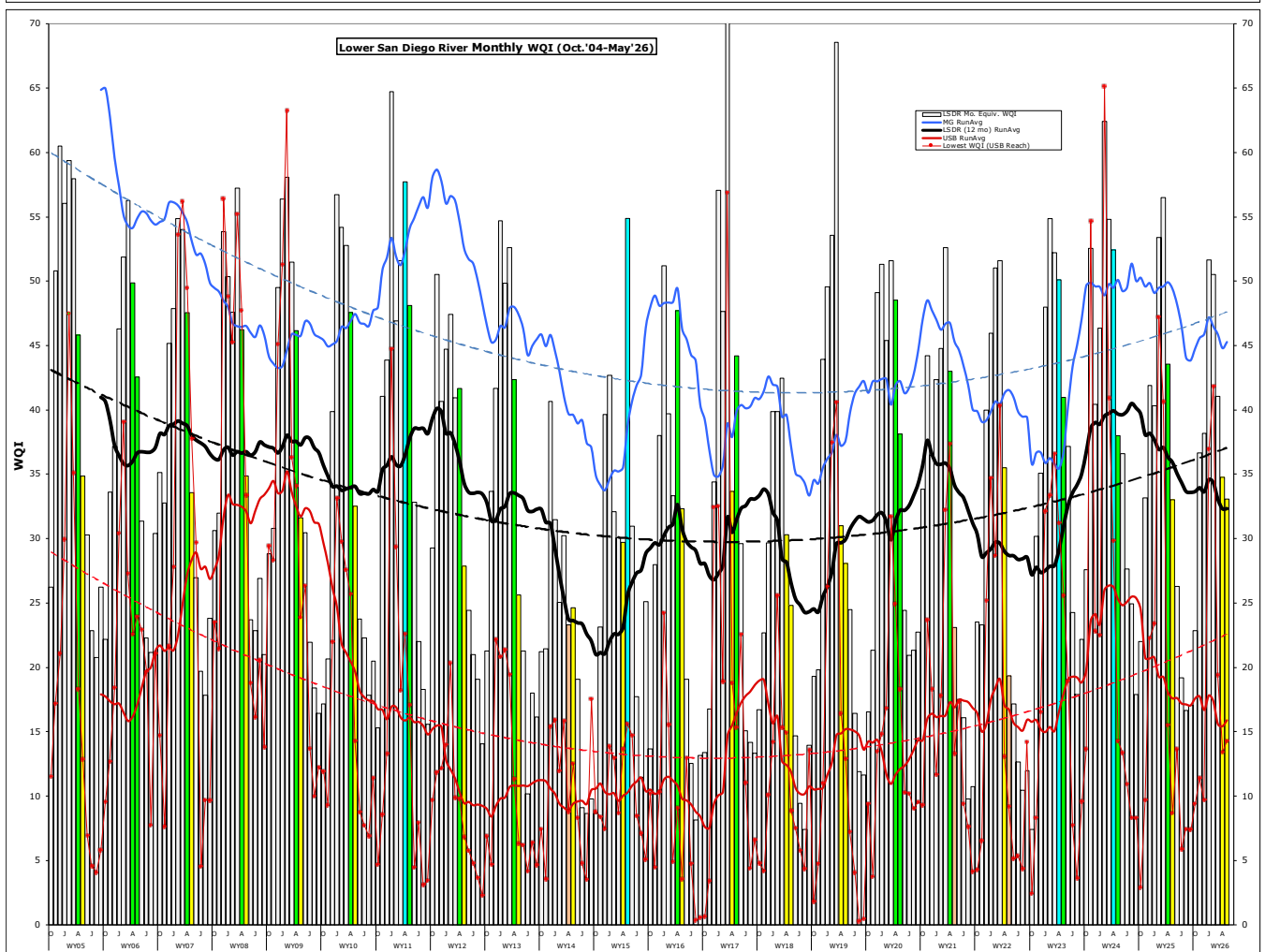


# Monthly WQM Report

## Lower San Diego River - May 2026



## Lower SDR Water Quality Monitoring Data Summary

**Table 1** presents a summary of water quality data monitored by the SDRPF RiverWatch Team within the Lower San Diego River (LSDR) watershed over the past two months (May/April). The overall index for this month of 33 (D Marginal) is two points (-5%) below last month, at the same value as a year ago and one point (-3%) less than the 22-yr May norm of 34 (D Marginal).

