The Monthly Dirt
A monthly newsletter on the California Construction General Permit

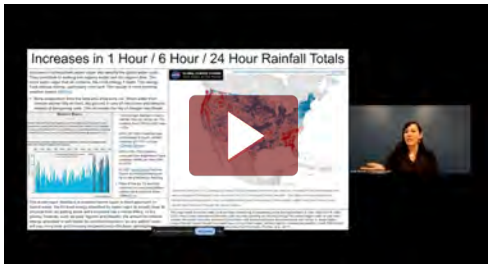
ARE YOU READY FOR THE UPCOMING RAINY SEASON?

STORM SEASON SAFETY

Prepare For Safety

It's October and we've already seen several rain events blow through California dumping some significant rainfall for this time of year. Are you ready for the new rainy season and the sampling that will come with it? Now is the time to plan for safety and prepare for rain so that you're not caught off guard when sampling time rolls around. In this month's edition of **The Monthly Dirt**, we are going to be talking about safety during qualifying precipitation events. Feel free to forward this newsletter to your team so that they too are prepared and safe this season.

As we've seen over the past several years, heavy rain events or atmospheric rivers can have a pretty drastic impact on your site. Freeways flood and shut down, roads have mild to severe flooding, trees and powerlines come down due to the saturated soils and high winds during storms, and sadly even fatalities can and do occur from fast rising flood waters and hydroplaning vehicles. Intense rain events like these are not something to mess with – especially where people's lives are involved – like at your job site! One of the best safety measures your site can implement is knowledge and planning ahead. If unsafe conditions appear to be moving in, altering protocols and communicating with workers on site about safety, and about what the Permit says about severe storms and hazardous conditions is the first step in protecting your site and crew. Heavy rainfall can cause deep gullies in hillsides, mudslides, unstable slopes, widespread flooding, mucky ground, heavy sheet flow, stuck vehicles and equipment, and more. As mentioned above, these storm events can come in all types of sizes and durations – from beneficial to hazardous. The amount of damage and BMP failure at your site depends on a variety of factors – how wet is the soil? How much rain is expected, over what period of time? Does your site tend to retain water thereby causing flooding during severe storms? Lately, California storm events have produced anywhere from minor runoff, to runoff you could go boating in. Check out this Storm Water Awareness Week workshop from Sunny Wescott, a chief meteorologist here in the United States, about understanding our current weather situation and what to expect looking at future weather patterns and what is causing these extremes in our atmosphere.



As a construction site permitted under the Construction General Permit, you are required to handle storm water – now in larger quantities in shorter periods of time. This means keeping an eye on the forecast to help you prepare for what's coming and get procedures, back up plans, and BMPs in place before the rain begins. It's a good plan to make sure perimeter controls are properly installed and keyed in so that sheet flow doesn't undermine them. Clean out drain inlets to prepare for heavy flows. Make sure materials are under cover and won't leak in the case of heavy rain or flooding. Ensure that dumpsters are properly covered so they don't become filled with water or have trash scattered by the wind. Make sure you have your sampling kit prepared and your sampling team is aware of safety protocols and also when the Permit says you should sample. Move equipment and materials to higher ground and away from areas that may flood or have high flow. Position and secure port-a-potties so they will not be inundated or blow over. Rain is coming, so act sooner and not later.

Weather Safety: While all of us are familiar with stormy weather, often these hazardous situations can pop up suddenly and when you least expect it. For example, the rain event starts qualifying at your site and you need to get out there to collect a sample. You glance at the weather forecast and see that the rain starts to slack off in an hour, so you think to yourself "I'll be fine". However, the weather model was

inaccurate, and a thunderstorm with heavy rain and hail blow in while you're out sampling – not only is it pouring from the big storm cell with flooding starting to spread, but you're also getting hailed on and out in unsafe conditions

NOAA Weather Forecast Table for 38.145869,-121.294518
Data Captured on 10/02/2025.

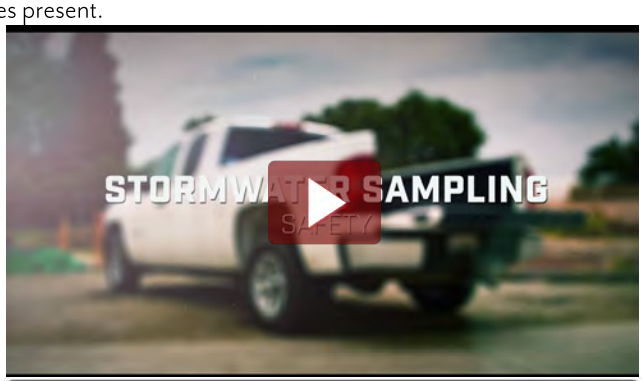
Day	Thu Oct 2				Fri Oct 3			
6-Hour Interval	5 AM	11 AM	5 PM	11 PM	5 AM	11 AM	5 PM	11 PM
POP (%)	51	38	33	31	21	9		
QPF (inches)	0.12	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0
Day	Sat Oct 4				Sun Oct 5			
6-Hour Interval	5 AM	11 AM	5 PM	11 PM	5 AM	11 AM	5 PM	11 PM
POP (%)								
QPF (inches)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

