TRACKING POLLUTANTS & MONITORING COASTAL WATER QUALITY NEAR SAN DIEGO

Observing Locations Along the Southern California Coast

San Diego public health officials routinely use the San Diego Coastal Ocean Observing System (SDCOOS) to make timely decisions related to local water quality. SDCOOS provides a single point of entry for accessing and archiving agency-sponsored water quality data (shoreline bacteria), which are integrated with other observing system products, including surface currents, satellite images, bathymetry, weather information, and archived data. SDCOOS also serves as a regional test bed for developing observing system products for coastal water quality issues.

In response to numerous beach closures attributed to high levels of bacteria, the City of Imperial Beach, CA teamed with Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board—Region 9 San Diego to monitor currents and the flow of pollution on a 24-hour basis in the waters off the coast of southern California. This project began in late 2001, with support from the State of California and the City of Imperial Beach. The initial focus of the system was to identify sources of pollution and track its movement.

Since its inception, SDCOOS has responded to numerous water quality events in the region. It enables a direct link between the information generated by this observing system and a wide audience of end-users, including local and regional agencies, policy makers, researchers, and the public at large.

The County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health writes that SDCOOS allows "DEH to make more accurate and timely notifications to protect public health, as well as reduce unnecessary economic hardship on local communities." Serge Dedina, the Executive Director of Wildcoast, a non-profit organization located in Imperial Beach, California dedicated to the preservation of California's coastal environment, writes that "with SDCOOS, Wildcoast has a scientific tool to help improve ocean water quality along the U.S.-Mexico border. Access to SDCOOS also allows us to provide real time water quality information to hundreds of our members on an almost daily basis through our Wildcoast Ocean Report email service." And the Lifeguard Captain of the City of Imperial Beach, Robert Stabenow, says that "SDCOOS is a great resource for lifeguards by providing real-time information not only for water quality issues, but also on daily weather and ocean conditions."

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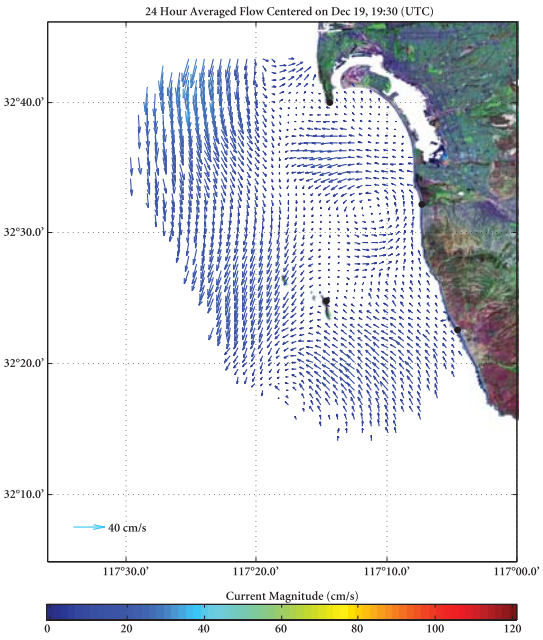
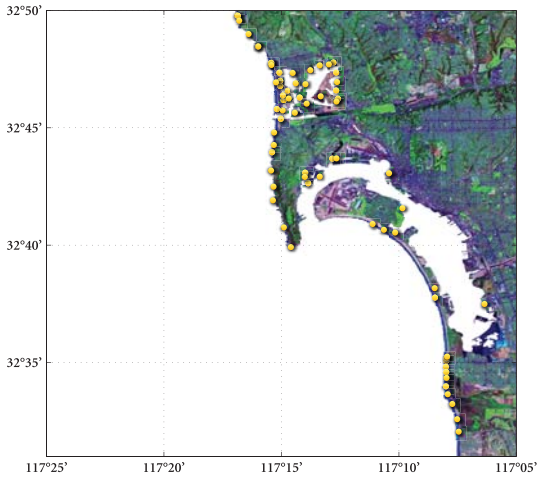


24-hr average of surface current vectors on 12 December 2003



San Diego City and County water quality sampling stations