



**DIANNE JACOB**  
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**AGENDA ITEM**

**DATE:** December 5, 2006

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT:** SUPPORT THE RÉAPPLICATION FOR A WAIVER OF SECONDARY TREATMENT STANDARDS FOR SAN DIEGO'S REGIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT (Districts: All)

**SUMMARY:**

**Overview**

The City of San Diego Metropolitan Wastewater System (METRO System) provides regional sewage treatment and disposal services to over 30,000 families and businesses within the County's unincorporated areas. Based on the percentage of total flow to the METRO system, unincorporated county ratepayers currently pay approximately 6.5 percent of METRO's operations, maintenance, and capital improvement costs.

The Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant treats and disposes 80% of the total capacity of the METRO system. The Plant operates under a waiver of treatment standards that will expire on June 15, 2008, and the City is evaluating whether to re-apply for another waiver or to change to more costly secondary treatment. Current cost estimates for construction of secondary facilities at the Point Loma Plant range from \$540 million to \$1.2 billion. This would result in rate increases of 20% or more. The County is unaware of any credible scientific data that suggests that secondary treatment is necessary.

On December 14, 2006, the Metro Wastewater Joint Powers Authority is scheduled to consider whether to recommend that the City re-apply for another waiver or implement secondary treatment at the Point Loma Plant.

Today's action proposes that the Board of Supervisors support the pursuit of additional, available waivers and to oppose changing to secondary treatment to avoid the unnecessary considerable costs to ratepayers.

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**Recommendation(s)**

**SUPERVISOR JACOB**

1. Support the pursuit of waiver renewals for the current treatment process and oppose changing the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant to secondary treatment.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to draft a letter for signature by the Chairman to the Mayor of the City of San Diego stating the Board's position urging the City to re-apply for a waiver of secondary treatment standards for Metro Sewage; and, send copies of the letter to the Metro JPA Board Members and San Diego City Council prior to December 14, 2006.

**Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

**Business Impact Statement**

N/A

**Advisory Board Statement**

N/A

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of San Diego (City) Metropolitan Wastewater System (METRO System) provides regional sewage treatment and disposal services to the City of San Diego, 12 other municipalities and special districts, and numerous unincorporated communities. The Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) forms the backbone of the METRO System, treating and disposing of over 80 percent of the total permitted capacity of the system.

Within the unincorporated county, over 30,000 families and businesses in the central and southwestern portions of the County rely on METRO treatment, with collection and wastewater transportation provided through the County's Spring Valley, Lakeside, and Alpine Sanitation Districts and the Wintergardens and East Otay Mesa Sewer Maintenance Districts. Based on percentage of total flow to the METRO system, unincorporated county ratepayers currently pay approximately 6.5 percent of METRO operations, maintenance, and capital improvement costs.

Since 1995, the Point Loma WTP has operated under a waiver to the treatment standards specified in the Federal Clean Water Act of 1972 to allow the plant to continue discharge of treated effluent to the ocean. The five-year waiver was first renewed in 2002. As conditions of these waivers, the City constructed significant improvements to the Point Loma WTP, including extension of the ocean outfall pipeline, installation of advanced primary treatment processes to further reduce the concentration of suspended solids in the effluent, implementation of an extensive ocean monitoring program under the direction of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and construction of the new North City and South Bay Water Reclamation Plants to produce 45 million gallons per day of reclaimed water for beneficial reuse within the region.

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The current waiver will expire on June 15, 2008, and the City is evaluating whether to re-apply for another waiver or to negotiate a consent decree with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency agreeing to implement advanced (secondary) treatment processes at the Point Loma WTP. Current cost estimates for construction of secondary facilities at Point Loma range from \$540 million to \$1.2 billion, depending on the selected technology and availability of adjacent property for expansion. Annual operating and maintenance cost increases resulting from implementation of secondary treatment are estimated to be between \$30 million and \$40 million. All these costs would be in addition to what the ratepayers pay today.

Factors that support continued operation under a waiver include:

- Current ocean monitoring shows no indication that operating the Point Loma WTP at the current level of treatment now has, or will in the future have, a negative effect on the ocean environment, even at future higher flow rates.
- The City, in cooperation with local environmental groups, has adopted a more comprehensive ocean monitoring program that will provide additional means of identifying potential impacts.
- The Point Loma WTP has consistently met 100 percent compliance with all State and federal permit requirements.
- The City, in partnership with the Participating Agencies, has invested \$1.5 billion since 1992 to upgrade and expand the wastewater treatment and ocean disposal system, including extension of the ocean outfall to 4.5 miles offshore at a depth of 320 feet to minimize negative impacts.
- The Point Loma WTP meets all discharge requirements specified in the California Ocean Plan, which governs ocean discharges from the State.

On December 14, 2006, the Metro Wastewater Joint Powers Authority is expected to consider whether to support the City in either re-applying for another waiver or seeking a negotiated consent decree to implement secondary treatment at the Point Loma WTP. This action proposes that the Board support pursuit of additional, available waivers and oppose changing the Point Loma WTP to secondary treatment. I urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,

DIANNE JACOB  
Supervisor, Second District

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**CONCURRENCE(S)**

<b>COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Written Disclosure per County Charter Section 1000.1 Required	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Requires Four Votes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A

**Other Concurrence(s):**

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** Board of Supervisors, District Two

**CONTACT PERSON(S):**

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