with lightning strikes occurring nearby. And while that scenario was fictitious, more often now, than we've seen in the past, it seems to be the case. Just this past week, the NOAA weather forecast was calling for 0.14" (which as a brief refresher is not qualifying since it was under .5" forecasted) during the course of the precipitation event, but that's not what happened – just a couple hours into the storm and the rain gauge was already recording 1" of rain. The storm patterns we're used to don't seem to be the same as current conditions, so being caught off guard and unprepared for the severity of a storm event can be a big safety issue for your site. Being mindful of weather safety will help you be prepared. Be on the lookout for heavy rain events which can cause flooding, electrical storms, high winds, falling trees, hail, darker conditions and less visibility due to heavy rain, fog, hail, or lack of sunlight. It is important to note here that if the weather pattern moving through is unsafe, you do not have to sample if it puts you in danger. Never put yourself in a hazardous situation where you could get trapped. Talk with your supervisors if the site is unsafe or if you feel uncomfortable continuing with work, inspections, or monitoring. Document the site conditions and weather conditions as proof of why monitoring couldn't be done. According to the Permit, dischargers are not required to conduct visual observation during dangerous weather conditions such as flooding and electrical storms. *"Dischargers are not required to physically conduct visual inspections or collect samples under the following conditions: During dangerous weather conditions such as electrical storms, flooding, and high winds above 40 miles per hour; outside of scheduled site operating hours; or when the site is not accessible to personnel."* (CGP 2022 III.B.1.) If you feel it is not safe to inspect or sample, follow your instincts!

Pollutant Safety: Along with heavy rain events comes flooding, bigger runoff and sheet flow patterns, water getting into places it doesn't belong, and the storm drain system becoming overwhelmed and backed up. This is a prime situation for pollutants escaping, accumulating, and causing safety issues. Chemicals leaching from construction activities exposed to rain, runoff picking up pollutants, secondary containment areas filling up and overflowing, and hazardous pollutants being picked up from a location offsite and carried onsite by the runoff. Not to mention pathogens from overwhelmed sewer systems, homeless encampments, upset portable toilets, or local animal activity. E. coli is not something you want to mess around with, so take into consideration when dealing with your storm water runoff, that it may contain some very nasty pollutants. Also, things like biohazardous – depending on your location may be of concern. We've had sampling locations with biohazards like blood, human bodily fluids, and hypodermic needles present. Although storm water may look innocent at times, there is a possibility for it to contain unsafe substances in it which you will need to be aware of and practice safe exposure and handling procedures.

Personal Safety: As a storm water inspector who has to go out during rain events and collect samples, there's a lot of things you need to implement for personal safety. Storms cause low visibility – it's darker outside, precipitation is lowering visibility and varying warm and cold temperatures and moisture can cause fog even during a rain event (when cold rain hits warm pavement and concrete it can cause steam or fog-like conditions). Because you're out in these conditions trying to collect your samples, be sure you are making yourself as visible as possible. Reflective and visible rain gear (this means no black or dark blue rain jackets), cones, utilizing hazard lights or a flashing light bar installed on your vehicle will help make you more visible and safe in areas with traffic where drivers or equipment operators may not be aware someone is collecting storm water samples at that location. Wearing appropriate PPE like gloves and safety glasses will help keep you safe from potential pollutants in the water. Boots with good traction will keep you sure footed in slippery areas. For those having to sample in treacherous terrain (like along or in a waterway), in muddy and steep site conditions where you or your vehicle can easily get stuck, or in unsafe locations, it might be a good idea to have a buddy system for sampling and not do it by yourself. Sampling often includes traveling to the sampling location in bad weather, so personal safety would include your vehicle too. Do your vehicle tires have good traction? Have you replaced your windshield wipers recently and treated your windshield with Rain-X? Are you familiar with the best driving procedures for wet and slippery streets, flooded roads, and high winds?

Procedural Safety: It's raining, and the only reason you are out in the rain is to collect samples. So, when sampling, there's procedural safety things you are going to want to follow to make sure you are sampling correctly and representatively, as well as safely. Check out these sampling videos to get a better understanding of procedures to keep you safe as a storm water inspector and sampler.



Please contact us if you have any questions ...

