



# CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH WATER QUALITY/COASTAL TIDELANDS COMMITTEE AGENDA

Crystal Cove Room (Bay 2D)

Thursday, May 7, 2026 - 3:00 PM

## ***Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee Members:***

**Councilmember Michelle Barto, Chair**  
**Councilmember Joe Stapleton, Vice Chair**  
**Eros Bilyeu, Member**  
**Curtis Black, Member**  
**Tim Burnham, Member**  
**Charles Fancher, Member**  
**Craig Hudson, Member**  
**Sharon Ray, Member**  
**John Wadsworth, Member**

## **Staff Members:**

**Jim Houlihan, Deputy Public Works Director/City Engineer**  
**Chris Miller, Administrative Manager**  
**Karen Gallagher, Administrative Assistant**

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The Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee meeting is subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act. Among other things, the Brown Act requires that the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee agenda be posted at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of each regular meeting and that the public be allowed to comment on agenda items before the Committee and items not on the agenda but are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee. The Chair may limit public comments to a reasonable amount of time, generally three (3) minutes per person.

The City of Newport Beach's goal is to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in all respects. If, as an attendee or a participant at this meeting, you will need special assistance beyond what is normally provided, we will attempt to accommodate you in every reasonable manner. Please contact John Kappeler, Water Quality Enforcement Manager, at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting to inform us of your particular needs and to determine if accommodation is feasible at (949) 644-3218 or [jkappeler@newportbeachca.gov](mailto:jkappeler@newportbeachca.gov).

## **NOTICE REGARDING PRESENTATIONS REQUIRING USE OF CITY EQUIPMENT**

Any presentation requiring the use of the City of Newport Beach's equipment must be submitted to the Public Works Department 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

- 1) **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
- 2) **ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**
- 3) **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

*Public comments are invited on agenda items. Speakers must limit comments to five minutes. Before speaking, we invite, but do not require, you to state your name for the record. The Committee has the discretion to extend or shorten the speakers' time limit on agenda items, provided the time limit adjustment is applied equally to all speakers. As a courtesy, please turn cell phones off or set them in silent mode.*

- 4) **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Recommendation: Approve minutes as presented.*

[WQCT Draft Minutes 04022026](#)

- 5) **CURRENT BUSINESS**

**(a) Single Use Plastics - Public Information Outreach Status Update (Michelle Barto)**

**Update on future education outreach program.**

Recommendation: Committee Discussion

**(b) Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District - Update (Brian Brannon, OCVCD)**

Recommendation: Committee Discussion

**(c) Regional Sediment Management - Update (Brett Sanders, UCI)**

Recommendation: Committee Discussion

**6) COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATTERS WHICH MEMBERS WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION OR REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM) (10 min)**

**(a) Status of trash source identification in Santa Ana River (Spring 2026 - John Wadsworth)**

**(b) Big Canyon Phase 3 Restoration Site Tour (Spring/Summer 2026 - Andy Tran)**

**(c) Ocean Beach Sand Renourishment plans, efforts, status - (Spring/Summer 2026, Chris Miller)**

**(d) Southern California Sand Collaborative**

**(e) Santa Isabella Restoration Grant Application (Summer 2026 - Heather Cieslak)**

**(f) Pumpout maintenance update (Summer 2026 - Chris Miller)**

**(g) Santa Ana River trash mitigation (Winter 2026 - TBD)**

**(h) Draft copper Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) (Winter 2026 - TBD)**

**7) PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

*Public comments are invited on non-agenda items generally considered to be within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee. Speakers must limit comments to three minutes. Before speaking, we invite, but do not require, you to state your name for the record. The Committee has the discretion to extend or shorten the speakers' time limit on non-agenda items, provided the time limit adjustment is applied equally to all speakers. As a courtesy, please turn cell phones off or set them in silent mode.*