<b>Table 1 - May/April '26 WQM Data Summary</b>							
	West - MV	Mid - MG	East - SB	LSDR	Variance From		
[Site #s]	[1-7] May/Aprl	[8-10] May/Aprl	[11-15] May/Aprl	[1-15] May/Aprl	Last Mo. (4/'26)	Last Yr. (5/'25)	Norm (May)
Temperature, oC	23.0/20.8	20.9/17.5	21.0/18.2	21.7/19.1	14%	10%	9%
Sp.Cond., mS/cm	2.72/2.56	1.66/1.52	1.84/1.63	2.21/2.03	9%	1%	2%
DO, mg/L	4.28/4.48	7.83/7.87	4.36/4.10	4.69/4.97	-3%	2%	-2%
DO, % of Sat.	51/51	89/82	50/44	54/54			
pH	7.62/7.62	8.01/7.96	7.70/7.59	7.67/7.60	1.0%	1.5%	-0.3%
3-day ADF, cfs	8.0/6.8	6.3/4.7	6.0/4.3	6.9/5.4	27%	55%	-20%
WQ Index	32/35	54/52	24/26	33/35	-5%	0.2%	-3%
Letter Grade	D/D	B/B	E+/D-	D/D			
March/April	Marginal/ Marginal	Good/ Good	Poor/ Marginal	Marginal/ Marginal	Index down 2 pts from last month		

Negative variance (declines from norms) and DO deficits (DO < 5.0 mg/L or 52% Sat) expressed in red.

LSDR **water temperatures** rose 2.6oC (14%) from last month to 10% above last year and 9% higher than the monthly norm of 19.9oC. The overall **specific conductance** of 2.21 mS/cm gained 9% over last month to reach 1% above a year ago and 2% more than the 22-yr norm of 2.17 mS/cm. The overall **dissolved oxygen** level of 4.69 mg/L (54%Sat.) dropped 3% below last month to 2% less than the 22-yr norm of 4.95 mg/L (54%Sat). **Streamflow** over the antecedent 3-days of 6.9 cfs is 27% above last month, 55% greater than a year ago while 20% less than the 22-yr May norm of 8 cfs. This month's overall LSDR **water quality index** (WQI) of 33 (D Marginal) is 5% under last month, about the same as a year ago and only 3% below the 22-yr norm of 34 (D Marginal) for May.

WQI values computed over the past 25 months of RiverWatch record for the three main sections of the lower river system, the overall LSDR average, plus 30-day antecedent average daily streamflow (ADF) and total monthly rainfall (MRF) values, are expressed in **Table 2** on the next page. Overall the LSDR WQI value for May of this year is the same as for May of last year.

<b>Table 2 - WQI Values, Average Daily Flow and Monthly Rainfall (April '24 - May '26)</b>							
	Mission Valley	Mission Gorge	Santee Basin	LSDR		ADF,cfs	TMR,F,in
April	60(B)	61(B)	40(C)	52(B)	WW	62	1.92
<b>May '24</b>	<b>40 (C)</b>	<b>54 (B-)</b>	<b>31 (D)</b>	<b>38 (C-)</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0.03</b>
June	40 (C)	51 (B-)	30 (D)	38 (C-)	DW	7.6	0.01
July	27 (D)	43 (C)	25 (D)	28 (D)	DW	3.8	0.00
Aug.	22 (E)	44 (C)	22 (E)	25 (E+)	DW	2.9	0.00
Sept	18 (E)	19 (E)	20 (E)	18 (E)	DW	1.6	0.01
Oct.	17 (E)	42 (C)	24 (E+)	25 (D-)	DW	1.2	0.01
Nov.	34 (D)	49 (C+)	23 (E+)	33 (D)	T	2.2	0.08
Dec.	45 (C)	53(B-)	33 (D)	42 (C)	T	3.7	0.05
Jan.'25	44 (C)	49 (C+)	32 (D)	40 (C)	T	3.8	0.00
Feb.	49 (C+)	68 (B)	50 (B-)	53 (B-)	WW	27	1.00
March	59 (B)	68 (B)	48 (C+)	57 (B)	WW	55	2.40
April	45 (C)	65 (B)	33 (D)	44 (C)	T	16	0.08
<b>May '25</b>	<b>38 (C-)</b>	<b>48 (C+)</b>	<b>23 (E+)</b>	<b>33 (D)</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.23</b>
June	27 (D)	35 (D)	24 (E+)	26 (D-)	DW	2.7	0.00
July	22 (E)	22 (E)	17 (E)	19 (E)	DW	1.4	0.00
Aug.	19 (E)	15 (E)	18 (E)	17 (E)	DW	1.3	0.01
Sept	26 (D-)	16 (E)	10 (F)	17 (E)	DW	2.2	0.05
Oct.	18 (E)	48 (C+)	19 (E)	23 (E+)	T	4.2	0.10
Nov.	34(D)	61(B)	28(D)	37(D+)	WW	18	2.90
Dec.	41(C)	56(B)	27(D-)	38(C-)	WW	15	0.15
Jan. '26	53 (B-)	64 (B)	44 (C)	52 (B-)	WW	81	4.19
Feb	46 (C)	60 (B)	50 (B-)	51 (B-)	WW	36	2.11
March	42 (C)	61 (B)	30 (D)	41 (C)	T	19	0.00
April	35 (D)	52 (B-)	26 (D-)	35 (D)	T	6.0	0.15
<b>May '26</b>	<b>32 (D-)</b>	<b>54 (B)</b>	<b>24 (E+)</b>	<b>33 (D)</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.31</b>