The Monthly Dirt

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COMPLIANCE

STORM WATER AWARENESS WEEK 2025

15,043
REGISTRATIONS

2,769
UNIQUE ATTENDEES

1,821
VIDEO VIEWS

50
STATES

48
COUNTRIES

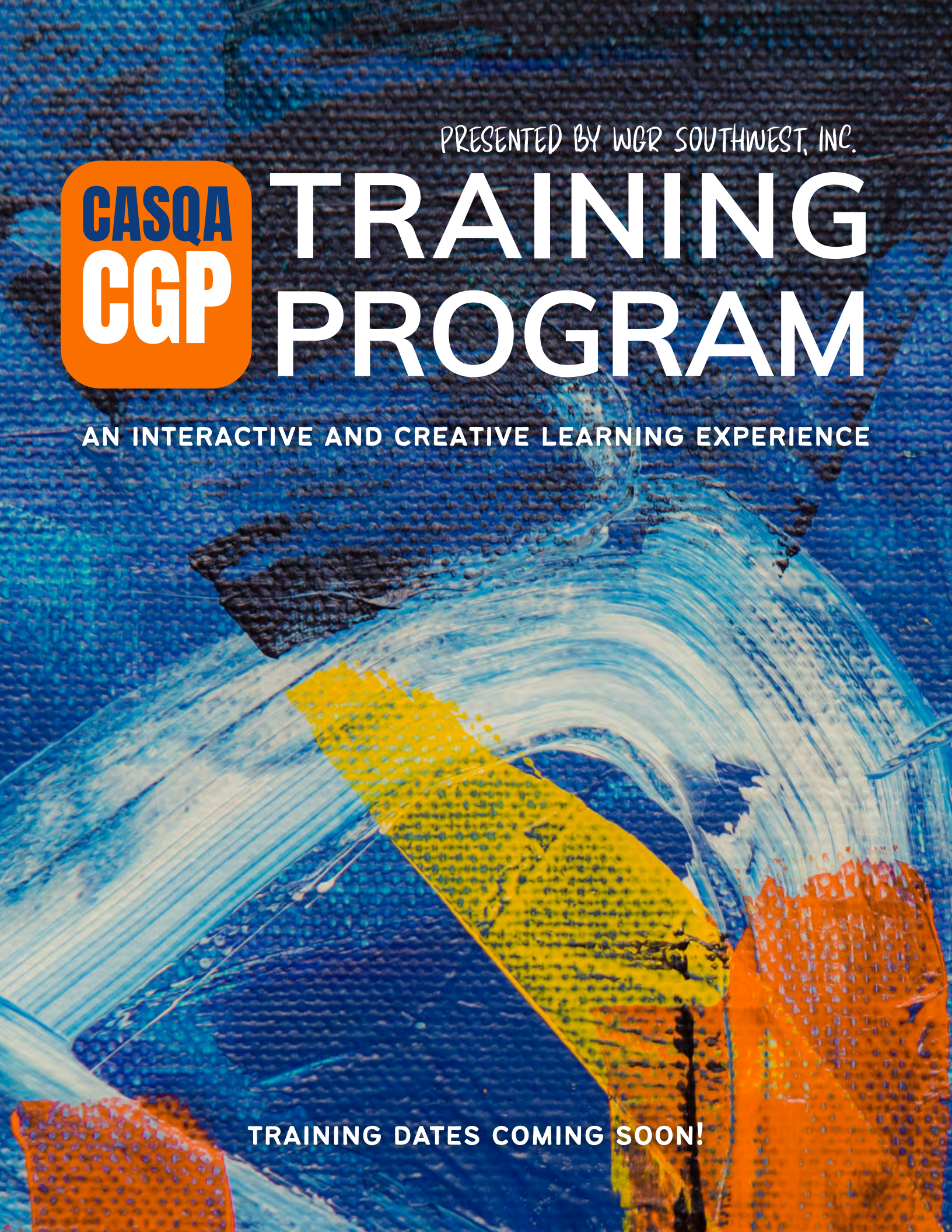
54
WORKSHOPS

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING STORM WATER AWARENESS WEEK 2025

