

PALO ALTO REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLANT POLLUTION PREVENTION PROGRAM

Program Summary

The Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP) treats wastewater from the East Palo Alto Sanitary District, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View, Palo Alto, and Stanford University. The RWQCP Pollution Prevention Program, which was initiated in response to the RWQCP's strict bay discharge permit conditions, addresses the sewer and storm water discharges of about 100 major industrial facilities, more than 1,000 commercial businesses, about 200,000 area residents. The RWQCP initiated the pollution prevention program to reduce pollutant discharge because pollution prevention (unlike many other available methods for the RWQCP to achieve compliance) is generally cost-effective and environmentally beneficial. The RWQCP seeks to enlist its community to use pollution prevention as a means to comply with wastewater permit conditions, while receiving the many financial, environmental, and safety benefits of reducing the handling and use of polluting materials. Program implementation involves regulatory actions, research and development of pollution prevention practices, business assistance, and aggressive public outreach, all focused on encouraging our community to take specific actions to prevent pollution of local creeks and San Francisco Bay.

Program Achievements

Over the last 9 years, the RWQCP pollutant discharges have declined substantially, as shown in the table below. The RWQCP Pollution Prevention Program has made a significant contribution toward the discharge reductions, which also resulted from traditional regulatory programs and incremental improvements in plant operations. The metals discharge reductions achieved through the RWQCP Pollution Prevention Program benefit San Francisco Bay water quality and aquatic life. Discharge reductions also meet the RWQCP's current need to move toward compliance with its stringent effluent limitations. Should compliance not be achieved, the RWQCP may potentially be subject to fines of up to \$25,000 per day.

Reductions in the Amount of Pollutants Discharge to the Bay

Water Pollutant	Cadmium	Chromium	Copper	Lead	Nickel	Silver
% Reduction Since 1989	93	82	61	90	65	92

While the RWQCP does not track exact costs for its pollution prevention efforts, our program cost is on the order of a few hundred thousand dollars a year. We believe that pollution prevention is the most cost effective and environmentally beneficial method of reducing metals discharge to the Bay. Other methods, such as additional wastewater treatment through reverse osmosis, would cost millions of dollars per year and involve substantial environmental impacts and energy use.