**8) SET NEXT MEETING DATE**

*Recommendation: June 4, 2026*

**9) ADJOURNMENT**

**Date:** April 2, 2026  
**Time:** 3:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Crystal Cove Conference Room, Newport Beach Civic Center  
**Meeting Minutes prepared by:**

**1. Call meeting to order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

**2. Roll Call and Introductions**

**Committee Members Present:**

Councilmember/Chair Michelle Barto  
Committee Member Curtis Black  
Committee Member Tim Burnham  
Committee Member Charles Fancher  
Committee Member Craig Hudson  
Committee Member Sharon Ray

**Committee Members Absent:**

Councilmember/Vice Chair Joe Stapleton  
Committee Member Eros Bilyeu  
Committee Member John Wadsworth

Staff Present: Karen Gallagher, Administrative Assistant  
Chris Miller, Administrative Manager  
Kayla Nyberg, Management Analyst  
Ellis Petersen, Associate Civil Engineer  
Dave Webb, Public Works Director  
Ben Zdeba, Acting Deputy Community Development Director  
Georgia Rios, Public Information Manager

Guests Present: Jim Mosher, Resident  
Nancy Gardner, Orange Coast River Park  
Nancy Skinner, SPON  
Virginia Anders-Ellmore, Resident  
Rudy Svrcek, Harbor Commissioner  
Andy Peplow, Kiewit  
Laura Curran, Resident  
Adam Leverenz, Resident

**3. Public Comment on Agenda Items**

Laura Curran stated that the General Plan's Natural Resources Element embodies Newport Beach's values to restore its environment and that ongoing consideration by the City to build a new Newport Beach Police Department headquarters in Civic Center Park runs afoul of Natural Resources Element Policy Nos. NR-10.3, NR-13.1, and NR-17.1.

**4. Review and approval of minutes**

**Recommendation: Approve minutes as presented**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Committee Member Hudson to approve the March 5, 2026, minutes as presented, seconded by Committee Member Fancher. The motion passed unanimously.

## 5. Current Business

- a. Orange County Watershed Water Quality Report (Michelle Barto)  
**Recommendation: Committee Discussion**

Chair Barto reported that she provided a link to the Committee with documentation from the latest Newport Bay Watershed Executive Committee meeting. She stated that the water quality is in good shape and the Executive Committee has met its goals from 2020.

In response to Committee Member Fancher's inquiries, Chair Barto reported that the group has evolved into a "receive and file" style committee because most of the goals have been met. She confirmed that it is a regional committee.

Chair Barto requested that Item No. 05.c be presented ahead of Item No. 05.b for a better flow.

- c. Trash Interceptor – 2025-26 Operational Recap (Ellis Petersen)  
**Recommendation: Committee Discussion**

Associate Civil Engineer Ellis Petersen reported that the Newport Beach Trash Interceptor has collected over 62 tons of trash since its opening, while staff has been learning ways to maximize its functionality, formalize collection procedures, and implement an Artificial Intelligence (AI) data collection system. He reported that the City has collected a wide array of trash items, with plastic bottles being the most frequently collected items. He stated that the biggest challenge has been the volume of trash that comes down San Diego Creek, and the velocity of the creek, whose water carried debris lift the booms above the waterline, allowing material to escape downstream. He added that the largest challenge comes from vegetative mats pulled off the creek's banks by fast currents.

In response to Committee Member Hudson's inquiries, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen clarified that the mats are processed through laborious means as people tear the mats apart with rakes. He added that the challenge is unique to Newport Beach compared to municipalities with similar trash interceptors. He clarified that the mats are considered debris.

