

## **Judge Upholds Plan to Clean Up Polluted Runoff**

**Local governments and builders had challenged guidelines, arguing they ignore economic effects.**

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Rejecting arguments by Los Angeles County, a coalition of cities and the home-building industry, a Superior Court judge has upheld a comprehensive regional plan to clean up polluted storm-water runoff, the primary cause of beach closures.

The ruling is the latest round in a long-running legal battle between California's regional water boards, which have begun imposing tough requirements to reduce water pollution in recent years, and cities and business groups throughout the state, which contend that the new standards are expensive and unfair.

The Los Angeles-area runoff plan requires government agencies and builders to clean up tainted water before it trickles into waterways and makes its way to the ocean.

Among the measures the plan requires are pollution filters at new developments to catch contaminants, and more rigorous inspections of construction sites and industrial facilities that are likely to produce polluted runoff when it rains.

Opponents, including Los Angeles County, the Building Industry Assn. and a group of small cities that includes Arcadia and Monrovia, filed a series of suits challenging the cleanup plan's legality, arguing that it did not adequately weigh economic impact, among other things.

The cases were eventually combined and the arguments were heard last year by Superior Court Judge Victoria Cheney, who issued her decision late Friday.

On Monday, environmentalists praised the ruling — and chastised the cities for spending more than \$1 million in taxpayer money fighting efforts to keep beaches clean.

"This is without a doubt the most extensive challenge to one of these cleanups plans that we have seen," said attorney David Beckman of the Natural Resources Defense Council, which intervened in the case on behalf of state regulators.

"This permit was worth fighting for because it has a results-oriented approach — it actually requires the water to get cleaner."

The fight, however, may not be over.

Cities and developers appealed a similar case over a cleanup plan in San Diego, and it is now before the California Supreme Court.