

**DESCRIPTION**

This Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed drains into San Diego Bay in San Diego County, the third largest sheltered bay on the California coast. Many waterways flow into the bay. The largest is the Sweetwater River in the southern half of the bay, terminating in Sweetwater Marsh. The Otay River also terminates in saltwater marsh at the southern tip of the bay. Other notable creeks include Telegraph Canyon Creek, Paleta Creek, Chollas Creek, Paradise Creek, and Switzer Creek.

All of these waterways begin in the Cuyamaca Mountains, and flow through densely urbanized areas before entering the bay. There are also numerous flood control and water supply dams along the larger tributaries. Historically, San Diego Bay was one of the primary outflows of the San Diego River (along with Mission Bay), but the river's estuary was straightened with dredging and levee projects at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

San Diego Bay is bordered by many large urban areas, including the cities of San Diego, National City, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, and Coronado. The downtown commercial center of the City of San Diego is along the north side of the bay, and the San Diego International Airport is nearby. Residences in Coronado (such as the Coronado Cays) line the Silver Strand, the strip of sand between the south bay and Coronado Island. The Coronado Bridge roughly bisects the bay, and provides auto access to the peninsula.

There are several industrial areas in the CCA watershed, including Barrio Logan, a heavily industrial waterfront neighborhood. Salt works ponds at the southern tip of the bay line the Otay River inflow. Numerous marinas surround the bay, allowing for private and public use of the waters, and a few ferries can be used to cross to the Coronado peninsula.

San Diego Bay has long been considered one of the best natural harbors on the west coast of North America, and it is home to the main force of the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet. The Navy has extensive operations throughout the bay, particularly North Island Naval Air Station at the tip of the Coronado peninsula, and Naval Base San Diego on the central eastern shore. A large amount of residential area in Coronado is dedicated to housing Navy personnel.

The Navy also operates amphibious vehicle testing grounds, a naval communications center, and large ship moorings (including those large enough for aircraft carriers), located on the Coronado and Point Loma peninsulas. Part of Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery also lies within the CCA watershed on the Point Loma peninsula. The Navy also operates several smaller sites within the City of San Diego. The U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard also have several smaller holdings in the CCA watershed.

Sailing is the dominant recreational activity in the waters of San Diego Bay. Swimming, fishing, water skiing, and parasailing are all common recreational activities in the bay. Many

**San Diego Bay,  
Coronado Side**

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

parks dot the shoreline, and the Coronado Municipal Golf Course allows golfers to enjoy views of the lower bay. San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge is in the southernmost part of the bay, and includes Sweetwater Marsh and a large area of mud flats. Chula Vista Harbor and Bayfront Park are also found in this area.

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) are **San Diego Bay** (impaired by PCBs, PAHS, and mercury); **Chollas Creek** (impaired by copper, diazinon, lead, zinc, bifenthrin, chlorpyrifos, cypermethrin, malathion, nitrogen, phosphorus, trash, and indicator bacteria); **Paleta Creek** (impaired by copper, and lead); **Paradise Creek** (impaired by phosphorus, and selenium); **Telegraph Canyon Creek** (impaired by nitrogen, and selenium); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, near US Navy submarine base** (impaired by benthic community effects, and toxicity); **San Diego Bay, Shelter Island Yacht Basin** (impaired by dissolved copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Shelter Island Shoreline Park** (impaired by indicator bacteria); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Americas Cup Harbor** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Harbor Island (West Basin)** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Harbor Island (East Basin)** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Downtown Anchorage** (impaired by benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Vicinity of B St and Broadway Piers** (impaired by indicator bacteria, benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, G Street Pier** (impaired by indicator bacteria); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Marriott Marina** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Near Switzer Creek** (impaired by chlordane and PAHs); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, near Coronado Bridge** (impaired by benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, between Sampson and 28<sup>th</sup> Streets** (impaired by copper, mercury, PAHs, PCBs, and zinc ); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Near Chollas Creek** (impaired by benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, 32<sup>nd</sup> St San Diego Naval Station** (impaired by benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Seventh Street Channel** (impaired by benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, North of 24th Street Marine Terminal** (impaired by benthic community effects, and sediment toxicity); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Chula Vista Marina** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Bayside Park (J Street)** (impaired by indicator bacteria); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Coronado Cays** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, at Glorietta Bay** (impaired by copper); **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Tidelands Park** (impaired by indicator bacteria); and **San Diego Bay Shoreline, Near Submarine Base** (impaired by toxicity, and benthic community effects);

Potential sources of these pollutants, organized by **Source Category**, are listed as **Sediment** (contaminated sediment); **Habitat Modification** (dredging, and historic land management activities); **Unpermitted Discharges** (illegal dumping, and spills); **Urban Runoff** (urban runoff/storm sewers, and other urban runoff); **Atmospheric Deposition** (atmospheric deposition); **Industrial Wastewater** (major industrial point source); **Unspecified Nonpoint Source** (unknown nonpoint source); **Unspecified Point Source** (unknown point source); and **Source Unknown**.

## CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The San Diego Bay [Critical Coastal Area](#) (CCA) was identified in 2014 based on the criterion of a coastal watershed where a state-identified Principal Bay or Estuary (San Diego Bay) is an impaired waterbody on the 2010 Clean Water Act 303(d) list (San Diego Bay shoreline is impaired in several locations). 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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