Associate Civil Engineer Petersen reported that in the largest rain events, the creek's flow is turbulent and chaotic, leading to boom tears. He stated that an identified area of potential improvement is increasing debris retention through a heavier and stronger boom that is neither lifted out of the water as easily nor torn in heavier flows. He added that the boom's angles could be adjusted to bring the trash closer to the shore area where there is less current, while the operation's efficiency is also being studied to see if the work can occur with less manpower. He presented several alternatives to the current boom being studied by City staff and potential changes in the geometric angles of the boom to get the trash closer to shore before it is washed away by heavy flows. He added that staff is discussing mechanical mat removal options with engineering firms to avoid the current labor-intensive methods. He reported that the AI camera system is fully operational, and its data is being used to create a site-specific model for Newport Beach.

In response to Ms. Curran's inquiry, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen clarified that the AI system identifies shapes and patterns in collected trash, applying it to a database to identify components.

In response to Chair Barto's inquiry, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen reported that the City has a two-way data sharing partnership with the University of California at Santa Barbara's Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory, with Benioff working for free.

Associate Civil Engineer Petersen reported that the trash interceptor is working well, but there remains room for improvement with staff presently studying options.

In response to Committee Member Black's inquiry, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen confirmed that the dumpsters fill up quickly and emptying them faster is an area for improvement being considered.

In response to Committee Member Fancher's inquiry, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen could not estimate the trash interceptor's operating cost to the City but cautioned that the costs could be higher initially while the City learns the best way to manage it. He stated that he would expect the operational cost to decrease with time and learned efficiency methods.

Committee Member Fancher added that he is less interested in the cost figure for the City's budget, but rather so they have a figure for how much the City spends to clean up trash sent by others to be used in future discussions with upstream neighbors.

Chair Barto agreed that the City's cost is good information to have at regional agency meetings.

Public Works Director Dave Webb cited the mats as an example of something unexpected where the City had to adjust its operations, adding that it is costing the City about \$20,000 per rain event to hire people to break up the mats. He echoed Associate Civil Engineer Petersen's comments about other potential cost-saving measures being considered by the City while on this learning curve, such as changing the angle of the boom.

Committee Member Fancher stated that staff is learning ideal operations while managing them well.

Public Works Director Webb cautioned that there will also be future mechanical maintenance costs.

In response to Committee Member Fancher's inquiry, Public Works Director Webb stated that they will be working with upstream neighbors to reduce trash entering the creek, and the Committee will be part of these efforts.

Chair Barto added that they can also send the video from the presentation to the Santa Ana River Flood Protection Authority.

Committee Member Ray stated that some upstream cities assuredly do a better job than others in capturing their trash before it enters the creek.

Chair Barto stated that trash reduction is not a priority for some upstream neighbors, citing the City of Anaheim as an example. She agreed that the presentation had good and useful visuals.

Committee Member Ray called for studying which cities generate the most trash collected.

Chair Barto stated that studying the top trash-contributing cities would be a great project for students at the University of California at Irvine, recalling that they have requested projects in the past.

Committee Member Ray agreed, adding that the study would be more trustworthy if conducted by a neutral group.

In response to Orange Coast River Park's Nancy Gardner's inquiry, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen reported that the ratio of vegetation to trash was incredibly high, theorizing the likelihood of it being related to channel maintenance being conducted by Orange County Public Works. He estimated that about 75% of the collections were vegetative, which is more than expected.

In response to Still Protecting Our Newport's (SPON) Nancy Skinner's inquiry, Associate Civil Engineer Petersen reported that hauling away the collected trash has been covered by CR&R Environmental Services, Inc. He added that trash and vegetative masses are treated equally. Public Works Director Webb clarified that most of the trash goes to the landfill because it is too contaminated to be considered organics and too costly to separate. He noted that the creek flows to a harbor also maintained by the City, so it is in their interest to remove the organic material.

Harbor Commissioner Rudy Svrcek noted that he can tell the positive difference the trash interceptor is making in the harbor by the reduction in both organic material and trash after rain events.

Public Works Director Webb added that reports he has received indicate that there has been less trash in the harbor this year than in the past. He noted that Associate Civil Engineer Petersen assumed oversight of the trash interceptor when former City staff member Bob Stein retired.

