provides additional protection for those waters of the State that are also waters of the United States.

The *Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region* (Basin Plan) contains policies that the Water Board uses with other laws and regulations to protect the quality of waters of the State within the Lahontan Region. The Basin Plan sets forth water quality

standards for surface water and groundwater of the Region, which include designated beneficial uses as well as narrative and numerical objectives which must be maintained or attained to protect those uses. The Basin Plan can be accessed via the Water Board's web site at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahtontan/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/references.shtml.

COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. The foremost method of reducing impacts to watersheds from development is LID, the goals of which are maintaining a landscape functionally equivalent to predevelopment hydrologic conditions and minimal generation of non-point source pollutants. LID results in less surface runoff and potentially less impacts to receiving waters, the principles of which include:
 - Maintaining natural drainage paths and landscape features to slow and filter runoff and maximize groundwater recharge;
 - Reducing compacted and impervious cover created by development and the associated road network; and
 - Managing runoff as close to the source as possible.

LID development practices that maintain aquatic values also reduce local infrastructure requirements and maintenance costs and benefit air quality, open space, and habitat. Vegetated areas for storm water management and infiltration onsite are valuable in LID. We thank the County for establishing LID implementation strategies and incorporating these strategies into this Project.

2. Because increased runoff from developed areas is a key variable driving a number of adverse effects, attention to maintaining the pre-development hydrograph will prevent or minimize many problems and will limit the need for other analyses and mitigation. Traditional methods for managing urban storm water do not adequately protect the environment and tend to treat symptoms instead of causes. Such practices have led to channelization and stream armoring that permanently alter stream habitat, hydrology, and aesthetics, resulting in overall degradation of a watershed.

Storm water control measures that are compatible with LID are preferred over more traditional methods. Examples include the use of bioretention swales, pervious pavement, and vegetated infiltration basins, all of which can effectively treat post-construction storm water runoff, help sustain watershed processes, protect receiving waters, and maintain healthy watersheds. Any particular one of these control measures may not be suitable, effective, or even feasible in every instance, but the right combination, in the right places, can successfully achieve these goals. We thank the County for establishing storm water controls

compatible with LID strategies and incorporating these strategies into this Project.

3. Hydromodification is the alteration of the natural flow of water through a landscape (i.e. lining channels, flow diversions, culvert installations, armoring, etc.). Disturbing and compacting soils, changing or removing the vegetation cover, increasing impervious surfaces, and altering drainage patterns limit the natural hydrologic cycle processes of absorption, infiltration, and evapotranspiration, and increases the volume and frequency of runoff and sediment transport. Hydromodification results in stream channel instability, degraded water quality, changes in groundwater recharge processes, and aquatic habitat impacts. Hydromodification also can result in disconnecting a stream channel from its floodplain. Floodplain areas provide natural recharge, attenuate flood flows, provide habitat, and filter pollutants from urban runoff. Floodplain areas also store and release sediment, one of the essential processes to maintain the health of the watershed. We thank the County for establishing controls to prevent the effects of hydromodification and incorporating these controls into this Project.

PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

A number of activities associated with the proposed Project may have the potential to impact waters of the State and, therefore, may require permits issued by either the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) or Lahontan Water Board. The required permits may include the following.

1. Land disturbance of more than 1 acre may require a CWA, section 402(p) storm water permit, including a *National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Construction Storm Water Permit*, Water Quality Order (WQO) No. 2009-0009-DWQ, obtained from the State Water Board, or individual storm water permit obtained from the Lahontan Water Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the IS/MND. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (760) 241-7305 tiffany.steinert@waterboards.ca.gov or Jan Zimmerman, Senior Engineering Geologist, at (760) 241-7404 jan.zimmerman@waterboards.ca.gov. Please send all future correspondence regarding this Project to the Water Board's email address at Lahontan@waterboards.ca.gov and be sure to include the State Clearinghouse No. and Project name in the subject line.



Tiffany Steinert
Engineering Geologist

cc: State Clearinghouse (SCH 2019079107) (state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov)
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (AskRegion6@wildlife.ca.gov)

R:\RB6\RB6Victorville\Shared\Units\JAN's UNIT\Tiffany\CEQA\Maida Gas Station_ISMND.docx