

State Water Resources Control Board

Statewide Restoration General Order (SRGO)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General Information and Recommendations

What is the purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document?

This document is intended to help project applicants answer common questions about using the SRGO. The questions and answers have been organized into different categories for ease of reference (e.g., benefits, eligibility, jurisdiction). The answers have been reviewed by agency staff or CEQA practitioners for accuracy. More information on how to qualify for and use the [SRGO](#) including example project applications and approvals, can be found at [AcceleratingRestoration.org](#). Project proponents are also encouraged to contact the appropriate [Water Board](#) for further information.

What is the SRGO?

The State Water Board's Statewide Restoration General Order ([SRGO](#)) provides a more efficient pathway for obtaining waste discharge requirements and Clean Water Act section 401 water quality certification for restoration projects that do not qualify for the [Order for Small Habitat Restoration Projects](#). SRGO project types, design guidelines and protection measures are coordinated with several other agencies' restoration permitting pathways.

Are other restoration permitting pathways available?

There are also several other restoration permitting pathways available in California, many of which have coordinated requirements. For a summary of those pathways, see our [Essential Guide for Accelerated Restoration Permitting](#).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - Statewide Restoration General Order (SRGO) **Benefits**

1. What are the benefits of using the SRGO rather than doing an individual 401 Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs)?

Using the SRGO provides several benefits to the project proponent. The project types and protection measures are closely coordinated with the USFWS and NOAA RC Restoration Programmatic as well as CDFW's Restoration Management Permit. Therefore, protection measures are less likely to conflict with other agency requirements. Using the SRGO can also promote greater inter-agency coordination leading to better project design and project outcomes.

Since the SRGO has been authorized by the State Water Board, project proponents request to enroll under that initial approval through a Notice of Intent process that is more streamlined than a typical application for individual WDR or 401 Certification.

Regional Board staff can also more easily prioritize permitting of restoration projects because the SRGO offers a dedicated permitting pathway that includes environmental protection measures coordinated with other agencies' restoration permitting pathways.

Eligibility

2. My restoration project has project design features intended to enhance streamflow and groundwater recharge. Would my project be excluded due to the SRGO's prohibition on "infiltration galleries"?

Streamflow enhancement projects could be covered under the SRGO, provided they meet the SRGO definition of a restoration project. It is highly recommended to request a pre-application meeting and, in that meeting, clearly describe how the design features of your project will create environmental benefits and why they are an integral part of the overall project design.

Per the SRGO, a "restoration project" is defined as one that would result in a net increase in aquatic or riparian resource area functions and/or services through implementation of the eligible project types, relevant general protection measures, and consideration of design guidelines. The approving Water Board determines if a proposed project meets the definition of a restoration project and is eligible for authorization under this Order"

3. Does the prohibition in the SRGO related to undersized rip-rap (described in detail below) require that rock not be placed in the stream if rock is part of the project design?

Appropriately-sized rock that is part of the restoration project design may be placed in the stream. Here is the text of the prohibition:

The following activities are not within the scope of the Order and will require separate permitting approvals with the State Water Board and/or Regional Boards:

- *Use of undersized riprap (e.g., will not remain in place during a 100-year flow event or other standard accepted by the approving Water Board).*

4. Is there a size limit on the SRGO?

There is no size limit on the SRGO. The SRGO has been used for a variety of different project sizes, including landscape-scale projects.



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5. Can the SRGO be used for wildfire resilience or recovery related projects?

If your project meets the terms and conditions of the Order it may be eligible. Floodplain and instream habitat restoration projects that also include activities like forest thinning to assist with large wood recruitment have been covered under the SRGO. Discuss the details of your project with your local Regional Water Board staff person to see if your project would be eligible or to consider possible project modifications to make it eligible.

6. Can the SRGO cover compensatory mitigation projects (e.g., permittee responsible mitigation, in lieu fee projects, mitigation banks, etc.)?

Compensatory mitigation projects can be enrolled under the SRGO provided that proposed projects meet the definition of a restoration project and other terms and conditions of the Order. Work with the authorizing Water Board to determine whether the SRGO could apply.

Mitigation bank projects would need to separately develop a [mitigation bank enabling instrument](#) for development and approval of the mitigation bank itself. The bank enabling instrument does not provide CWA permitting coverage.