- b. General Plan Update: Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay and Beaches Element, Natural Resources Element, and Safety Element (Curtis Black, Ben Zdeba)  
**Recommendation: Review, provide input, and recommend adoption**

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Ben Zdeba noted that Chair Barto cannot vote on this item due to her position as a City Councilmember.

Committee Member Black reported that the first draft of the relevant elements of the ongoing General Plan update was previously brought to the Committee, clarifying for new members that this current review includes feedback submitted by the Committee during their previous discussions in the fall. He added that most of the Committee's recommendations made it into this draft.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba provided an overview of the process behind the City's first comprehensive General Plan update since 2006. He noted that the Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element has been approved by the Harbor Commission and Parks, Beaches & Recreation (PB&R) Commission, with the PB&R Commission also approving the Draft Natural Resources Element. He added that the Planning Commission will also vote on the Safety Element at a meeting later in April.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba reported that the Committee formed an Ad Hoc Committee in the fall, with Committee Members Black, Fancher, and Wadsworth providing recommendations that the full Committee agreed to forward for consideration in October 2025. He presented how the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) weighed the Committee's feedback and created a new Policy No. NR-13.14 to specifically address their goal of reducing plastic use.

Committee Member Black lauded the updating process, noting that he served on the GPAC. He reported that the Committee's feedback on shoreline protection thresholds was incorporated as Policy No. HBB-7.5.

Committee Member Fancher stated that Policy No. HBB-7.5's wording does not match Committee Member Black's comments about prioritizing nature-based strategies over structural armoring.

Committee Member Black stated that the spirit of the Committee's comment was incorporated into the policy, even if the verbiage is not identical, adding that they will have a role in implementation.

Committee Member Fancher expressed concerns about the Committee's likely level of influence on every future matter.

In response to Chair Barto's inquiry, Committee Member Fancher clarified that he is looking for inclusion of specific language about prioritizing nature-based solutions over hard-scape armoring.

Acting Deputy Development Director Zdeba stated that the language may be in a different policy but could not cite it off hand.

In response to Committee Member Ray's inquiry, Ms. Gardner reported that there is an Implementation Plan that will specify which groups are responsible for which policies, adding that it has not yet been completed, which is why it isn't being presented.

Committee Member Black reported that the 2006 General Plan focused on the harbor and bay, and an effort was made to better recognize the beaches in this comprehensive update, citing Policy No. HBB-8.8 as an example of this emphasis. He reported that the GPAC sought clarity on which group is ultimately in charge of the City's beaches, noting that Policy No. HBB-5.5 specifically calls for the

Committee to have an adequate representation of coastal resiliency experts. He noted that Policy No. NR-13.2 has been updated by others but is within their scope, and the State-mandated need to develop a Sea Level Rise Plan by 2034 is incorporated into Policy No. S-1.1 and Policy No. HBB-2.1, adding that the Committee should advocate for this and be involved as the Plan is developed.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba reported that the City has already obtained a Senate Bill 1 grant to study sea-level rise and conduct a vulnerability assessment.

Committee Member Black noted that implementation will also involve the Local Coastal Plan (LCP), adding that there is a place for the Committee to be more involved with the LCP.

In response to Committee Member Black's inquiry, Ms. Gardner stated that a motion should be made before further discussion.

Committee Member Black moved to approve staff's recommendation as presented, and it was seconded by Committee Member Hudson.

Committee Member Fancher decried not specifying a preference for natural solutions over structural armoring in Policy No. HBB-7.5

Ms. Gardner reported that the GPAC agreed that the comments from this ongoing round of board, committee, and commission meetings would not change the draft submitted to the City Council, but rather this round of recommendations would be presented to the Council on a separate sheet.

