

Malibu Creek Watershed

Malibu Creek and its tributaries are found in much of the service areas shared by the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) comprised of Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and Triunfo Sanitation District. As partners, the JPA treats and recycles wastewater at the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility (Tapia) for some 100,000 people to protect public health and the environment.



The Malibu Creek watershed is central to many of the attractions that make the JPA's service area so appealing. Parks and open spaces in the mountainous region support recreation, wildlife and scenic vistas, all within reach of the area's residents.



The JPA works closely with the community and nature. It conducts educational programs for local students and adults that focus on environmental practices like water-wise gardening, waste-stream diversion, runoff prevention and more.

Malibu Creek is listed as "impaired" by the State for the presence of algae, which impacts recreation. Through the years, a number of measures have been taken to control algae. Recycled water that is released to Malibu Creek, in the winter when the demand is low, contains nitrates below drinking water standard. Releases of the treated wastewater is not permitted during the warm-weather months, from April 15 through November 15 each year.



Meeting these standards and practices comes at a cost – Over \$10 million in improvements since 2005. Yet with these efforts, the presence of algae persists in the watershed, both above and below Tapia's discharge point in Malibu Canyon. As a result, regulatory efforts continue to seek solutions to the algae impairment. The most recent include the December 2012 proposal from U.S. EPA of new standards for Malibu Creek, rising from a consent decree where the JPA was not a party. The proposed water quality standards are stringent. The JPA analysis raises many questions about the methodology, conclusions and the costs for compliance, which provide no assurance that algae will be reduced or eliminated.

EPA's proposal was released in mid-December 2012 with a comment deadline set for January 25, 2013 and an adoption date set for March 24, 2013, leaving little time for analysis, scientific verification of its premises, or public participation. The JPA believes such a sweeping document demands scientific scrutiny and an assurance that its proposals will be effective, because compliance with its standards could cost ratepayers some \$160 million, based on a 2005 estimate.

