

DESCRIPTION

This Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed drains into the Santa Maria River Estuary, on the border between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The estuary begins at the confluence of the Santa Maria River and Orcutt Creek. The City of Guadalupe is located at the edge of the CCA along Highway 1.

The Santa Maria River has been reduced to an intermittent waterbody due to the large water draw to supply agriculture in the region, and is often just a sandy streambed during the drier months. Other than the two major streams, the majority of the CCA watershed is comprised of coastal dunes, including those found in Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Preserve.

The primary land use in the CCA watershed between Guadalupe, the Santa Maria River, and Orcutt Creek is agriculture. The majority of the watershed extending inland of the CCA, apart from the cities of Santa Maria and Orcutt, is also in agricultural production. The use of pesticides in large-scale agriculture in the region is the leading source of water quality impairment within the CCA.

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) list in this CCA are the **Santa Maria River Estuary** (impaired by total coliform, E. coli, fecal coliform, diazinon, chlorpyrifos, malathion, dissolved oxygen, DDD, DDE, toxicity, and pH); **Santa Maria River** (impaired by nitrate, chlorpyrifos, fecal coliform, dieldrin, diazinon, endrin, DDT, toxaphene, chloride, sodium, E. coli, turbidity, toxicity, cypermethrin, malathion, DDD, and DDE); **Unnamed Tributary to Orcutt Creek** (impaired by diazinon, chlorpyrifos, turbidity, ammonia, nitrate, and toxicity); **Orcutt Creek** (impaired by fecal coliform, DDT, ammonia, chlorpyrifos, dieldrin, boron, sodium, water temperature, specific conductivity, diazinon, toxicity, nitrate, chloride, turbidity, malathion, E. coli, carbaryl, cyfluthrin, cyhalothrin lambda, DDD, and DDE); and the **Pacific Ocean at Guadalupe Dunes** (impaired by fecal coliform).

Potential sources of these pollutants, organized by **Source Categories**, are listed as **Agriculture** (agriculture, and grazing-related sources); **Miscellaneous** (domestic animals/livestock); **Urban Runoff** (urban runoff/storm sewers); **Municipal Wastewater** (collection system failure); **Natural Sources**; and **Source Unknown**.

**Santa Maria River Mouth**

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For more photos, see the [California Coastal Records Project](#).

CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The Santa Maria River [Critical Coastal Area](#) was identified in 2014 based on the criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2010 Clean Water Act 303(d) list (Santa Maria River) flows into a state-identified Principal Bay or Estuary (Santa Maria Estuary). See California Department of Fish and Wildlife's "[California's Living Marine Resources: A Status Report](#)" (2001) and associated [map of the Principal Bays and Estuaries of California](#).

ADDRESSING POLLUTANTS

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to make a [list of impaired waters](#) that are not attaining water quality standards, and to develop a [Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\)](#) or similar approach to account for all sources of the pollutants that caused the water to be listed as impaired. TMDLs include allocations to both point and nonpoint sources (NPS) of the listed pollutants. The current (2016) 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies includes pollutants, potential pollutant sources, and year a TMDL was approved or is expected.

To address NPS pollutants, see [California's Nonpoint Source Management Measures](#) for guidance on selecting appropriate Management Measures, which consist of a suite of plans, practices, technologies, operating methods, or other measures that may be used to control NPS pollution.

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