

DESCRIPTION

This Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed flows to Malibu Creek, and is one of the two largest watersheds in the Santa Monica Bay Watershed Management Area. This watershed contains mostly undeveloped mountain areas, large acreage residential properties, and many natural stream reaches.

Numerous pollutants impair the water quality of several creeks and beaches within the Malibu Creek watershed, as well as in Malibu Lagoon and Santa Monica Bay offshore/nearshore waters. Nonpoint source pollution from human activities is strongly implicated, including ill-placed or malfunctioning septic systems, and runoff from horse corrals. Nutrient inputs are also contributed by urban runoff, and by the wastewater treatment plant, which discharges treated tertiary effluent into Malibu Creek about five miles upstream of Malibu Lagoon.



Malibu Creek and Lagoon

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

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) list in this CCA are **Malibu Lagoon** (impaired by indicator bacteria, enteric viruses, pH, eutrophic, benthic community effects, and swimming restrictions); **Malibu Creek** (impaired by trash, sulfates, selenium, indicator bacteria, fish passage barriers, sedimentation/siltation, scum/foam – unnatural, nutrients – algae, invasive species, toxicity, and benthic community effects); **Stokes Creek** (impaired by indicator bacteria); **Las Virgenes Creek** (impaired by nutrients – algae, invasive species, scum/foam – unnatural, organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen, benthic community effects, selenium, sedimentation/siltation, trash, and indicator bacteria); **Malibu Beach** (impaired by indicator bacteria, and DDT); **Amarillo Beach** (impaired by PCBs and DDT); **Malibu Lagoon Beach (Surfrider)** (impaired by coliform bacteria, PCBs, and DDT); and **Santa Monica Bay Offshore/Nearshore** (impaired by PCBs, DDT, arsenic, mercury, and trash).

Potential sources of these pollutants, organized by **Source Categories**, are listed as **Agriculture** (agriculture – animal, and irrigated crop production); **Atmospheric Deposition**; **Recreation Areas and Activities** (golf course activities); **Groundwater Related** (groundwater loadings); **Municipal Wastewater** (major municipal point source – dry and/or wet weather discharge); **Waste Storage and Disposal** (onsite wastewater systems – septic tanks); **Urban Runoff** (urban runoff/storm sewers); **Unspecified Nonpoint Source**; **Unspecified Point Source**; and **Source Unknown**.

CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The Malibu Creek [Critical Coastal Area](#) (CCA) was identified in 2002 based on the criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2002 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list (Malibu Creek and Lagoon) flows into a federal Marine Managed Area (Santa Monica Bay National Estuary).

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.

Information for this factsheet was originally compiled by members of California's Critical Coastal Areas Statewide Committee in 2006. The factsheet was revised and updated in 2019 by the California Coastal Commission's Water Quality Program staff.

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