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## New Mandatory Municipal Regional Permit

*By Sophie Braccini*

At the March 24th meeting of the Moraga Town Council Jill Mercurio, Moraga Public Works Director/Town Engineer, presented a report on the impact of the newly adopted Municipal Regional Permit (MRP) that affects the way the Town will be issued its storm water discharge permit under the direction of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (the Board). In short, municipalities are required to send less pollutant into waterways and produce more reports to demonstrate their performance. The new MRP that became effective in December of 2009 contains an unfunded mandate for the Town of Moraga (and other jurisdictions). "I doubt if any agency in the state will be able to be in compliance," said Town Manager Mike Segrest during the meeting, "we will have to balance what is good for the environment with what we can possibly do."

"The Town will have problems with all of the reporting requirements," said Mercurio, "Participation in the Contra Costa Clean Water Program (CCCWP) will provide us with many of the templates to be used, but a lot of the data will need to be collected, collated, and reported directly by the Town." Mercurio knows that her staff will have to be involved in more community outreach events - public service announcements, shows/fairs/workshops, creek cleanups, children's educational events, etc. "With (our) skeleton staff, we will have to be creative in our approach to meeting these requirements," she added. The Town will also have to tighten up its enforcement processes, including issuing administrative citations to fine people for violations.

Mercurio believes that a lot of municipalities will have problems implementing all the measures in the timeframe required by the permit. Fortunately, for some of the requirements, the Town of Moraga has already scored some points with its implementation of an Integrated Pest Management policy. "All of the agencies within the County need to implement an IPM program to comply with the new permit," said Mercurio, "The Town's IPM policy has been held up as an implementable standard that all agencies should consider."

Besides additional fines for littering there will be other consequences for residents. "The Town is being required, in order to comply with the permit, to enforce more restrictions on activities that can affect our waterways," explained Mercurio, "For example, previously, folks needed to provide an "erosion control plan" and apply for an erosion control permit when they were doing work during the rainy season. Now it looks like the erosion control permits must be issued year-round which means, unfortunately, that they will be more detailed and more costly."

Mercurio feels that the Board will allow some leeway, given the proscriptive nature of some of the requirements. "The Town (and other local agencies) will work diligently to implement all of the requirements, but it will have to be a phased approach that works with our limited resources," she concluded.

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