



May 10, 2019

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SCAP Support of AB 1672

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez:

The Southern California Alliance of Publicly Owned Treatment Works (SCAP) is in full support AB 1672 (Bloom), requiring labeling for both flushable and non-flushable wet wipes products so that Californians will know whether a product can be discarded safely through their plumbing or should be disposed of in a trashcan.

SCAP represents 83 public water/wastewater agencies in southern California. SCAP members provide essential water supply and wastewater treatment for approximately 20 million people in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties. SCAP's wastewater members provide environmentally sound, cost-effective management of more than two billion gallons of wastewater each day and, in the process, convert wastewater into resources for beneficial uses such as recycled water and renewable energy.

In recent years, wipes have gained popularity as they're manufactured for a variety of daily household purposes. Because most wipes are not compatible with sewer systems and public infrastructure, however, flushing these products results in a variety of problems, including environmental ones like sanitary sewer overflows which are violations of law and result in fines and penalties for public agencies.

By the Numbers: Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs)*

- 35,342** Gallons of **raw sewage water that reached surface waters** thus far in **2019**, due to wipes
- 40%** **Increase** since 2015 in the percentage of **SSOs that were related to wipes**
- 624** **Category 1 SSOs** in the last decade related to wipes – more than **1 per week**
- 3,661,729** Gallons of **raw sewage water** spilled into surface waters from the **624 SSOs**
- 3,218** Number of wipes related **SSOs** over the last decade – nearly **1 per day**.
- 5,580,939** Gallons of raw sewage water spilled in **California** from the **3,218 SSOs**

**From the State Water Resources Control Board's CIWQS Database*

In addition to sewer overflows attributed to the flushing of non-flushable wipes adversely effecting public health and the environment, there are several other undesirable consequences associated disposal of non-flushable wipes in public sewer systems.

SCAP

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF
PUBLICLY OWNED TREATMENT WORKS



- **Increased energy usage** - In an effort to reduce pump clogging associated with non-flushable wipes not breaking down in the sewer, wastewater utilities are replacing serviceable pumps prior to the end of their useful life with recessed impeller or chopper pumps. While these pumps are more capable of handling non-flushable wipes without clogging, they still clog just not as often; these pumps are less efficient and require more energy to convey sewage.
- **Worker safety** - The removal of non-flushable wipe clogs from pipelines, manholes and pumps is a manual process. It requires wastewater system workers to enter confined space areas and manually remove heavy clumps of sewage soaked non-flushable wipes. While the wastewater industry has developed excellent worker safety programs, we strive to avoid unnecessary worker exposure to raw sewage and hazardous confined space environments.
- **Microplastics and microfibers** – There is an increasing awareness of public health and environmental health threats associated with microplastic and microfibers. The wastewater sector is striving to keep these constituents out of the sewer system. Synthetic microfibers found in some non-flushable wipes represent one more unnatural constituent that must be removed before wastewater can be fully treated for reuse.

The problems created by wet wipes are being experienced by agencies and ratepayers around the state, nation, and world. AB 1672 would ensure wet wipes packaging clearly communicates whether the product can be safely flushed through a toilet or if it will not break apart like toilet paper and should not be flushed. **The public consumers have a right to know!**

For these reasons, SCAP is in full support of AB 1672, and we respectfully request for the bill to pass off of the suspense file on Thursday, May 16.

Sincerely,

Steve Jepsen
Executive Director, SCAP

cc: Assembly Appropriations Committee Members
The Honorable Tasha Boerner Horvath, District 76
Jessica Gauger, California Association of Sanitation Agencies