



## Water Well Discharge Prohibitions

### ----- *Fact Sheet* -----

In the autumn of 2016, unauthorized discharges from two water production wells to creeks in the Santa Barbara Coastal sub-basins resulted in consultation between the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, Environmental Health Services Division, and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. This consultation clarified that all discharges to creeks or drainages in the Santa Barbara coastal sub-basins are a violation of the Basin Plan.

So what does this mean to water well drillers?

- Discharges to creeks and drainages, including discharges of drilling muds, drilling waters and/or water pumped from the well while it is being developed, are prohibited;
- Such discharges are violations of county and state regulations:
  - County Code Chapter 34 Section 34A.11.(7) *Drilling waste shall be controlled and may not be discharged so as to create conditions that violate water quality control board regulations, other state laws, federal regulations or local ordinances;*
  - Water Quality Control Plan, Central Coast Basin, Chapter 5, Section IV.B. Inland Waters, reads in part: *“Waste discharges to the following inland waters are prohibited: (4). All coastal surface streams and natural drainages that flow directly to the ocean within...the Santa Barbara Coastal Subbasins...”*

Violations of these regulations may result in enforcement including issuance of a stop work order and suspension or revocation of the well permit by Environmental Health Services. Additionally, both the Water Quality Control Board and Environmental Health Services may issue notices of violation and levy fines. Violation of Santa Barbara County Code Chapter 34A may result in enforcement with an administrative fine of up to \$1,000.00 per each “one-time” action as provided in County Code Chapter 24A. The Water Quality Control Board may levy administrative fines up to \$10.00 per gallon for violation of the Basin Plan’s discharge prohibition per California Water Code Section 13385.