Jurisdiction

7. My project spans two different Regional Boards' jurisdictions – who would be my approving Water Board?

The SRGO is implemented like any other Water Board permit in terms of jurisdiction, meaning that if your project crosses Regional Board boundaries, then the State Water Board will process the permit application (i.e., Notice of Intent).

The State Water Board contact is in the Division of Water Quality at (916) 341-5290 or Jessica.nadolski@waterboards.ca.gov.

8. Does the SRGO also cover compliance for the Water Board's construction stormwater regulations (e.g., the Construction Stormwater General Permit)?

No. Depending upon the details and size of your project you may have to get a separate approval for stormwater impacts during construction (e.g., [Construction General Order](#), etc.).

9. My project meets the conditions of the Water Board's Small Habitat Restoration Permit (SHRP) but it does not impact Waters of the US/federally jurisdictional waters. Therefore, the project needs Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) coverage. Can I use the SRGO to get coverage for impacts to waters of the state?

Yes. The SRGO provides Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) coverage for projects proposing impacts to waters of the state, in addition to CWA coverage, if needed. As of August 2025, the SHRP does not cover



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waters of the state. Future updates include proposals to add this coverage.

10. Can State Water Board Water Rights staff use the SRGO for water conservation projects that also need water rights permitting?

If the project falls within the purview of the Division of Water Rights, the Order can be used provided that Water Rights staff decide to take over writing 401 certification/WDRs for the project and the project would otherwise qualify for the SRGO. Note that a separate water rights permit might be needed in addition to coverage for 401 Certification/WDRs provided by the SRGO.

Process

11. If I use the SRGO but not the SRGO PEIR, what Tribal Consultation process am I required to follow?

Contact your approving Water Board to discuss the process.

12. When should I contact the Water Board about my project and the potential to use the SRGO, and is a pre-application meeting required?

It is helpful to reach out to Water Board and other regulatory agencies as early as possible, but generally at 30, 60, and 90 percent design completion.

A pre-application meeting must be requested as soon as your project concept is developed or at least 30 days prior to submitting the Notice of Intent (NOI). However, the pre-application meeting can be waived by the approving Water Board on a case-by-case basis. See details below from the Order:

A.5.3 Pre-Application Consultation The project proponent will contact the approving Water Board to submit available project information and request a pre-application consultation meeting prior to submittal of the NOI. The approving Water Board may waive the pre-application meeting requirement on a case-by-case basis.

13. Can I lump multiple projects into one SRGO application?

Yes, it is possible for multiple projects to be authorized with a single SRGO Notice of Intent or application. However, doing so is at the discretion of the approving Water Board, so a project proponent should contact the approving Water Board to discuss if this approach could be approved considering the specific circumstance. I have a landscape-scale project with individual actions that cross Regional Board boundaries. Who is the approving Water Board?

14. What are the fees for using the SRGO and does my project qualify for the Ecological Restoration and Enhancement Projects (EREP) category in the Water Board's fee schedule?



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A fee calculator can be found [here](#) and fees must be confirmed with the approving Water Board. See also SRGO Section XII. Application Fees.

The category your project falls under depends upon the details of the project and whether it would fit the Water Board's definition of an EREP project, which can be found in the fee schedule and the [Dredge and Fill procedures](#). Mitigation-related projects (e.g., In-lieu Fee (ILF) projects or those projects legally required to be implemented as part of a Cleanup and Abatement Order, etc.) typically do not meet the definition of an EREP project.

15. How long is the Water Boards' public noticing period for the SRGO?

Public noticing of a project under the SRGO is 21-days and is posted on the reviewing State or Regional Board's Water Quality Certification webpage.

16. How do I select the appropriate protection measures from the SRGO for my project?

It will depend upon the project type and activities. You can use Sustainable Conservation's [protection measures selection tool for the SRGO](#) to create a draft list of measures based on your project type and activities. You can then review those measures to see if they are appropriate or need any modifications based on site specific constraints, etc. It is also recommended to discuss appropriate measures at the pre-application meeting with the approving Water Board.

17. My project will impact Waters of the United States as well as Waters of the State and therefore will need a permit from both the Army Corps and Water Board – which permit do I need to obtain first?