AN APPROVED QSP & QSD PREREQUISTE PROGRAM

THE CONNECTIONS COURSE

ENROLL NOW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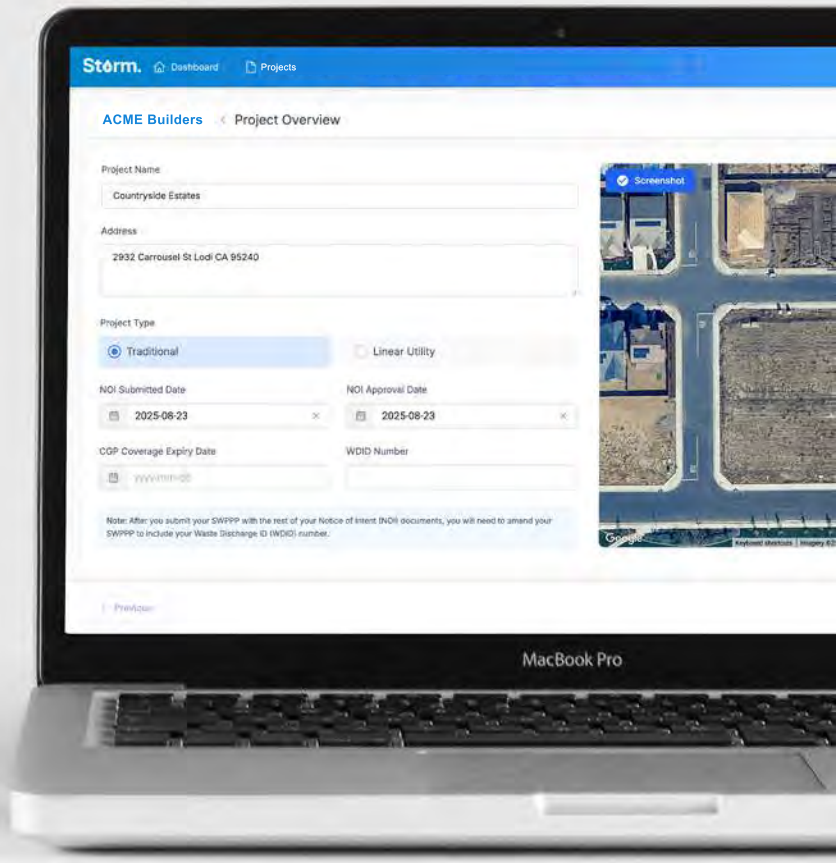


LAUNCHING SEPTEMBER 22

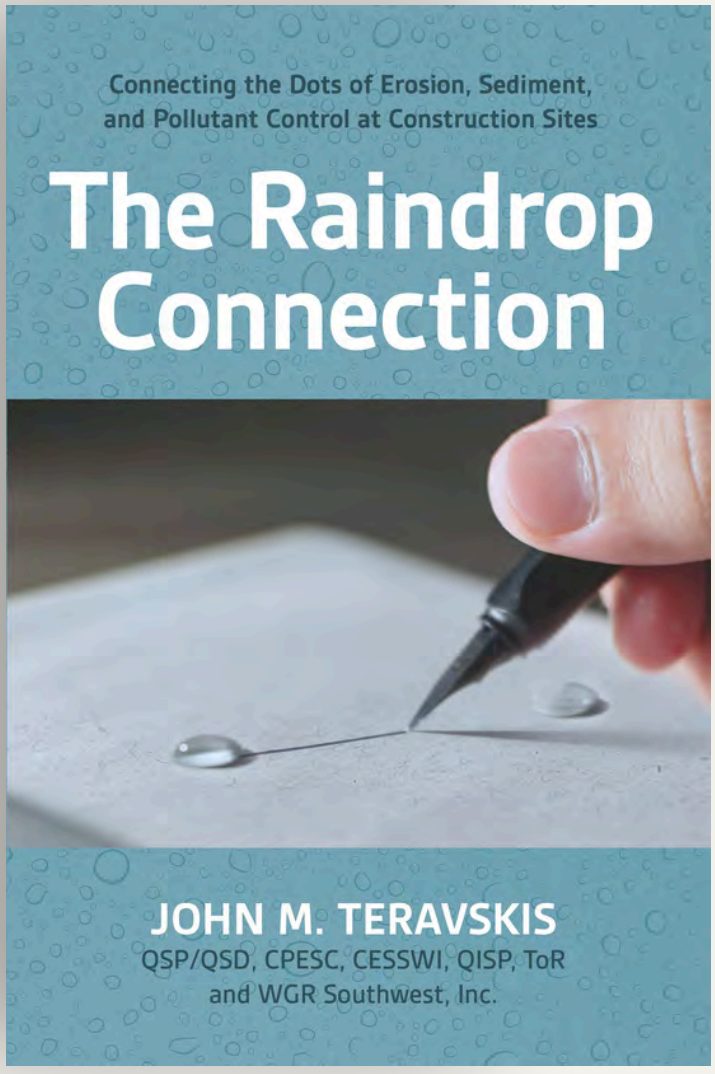
For CA traditional construction SWPPPs. Other States, regions, and CalTrans coming soon!

[1]Based on average completion time in beta testing.

FROM THE EDITOR OF THE MONTHLY DIRT

THE RAINDROP CONNECTION

A NEW PEER-REVIEWED INDUSTRY TEXTBOOK



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**textbook is included with course enrollment*

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