



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **CALIFORNIA SPORTFISHING PROTECTION ALLIANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE CENTER GIVE NOTICE TO SUE SALVAGE YARD ON SALINAS RIVER FOR CLEAN WATER ACT VIOLATIONS**

### **Lawsuit to Be Filed Against A-1 Metals & Auto Salvage Facility for Illegal Storm Water Discharges**

**Paso Robles, CA** – California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (“CSPA”) and Environmental Defense Center (“EDC”) notified A-1 Metals & Auto Salvage on Monday of their intent to sue the Facility for violating the Clean Water Act. The notice letter alleges that the Facility is illegally discharging pollutants, including copper and lead, into the Salinas River. The A1-Metals auto-dismantling and salvage yard is located in an environmentally-important area near the Salinas River, which flows into the Monterey Bay. The Salinas River watershed is critical to central coast communities’ health and recreation, and is home to numerous endangered species.

The notice letter stresses that A-1 Metals is operating in violation of the state’s General Industrial Storm Water Permit. The General Permit is intended to protect our state’s waterways from pollution caused by storm water run-off from industrial facilities. Storm water is among the top sources of water contamination as significant quantities of pollution enter our waterways when it rains. Under the General Permit, industrial facilities are prohibited from discharging pollutants in excess of applicable limits. Facilities that handle motor vehicle parts and process scrap waste, like A-1 Metals, are required to collect and analyze storm water samples for iron, lead, aluminum, copper, zinc, and other pollutants. For each pollutant, the Facility is required to meet specified limits by implementing management practices at the facility that reduce their contamination in runoff.

CSPA and EDC’s notice points out that A-1 Metals has failed to meet these limits and is in violation of the substantive and procedural requirements of the General Permit. Specifically, A-

1 Metals has continuously violated the Permit by discharging copper, lead, iron, aluminum, and other pollutants in concentrations that are magnitudes above lawful limits. On one occasion, the facility discharged copper at 40 times the legal standard. Many of these pollutants are known to cause cancer or birth defects and can be acutely toxic to fish and bird species.

“The high level of chemicals, especially copper and lead, that this facility pollutes is unacceptable and an ongoing threat to the people, fish and wildlife that rely on this important watershed,” stated Bill Jennings, Executive Director of CSPA.

The Salinas River runs 170 miles from the mountains in San Luis Obispo County north to Monterey Bay. The watershed encompasses over 4,500 square miles, and serves central coast cities and a highly-productive agricultural valley. The River supports a number of endangered species including the Southern California Steelhead, Red-legged Frog, Tiger Salamander, California Condor, and the San Joaquin Kit Fox. The River and surrounding areas are also popular for kayaking, hiking, cycling, and other recreation.

The A-1 Metals facility has been in operation since 1988, and is used to receive, store, handle, dismantle and recycle decommissioned vehicles, equipment and automotive parts. It has failed, however, to implement practices at its site that prevent run-off of harmful pollution, including heavy metals and other toxics, during significant rain events. In addition, A-1 Metals has failed to analyze samples for all pollutants that the Permit requires, such as Zinc, indicating that the public remains unaware of the full extent of the Facility’s pollution. A-1 Metals is also in violation of the monitoring and reporting requirements of the Clean Water Act.

Maggie Hall, Staff Attorney at EDC, stated, “A-1 Metal’s own public documents show egregious Clean Water Act violations on everything from pollution levels to failing to adequately monitor discharges from the Facility. The discharges from the A-1 Metals Facility are in clear violation of the Act and a threat to the Salinas River, its wildlife, and human health.”

Under the Clean Water Act, potential litigants must file a 60-day notice of intent to sue before lawsuits can be filed alleging that a facility is in violation of the Act. While CSPA and EDC are committed to pursuing legal remedies if necessary, it is CSPA and EDC’s hope that submission of the notice will prompt A-1 Metals to comply with its mandatory permit requirements, thereby protecting water quality, without court intervention.

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*The **California Sportfishing Protection Alliance** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit conservation and research organization established in 1983 for the purpose of conserving, restoring, and enhancing the state’s water quality, wildlife and fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats. Learn more about CSPA at [www.calsport.org](http://www.calsport.org)*

*The **Environmental Defense Center**, a non-profit law firm, protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting*

*coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health.  
Learn more about EDC at [www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org](http://www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org)*