

DESCRIPTION

This Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed flows into the San Elijo Lagoon in San Diego County. The Lagoon is a shallow-water estuary divided into three basins by highways and railroad tracks, resulting in restricted tidal circulation. The San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area (No-Take) covers 0.44 square miles of the Lagoon, and protects diverse habitat with six plant communities: coastal strand, salt marsh, freshwater marsh, riparian scrub, coastal sage scrub, and mixed chaparral. Extending offshore from the CCA is Swami's State Marine Conservation Area.

The Lagoon is fed by a 77-square mile urban watershed with two main tributaries, Escondido Creek and Orilla Creek, which pass through the cities of Escondido, San Marcos, Carlsbad, Encinitas, and Solana Beach. The Lagoon receives polluted runoff from agriculture, equestrian facilities, construction sites, and urban runoff from developed areas upstream.

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) list in this CCA are **San Elijo Creek** (impaired by indicator bacteria); **San Elijo Lagoon** (impaired by indicator bacteria, eutrophic, sedimentation/siltation, and toxicity); **Escondido Creek** (impaired by indicator bacteria, DDT, manganese, phosphate, selenium, sulfates, total dissolved solids, toxicity, benthic community effects, bifenthrin, malathion, and nitrogen); **Pacific Ocean Shoreline, Cardiff State Beach at San Elijo Lagoon** (impaired by indicator bacteria); and **Pacific Ocean Shoreline, Cardiff State Beach at Parking Lot Entrance** (impaired by trash). Potential sources of these pollutants are all listed as **Source Unknown**.

CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The San Elijo Lagoon 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 (San Elijo Creek) flows into a state Marine Managed Area (formerly San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Park, now San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area).

This CCA also met the 2014 CCA identification criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2010 Clean Water Act 303(d) list (San Elijo Creek) is adjacent to a [California Marine Protected Area](#) (San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area, and Swami's State Marine Conservation Area).



Mouth of San Elijo Lagoon

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

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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