In response to Committee Member Fancher's inquiry, Ms. Gardner clarified that the Committee can still make comments will be brought to the Council for discussion, but the current GPAC-approved draft of the General Plan is what will be presented to the Council.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba, in reference to Committee Member Fancher's earlier comments, noted that Policy No. HBB-7.1 specifically encourages the use of nature-based solutions as alternatives to traditional hard infrastructure.

In response to Committee Member Burnham's inquiry, Ms. Gardner clarified that Committee comments on the GPAC-approved drafts will be brought to the Council in an addendum format.

Chair Barto clarified that, although the Committee has a motion currently on the table, there could be discussion about an amendment adding secondary comments.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba cited as an example of the currently ongoing boards, commissions, and committees comment process how the PB&R Commission wanted to be included in Policy No. HBB-5.5 and this will be presented to Council as an addendum to the final drafts to delineate that the direct request was not vetted by the GPAC.

Committee Member Fancher stated that he reads Policy No. HBB-5.5 as adding to the Committee's scope. He added that there should be an aspirational statement calling for the City to treat the beaches seriously and not just have the Committee treat them seriously, requiring priority attention.

Committee Member Black stated that there are other places where the Draft General Plan speaks to this point, including the preamble to the Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element. He added that beaches are a more prominent part of this General Plan than the 2006 edition but agreed that it would be fair to put it into a policy.

Committee Member Fancher stated that the importance of the beaches needs to be specifically stressed in the coastal resilience-driven Policy No. HBB-5.5.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba noted that Goal No. HBB-7 is the protection and restoration of beaches and dunes, including five policies specifically speaking to this matter.

Committee Member Black noted that the document included in the Staff Report is focused on what changed since their fall discussion and is not a full picture of the Draft General Plan.

In response to Committee Member Ray's inquiry, Ms. Gardner reported that a recommendation made by the GPAC was for an annual review of one or two elements to track implementation progress and ensure that things are not falling through the cracks.

Committee Member Fancher stated that if the City submits a Sea-Level Rise Plan to the State by 2029, it receives additional funding, so the City should make it a stated goal to submit one by 2029.

Ms. Gardner, echoing comments made by GPAC Member Paul Watkins, stated that having specific target dates included in the General Plan creates unnecessary exposure to litigation if not met.

Committee Member Fancher expressed his confidence that Chair Barto will make the beaches a City Council priority.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Committee Member Black to approve staff's recommendation as presented, seconded by Committee Member Hudson. The motion passed unanimously with Chair Barto abstaining.

**6. COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATTERS WHICH MEMBERS WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, OR REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM)**

- (a) Vector problem areas in Newport Beach (Spring 2026 – Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District)
- (b) Status of trash source identification in Santa Ana River (Spring 2026 – John Wadsworth)
- (c) Big Canyon Phase 3 Restoration Site Tour (Spring/Summer 2026 – Andy Tran)
- (d) Ocean Beach Sand Renourishment plans, efforts, status (Spring/Summer 2026 –Chris Miller)
- (e) Southern California Sand Collaborative
- (f) Santa Isabella Restoration Grant Application (Summer 2026 – Heather Cieslak)
- (g) Pumpout maintenance update (Summer 2026 – Chris Miller)
- (h) Santa Ana River trash mitigation (Winter 2026 - TBD)
- (i) Draft copper Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) (Winter 2026 - TBD)

Public Information Manager Georgia Rios reported that she was hired about two months ago and is learning about what is happening in the City, like the trash interceptor, which can be promoted through publicity efforts, including the City's social media channels.

Committee Member Fancher pondered how the PB&R Commission's beach oversight roles overlap and possibly conflict with theirs. He encouraged inviting a regular PB&R representative to the Committee's meetings and vice versa to help ensure coordination between the groups.

Chair Barto agreed, stating that both groups work with the beaches while doing different things. She agreed to have a discussion with a PB&R representative to start the process.