The **cover page** of this report presents monthly WQI values and range (high/low) for the Lower San Diego River watershed over the past 21+ years. Each year's values are expressed as color-shaded bars; blue (50 or >) A-B/Good, green (38-49) C/Fair, yellow (25-37) D/Marginal, brown (13-24) E/Poor, and pink (12 or <) F/Very Poor. Running average index values for the LSDR (distance weighted averages of all sites) are shown as a heavy black line. Running averages for the consistently highest (best) quality section of the river (Mission Gorge) are shown as a 'blue' line, while the consistently lowest (poorest) reach (Upper Santee Basin) is shown in 'red'. The dashed lines represent overall trends for the highest, lowest and average of all sites. This month's overall value of 33 is the 13th time over the past 22 years that the May index has been in the D Marginal range.

WQI values extending from Sept.'05 thru May '26 are presented in **Chart 1** (next page) together with 12-mo. running averages for each of the five reaches and overall (i.e., LSDR) for the entire lower river watershed. The current running average WQI of 32.3 is 2.6% below of the long-range norm of 33.2. The running average low for May of 26 (23% below norm) occurred in 2015. The previous highest running average WQI for the month of 38 (15% above norm) occurred in 2007. 10 of the 16 sites monitored exhibited declines in water quality this month while six showed slight gains. The greatest decline, dropping 31 points from 41 Good to 10 (Very Poor), was Site 12 (Sycamore Ck at Carlton Oaks Dr. bridge).

Monthly and 12-mo. running average WQI values for the commonly 'lowest' (Upper Santee Basin) and typically "highest" (Mission Gorge) reaches of the lower watershed are presented in **Chart 2**. The greatest downward trends (**red-dashed line**) over time have been associated with the lowest quality reach (Upper Santee Basin) encompassing sites 13E and 14. The Mission Gorge (**blue line**) section, extending from Old Mission Dam through Mission Trails, continues to demonstrate the least change in index values. Index values experienced over the wet weather months of this year have declined due to the Spring hot and dry spell. Overall WY26 index values are expected to be well below highs reached during the previous two water years.

Spatial WQI values determined over the last three months, expressed in order of location upstream, are shown in **Charts 3, 4 and 5** on page 6. This month's results (color bars w/values in bold black shown on Chart 5) are lower than last month (middle bar) at ten of 16 sites. This month; two sites are Good B, while five are Fair C, five more Marginal D, one Poor E and three Very Poor F. Last month one site was Good B, six sites Fair C, six more Marginal D, two Poor and one Very Poor. During the previous month (March) four sites were Good B, six Fair, five Marginal, and one Very Poor. Index values are expected to continue in decline over the next five months. It is very likely that this year's overall water quality values, compared to the last several water years, will show declines due to below normal annual rainfall, less runoff/lower streamflow, elevated water temperatures and specific conductivities combined with depressed dissolved oxygen levels occurring throughout the lower river system. The cyclic patterns in monthly, seasonal and annual water quality values, as shown in the charts of this report clearly demonstrate that the Lower San Diego River metrics are constantly changing due primarily to natural causes.

jck (5/23/26)

