



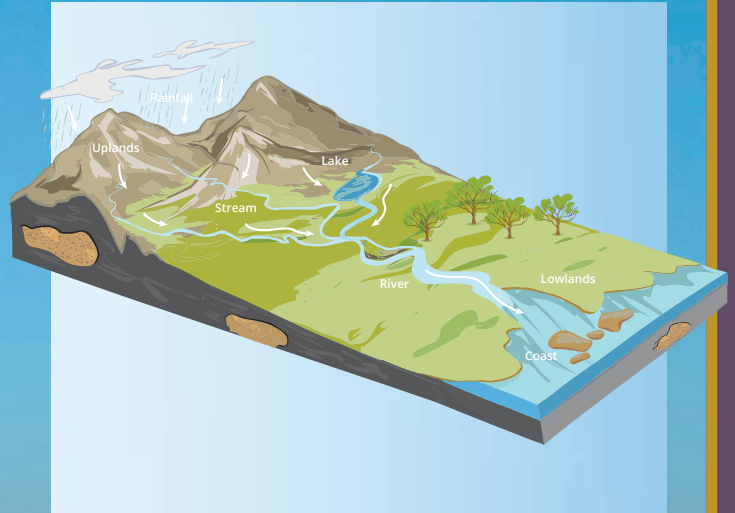
**THINK BLUE<sup>®</sup>**  
**SAN DIEGO**

# San Diego Bay

WATERSHED

# what is a watershed?

Watersheds are land areas that funnel water to a common low point – usually a stream, lake, river or out to the ocean. When it rains, water flows down from areas of higher elevation following the natural shape of the land. Along the way, rainwater and urban runoff collect and deposit trash, sediment, heavy metals, fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants into our local waterways. These pollutants degrade water quality, damage property and harm the health of nearby residents and wildlife. Everyone lives within a watershed, and preventing pollution and contamination from entering our local waterways is everyone's responsibility.



# what is a storm drain?



the storm drain system through an opening in the curb called a curb inlet, which serve as the entry point for stormwater's journey to the ocean.

Storm drains collect rain water to help prevent flooding in our communities. The storm drain system includes a vast network of underground pipes and open channels that take water away from streets and other developed areas. Water enters

Water in the storm drain system receives no treatment or filtering and is separate from the sewer system. All water in the storm drain system eventually flows to our rivers, creeks, bays and the ocean – along with the pollutants it carries.

Keeping pollutants out of storm drains helps preserve our environment and improve water quality in the San Diego Bay Watershed. It can also help you avoid costly fines related to the illegal disposal of trash and other pollutants into the storm drain system.



# about

## the San Diego Bay Watershed

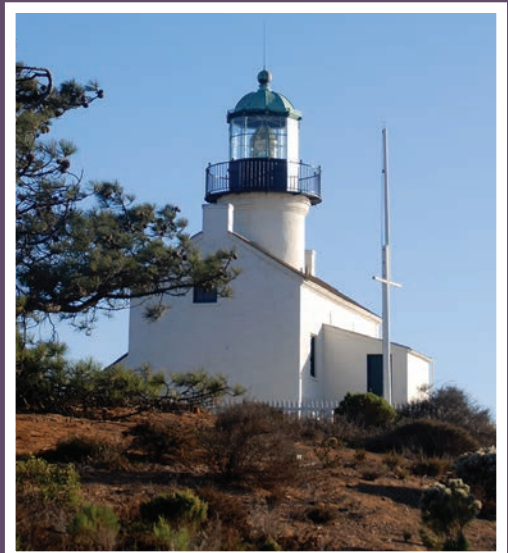
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The San Diego Bay Watershed encompasses approximately 444 square miles and begins northeast of Descanso along highway 79 near Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. The watershed flows west through the unincorporated communities of Alpine, Jamul and Dulzura and continues toward the San Diego Bay through the Cities of La Mesa, Lemon Grove, San Diego, National City, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach and Coronado. The Sweetwater River is the major waterway within this watershed travelling 55 miles from its headwaters until it empties into the middle of San Diego Bay near highway 54 (between National City and Chula Vista).

The current population of the entire watershed is approximately 1.1 million people. The watershed includes four major water supply reservoirs (Loveland, Sweetwater and the

Upper and Lower Otay Lakes) that provide important habitat and recreational opportunities for the region. Other important conservation areas within the watershed include the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve and the many vernal pool lands in the region.

The watershed drainage closest to the City of San Diego consists of a group of relatively small local creeks and pipe conveyances. Many of these are concrete-lined and drain directly into the bay. The creeks in this part of the watershed are highly impacted by urban runoff. Chollas Creek is listed as an impaired water body because of the pollution from various trace metals and pesticides.



# San Diego Bay Watershed



## quick facts

Total Square Miles: 444

Total Population: 1,084,567

Cities in the Watershed:

San Diego, National City, Chula Vista,  
La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Imperial Beach,  
Coronado and Unincorporated  
San Diego County

Water Supply Reservoirs:

Sweetwater, Loveland and  
Upper & Lower Otay Lakes

Important Water Bodies:

Chollas Creek, Sweetwater River  
and Otay River

Major Receiving Water Body:

San Diego Bay

Land Use Statistics:

Undeveloped = 25%  
Parks/Open Space = 32%  
Residential = 23%  
Transportation = 9%  
Other = 11%

# protect your watershed

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Some water pollution problems can be traced to a specific location, such as a pipe or waste disposal site. However, most water quality problems are more difficult to isolate and control since they cannot be traced back to one specific source. Pollution problems like these are everyone's responsibility. The list below includes the most significant types and most likely sources of pollution in the San Diego Bay Watershed.

## Pollutants of Concern

- Bacteria/Pathogens
- Sediment
- Pesticides
- Heavy metals

## Likely Pollutant Sources

- Garbage, litter & debris
- Animal & yard waste
- Landscaping
- Home and garden activities
- Car/Boat repair & maintenance
- Industrial facilities
- Streets (car fluids & brake dust)







**THINK BLUE®  
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To report stormwater pollution in San Diego, call the Think Blue Hotline:

**619-527-7500**

You can also use the Get It Done app at [sandiego.gov/get-it-done](https://sandiego.gov/get-it-done).

**thinkblue.org**

 **ThinkBlueSanDiego**

 **ThinkBlueSD**

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# Think Blue Tips

You can help protect the San Diego Bay Watershed by taking simple steps to prevent pollution:

- Properly dispose of trash and take large items to a landfill or recycling center
- Take household chemicals (paint, motor oil or household cleaners) to a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Center
- Pick up after your pet and properly dispose of waste in the trash
- Eliminate irrigation runoff – fix broken sprinklers and control over-spray
- Sweep up debris and dirt instead of using a hose to wash it away
- Use fertilizer sparingly – most plants need far less than typically given
- Wash vehicles on your lawn so the ground underneath can absorb the water
- Use pesticide alternatives like beneficial insects or non-toxic /biodegradable products
- Direct wash water onto landscaped areas or collect it using a wet/dry vacuum or mop for disposal into the sewer system
- Never dispose of ANY wastewater in a storm drain