The Army Corps typically requires a 401 certification from the Water Board or a Notice of Applicability that a project is covered by a programmatic 401 certification (e.g., SRGO) before they issue their 404 Clean Water Act permit. However, it is highly recommended to convene the permitting agencies at the beginning of project planning/design to facilitate faster processing of permit applications.

18. What other agency permits are available for restoration ?

Several other agency permits can be used with the SRGO (e.g., [USFWS Restoration Programmatic](#), [NOAA Restoration Center Biological Opinions](#), [Restoration Management Permit/RMP](#), etc.). CDFW also encourages applicants using its RMP to [propose measures in existing restoration authorizations](#). For a summary of restoration permitting pathways available, see [Sustainable Conservation's Essential Guide for Restoration Permitting](#) and [restoration permitting resources website](#). Be sure to bookmark the link to the Essential Guide as the table is updated periodically.

19. Do you have to complete CEQA compliance before starting the SRGO application process?



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No, however Water Code requires completion of a valid CEQA document before the Water Board can authorize a permit. See “CEQA Options” below for more information on different options for compliance.

CEQA Options

20. What are my CEQA options when using the SRGO?

The [CEQA lead agency](#) will determine which CEQA pathway they want to use. If a lead agency (including CDFW as the lead agency) chooses to use the Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects (SERP), CDFW must also concur with the lead agency’s decision before the SERP is finalized. CEQA options include but are not limited to:

- Categorical Exemptions (per CEQA Guidelines Section) such as:
 - [15333](#) - Small Habitat Restoration Projects
 - [15301](#) – Existing Facilities
 - [15302](#) – Replacement or Reconstruction
 - [15303](#) – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures
 - [15304](#) – Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemptions (per California Public Resources Code and CEQA Guidelines Section):
 - [21080.56](#) - Restoration Projects (SERP), managed by CDFW
 - [15269](#) – Emergency Projects
- [SRGO PEIR](#) (per CEQA Guidelines Section)
 - 15168(c)(2) - Notice of Determination
 - 15162 – Subsequent EIRs or Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration or Negative Declaration
 - 15163 – Supplemental EIR or Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration or Negative Declaration
 - 15164 – Addendum
- Addendum to the [Suisun Marsh Plan EIS/EIR](#)
- Addendum to the [California Vegetation Treatment Program \(CalVTP\)](#) PEIR
- Other Programmatic EIRs ([State Parks PEIR](#), etc.)
- Addendum to an existing Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)
- A new CEQA document (e.g., Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration or Negative Declaration, Environmental Impact Report)



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Projects 5 acres or less that meet the conditions of [Categorical Exemption 15333](#) for Small Habitat Restoration Projects typically use that pathway because it is the simplest option. That option has also been used for CEQA compliance for projects that are over the current 500 cumulative linear feet limit of the Water Board's Small Habitat Restoration Permit, but that are 5 acres or less.

21. How do I determine whether I can/should use the SERP or PEIR for my project?

The [CEQA lead agency](#) will determine which pathway is most appropriate for the project. The SERP process is specifically for projects that would result in restoration of California native fish, wildlife, and habitats and is statutorily exempt from CEQA. Qualifying projects can have "incidental" public benefits, but do not always allow for multi-benefit projects as with the SRGO PEIR. So, the appropriate pathway will depend upon the details of the project.

If your project qualifies for the Categorical Exemption 15333 for Small Habitat Restoration Projects, it may be preferable to use that pathway since it is an efficient CEQA process whereby the applicant simply files a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

Applicants should reach out to the Water Board and CDFW to discuss use of SERP versus SRGO as soon as you can. Regulators have been participating in multi-agency project kickoff meetings and making this decision on a project-by-project basis. Typically, kickoff meetings take a couple weeks to get scheduled. Contact your CDFW Cutting Green Tape regional contact or your local Regional Board staff to get a multi-agency kickoff meeting started. If your Regional Board needs assistance, they can contact the State Water Board 401 Program Manager (jessica.nadolski@waterboards.ca.gov).

More information can also be found on the [Cutting Green Tape Regulatory Strategies to Advance Restoration Webinar Series](#).

22. Can I use the SRGO without using the PEIR?

Yes, however some other form of CEQA compliance (e.g., CEQA exemption, a different programmatic, individual CEQA document) must be done if you are not using the PEIR. Project proponents are required to submit CEQA compliance documentation to the Water Board when obtaining coverage under the SRGO.