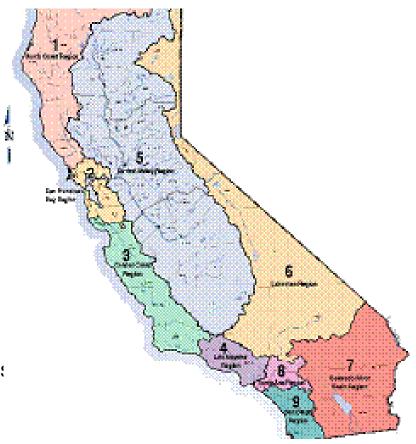


- The Water Boards ensure that the quality of the State's waters is protected
 - set water quality standards,
 - monitor and assess the State's waters,
 - regulate identified pollutant sources, and
 - enforce compliance with regulatory requirements
- Water Quality Control Plans protect water quality by
 - designating <u>beneficial uses</u> (e.g., swimming, fishing, drinking water),
 - setting water quality objectives to protect those uses, and
 - establishing implementation programs to achieve them
- These are the basis for issuing permits, setting cleanup requirements and managing resources
- They are living documents, regularly updated to address new information and policy changes



- The California Ocean Plan is the water quality control plan for our coastal waters
- It includes two categories of State Water Quality Protection Areas (SWQPA):
 - Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS)
 - a designation for unique and valuable biological communities, requiring the highest level of protection through a prohibition on waste discharge
 - many have been designated
 - General Protection Areas
 - a subset of SWQPA in addition to ASBSs
 - the same goal as ASBS, but allow for regulated discharges that do not compromise water quality
 - none designated to date, competing workload priorities for staff

- Areas of Special Biological Significance
 - Between 1974 and 1975, the State Water Board designated 34 ASBS
 - Protected through discharge prohibitions and special conditions under the Ocean Plan



- What is prohibited in ASBS?
 - Waste discharges directly into ASBS, unless an exception is granted
- What is allowed with an ASBS exception:
 - Limited-term activities (e.g., seawall repair, slope dewatering)
 - Ongoing activities (e.g., marine labs, stormwater) with monitoring and special protections
- Discharges outside the ASBS must be located far enough from ASBS boundaries to maintain natural water quality

- Are ASBS effective?
 - These areas already have excellent natural water quality
 - The primary goal is to <u>maintain</u> the natural water quality (not necessarily to improve it)
 - ASBS designations minimize anthropogenic impacts and preserve pristine conditions
 - ASBS are effective!



- Is the Water Board considering any new ASBS?
 - A nomination for Point Sur is under review by the Central Coast Regional Water Board
 - May be considered by the State Water Board in Summer 2026 at the earliest
 - Pending CEQA review.



- Other tools to improve water quality
 - Planning:
 - Ocean Plan, Thermal Plan, Once-Through Cooling Policy
 - Amendment to the Ocean Plan to address ocean acidification, hypoxia, and nutrient impacts in the Southern California Bight.
 - Implementation:
 - Impairment assessments
 - Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)
 - Regulation of discharges via permits

- General Protection Areas
 - In 2012, the Ocean Plan was amended to create General Protection Areas as a subset of SWQPA in addition to ASBSs
 - Due to competing demands with other high-priority work, no General
 Protection Areas have been designated to date

 As resources are available, State Water Board staff will solicit stakeholder input and may recommend revisions to the ASBS General Exception or additional requirements to ensure natural water quality

