

What Is The Clean Water Act and How Does It Impact Stormwater?

The Clean Water Act is a U.S. federal law that regulates the discharge of pollutants into the nation's surface waters, including lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and coastal areas. Early efforts to reduce water pollution focused on traditional point source dischargers such as industry, and sewage treatment facilities. In 1987, Congress amended the Clean Water Act to address municipal stormwater discharges. All governmental agencies responsible for discharging water from any source, including the stormwater drainage system, into rivers or oceans, must meet the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements of the Clean Water Act. The requirements are detailed in a NPDES Permit which outlines the specific actions under which agencies are "permitted" to discharge to waterways.

In 1987, when Congress amended the Clean Water Act to address municipal stormwater discharges, all governmental agencies responsible for discharging water from any source (including the stormwater drainage system into rivers or oceans), were now required to meet the Federal Stormwater Program's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System or NPDES.

NPDES requires stormwater permits for point source discharges of stormwater from certain industrial activities and from large municipalities with a population of 100,000 or larger. Operating as a separate municipal storm drain system and discharging stormwater under the Ventura Countywide Stormwater NPDES permit requires specific actions be adhered to by the City of Ventura. In short, the NPDES Permit governs precisely how the City of Ventura is permitted to discharge to waterways.