MEMORANDUM TO THE WATER POLICY TASK FORCE

April 14, 2005

TO: ***Members of the Water Policy Task Force***

FROM: ***Daniel E. Griset, Sr. Regional Planner, X895, griset@scag.ca.gov***

SUBJECT: ***Survey of Stormwater Management Costs***

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive for future policy consideration.

BACKGROUND:

The State Water Resources Control Board funded this project under the title "Survey of Costs to Develop, Implement, Maintain and Monitor Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Storm Water Management Programs and Description of Alternatives for Control of Stormwater Quality in Los Angeles County." The Board's interest in this issue is a result of previous studies (Brown and Caldwell's for Caltrans and USC's for the Coalition for Practical Regulation) that estimated stormwater compliance costs in excess of $50 billion. These estimates, driven by the expectation that stormwater discharges will require advanced treatment, have provoked strong disagreement within the water quality community in Los Angeles County.

The survey report approaches its goals by looking at both documented local stormwater management program costs and at alternative approaches to stormwater quality control.

Local Program Costs

The program costs were developed with reviews of five cities and one metropolitan area. These included the City of Encinitas, City of Fremont, City of Santa Clarita, City of Corona, City of Sacramento and the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area. These cities were selected because of their unique water features and the contrasts these features would give the Survey.

Among the cities the annual costs per household ranged from $29 to $46. In the Fresno-Clovis area the annual household cost was $18. The difference owes in some measure to the level of program integration among the cities in the Fresno-Clovis area.

Stormwater Quality

The Survey then studied the effect of two different strategies for improving stormwater quality: source control and runoff reduction. The runoff reduction strategy considered makes use of traditional

infiltration and evapotranspiration Best Management Practices (BMPs). The study developed two scenarios for source controls: one of these considers source control BMPs as being sufficient to comply with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board's regulations; the other involves treatment with the use of wetlands and infiltration basins. These two scenarios do not include advanced treatment costs. However, the Survey suggests that were advanced treatment of stormwater runoff needed, it would be much more limited (and less costly than previously estimated by the other two studies) because of the other beneficial effects of the measures used in the two scenarios to reduce runoff and control sources.

The Survey estimated that the current annual cost per household for stormwater quality efforts is $18. With the additional efforts identified in the two scenarios (alternatives to advanced treatment) the additional annual costs per household ranged between $27 to $71.

Another aspect of stormwater management costs is the impact of TMDL mandates. These affect all runoff, not only stormwater runoff. As such, the Survey noted that for two of the Los Angeles Basin TMDLs there would be additional annual household costs: the Ballona Creek Metals TMDL compliance could cost as much as $75, while the Los Angeles River Trash TMDL compliance could exceed $140.

The Survey observed that local management efforts remain very limited. And without wide use of source controls and runoff management, the ultimate cost for complying with stormwater discharge rules will rise to higher levels, but short of those cost levels associated with the full use of advanced treatment.