Committee Member Fancher referenced the discussion at the March meeting about the sand behind Prado Dam, adding that there was information presented about a possible new sand source at Anaheim Lake. He encouraged the City to make obtaining this sand a priority, including a potential partnership with the City of Laguna Beach to increase both cities' collective political strength.

Ms. Gardner stated that the City of San Clemente could be a good partner for Prado Dam sand.

Chair Barto reported speaking with the Mayor of the City of Seal Beach, who agreed to a partnership once they figure out the specifics. She also reported speaking with Laguna Beach officials who were tentatively interested in a partnership.

In response to Committee Member Black's inquiry, Public Works Director Webb stated that the sand must be trucked to Newport Beach due to rail line issues, lamenting that it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. He reported on complications of working with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) due to federal administrative issues.

Public Works Director Webb agreed that a good way to get governmental funding would be to form a coalition with peers, noting that it worked for the City in the 1970s to get sand.

In response to Ms. Curran's inquiry, Administrative Manager Chris Miller clarified that the basin behind Prado Dam has reached its maximum capacity and there is an established timeframe to remove the accumulated sand, but transportation is a problem. Public Works Director Webb added that the Orange County Water District does not have the funding to remove the sediment, but many County cities need the sand.

Committee Member Fancher encouraged the City to seek Anaheim Lake sands, including contracting for a future purchasing right.

Public Works Director Webb estimated that 750,000 yards of sand at Anaheim Lake at a cost of \$15/cubic yard is \$11.5 million, stating that this is a lot of money for the City Council to find right now.

Chair Barto clarified that the City could get the rights to the sand, but the budgeting would be challenging without partnerships. She stated that Laguna Beach's water well collaboration with the City of Fountain Valley could be a good model to follow.

In response to Committee Member Fancher's inquiry, Chair Barto agreed to add the subject to Item No. 06 for future meetings so that it stays topical.

Public Works Director Webb cautioned that this is not a fast process due to the need to work with the federal government and the levels of complication that it adds, including permitting.

Chair Barto reported that she will work with Public Works Director Webb and Administrative Manager Miller on a report for the next meeting.

Committee Member Burnham encouraged making sand replenishment a priority, adding that there is already major damage to dunes, and the El Niño weather season is coming up.

Committee Member Hudson reported that, due to similar erosion emergencies, the City of San Clemente has established a Beach Czar position, and a similar staff position could help the City.

Committee Member Fancher reported having a Beach Czar discussion with the General Plan Update Ad Hoc Subcommittee during the fall.

Committee Member Black stated that, by the time the City has reached an emergency, it is too late.

Chair Barto stated that the next stage, with the encouragement of the updated General Plan's goals, will be working on political methods of obtaining sand, perhaps including the creation of a comparable Beach Czar for Newport Beach.

Ms. Skinner stated that sand replenishment should be the top subject at every Committee meeting.

Committee Member Burnham added that surfers have been hurt by hitting rocks exposed by erosion.

In response to Ms. Skinner's inquiries, Public Works Director Webb stated that there is not enough sand in the Santa Ana River's bed to make a difference if water were discharged from Prado Dam. Administrative Manager Miller confirmed that hydraulic dredging is cheaper than constructing a slurry line. Chair Barto added that Orange County Water District Executive Director of Planning and Natural

Resources Lisa Haney had told the Committee last year that the slurry line used years ago was a one-time situation due to a specific buildup of sediment and is not a cost-effective option today.

## **7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Virginia Anders-Ellmore requested writing a letter to President Donald Trump stating that the City is opposed to his proposals expanding offshore drilling.

Chair Barto reported that the City Council submitted an opposition letter to the State in January at the request of the Committee. She stated that the City does not have previously drilled offshore wells like the problematic one near the City of Santa Barbara, and the letter specifically speaks against the drilling of new wells. She stated that economics could also help protect the City because California's offshore oil is of low quality.

## **8. SET NEXT MEETING DATE**

Recommendation: May 7, 2026

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

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**Chair / Michelle Barto**

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