

9 – WATER QUALITY AND WATERSHED PROTECTION

1. **Program Area:** Infrastructure and Environmental
2. **Agencies and Departments involved:** Resources and Development Management Department (RDMD)
3. **New or previously identified in earlier Strategic Financial Plans, if previously identified what has changed and why:**

Previously identified. A dedicated funding source still needs to be identified.

4. **Description of the project/program – what it is and what it will achieve:**

Water quality protection is mandated and closely linked with the economic, recreational and aesthetic value of our 42-mile coastline and ultimately the overall quality of life in Orange County. To date, the County has achieved its mandated goals and improved its implementation methods by embracing regional collaboration efforts to effectuate water quality compliance.

The most pressing challenge the County faces is the Regional Water Board's continued imposition of costly unfunded mandates. While we have been successful in meeting previous mandates with limited resources, we have been unsuccessful in identifying a dedicated funding source. These additional mandates have placed an increasing burden on the limited number of staff and resources currently allocated to watershed protection. Future mandates will either force our implementation efforts and our current program to grow even larger and result in further financial drain on resources or potentially result in non-compliance. Beyond our efforts on current mandates, we have also worked to implement long-term, meaningful water quality solutions and watershed programs to minimize future mandates. Balancing our mandated compliance activities with long-term efforts has grown increasingly more difficult without such a funding source.

Within 3 years, funding contributions from other County Fund reserves (particularly Flood) will be diminished to the point where continued operation of this program will be threatened. Accordingly, either a new funding source needs to be found or decisions need to be made to reduce the Watershed Program. This is a substantial issue which requires addressing by RDMD and CEO.

5. **Potential Funding Sources:**

RDMD/Watershed and Coastal Resources has identified Road, Flood Control, and Harbors, Beaches and Parks Funds to pay for about 95% of its costs. The Net County Cost for RDMD/Watershed and Coastal Resources for this Strategic Priority starts at \$615,287 in FY 2003-04 and increases to approximately \$4.1 million by FY 2012-13.

6. Cost – estimate and identify separately one-time and ongoing costs:

Costs to develop and implement a program that conforms to the analysis, monitoring, inspection and reporting requirements of the draft NPDES permits will be substantial. Total RDMD/Watershed and Coastal Resources costs begin at about \$18.1 million and increase to approximately \$24 million by FY 2012-13. The financing of watershed activities by other RDMD funds is not sustainable.

7. Community Awareness (stakeholders): Orange County residents

8. Personnel – will the program/project require additional staffing? If so, estimate number of positions: No new positions being requested at this time.

9. Mandated or discretionary: Mandated

10. Implementation period if funding were available: This program is already underway.