

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL COAST REGION

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 19, 2004

Prepared on February 25, 2004

ITEM NUMBER: 8

SUBJECT: Status Report for Ventana Inn, Big Sur, Monterey County, Order No. R3-2002-0032

KEY INFORMATION

Discharger: Ventana Inn  
Location: Big Sur, on Highway 1 approximately 28 miles south of Carmel, Monterey County  
Discharge Type: Domestic wastewater  
Current Flow Rate: ~32,000 gallons-per-day (gpd)  
Design Capacity: unknown  
Disposal Method: Multiple septic tank/leachfield systems  
Recycling: None  
Existing Order: R3-2002-0032

SUMMARY

At the February 6, 2004 Regional Board meeting, the Board requested an update on the wastewater treatment improvements at the Ventana Inn. The Inn provided a compliance time schedule that indicates improvements will be completed by June 2004. Staff will continue to closely monitor compliance and initiate further enforcement action as necessary.

BACKGROUND

Over the years, the treatment and disposal systems at Ventana Inn have not kept pace with the increase in waste generation from the resort. Analysis of the 2002 monitoring reports showed that flow had doubled since the previous requirements were adopted in 1983. Flow data in 2002 indicated that many of the wastewater systems were hydraulically overloaded. Chronically overloaded septic tanks likely caused solids to flush out to the leachfields, preventing effective percolation and ultimately leading to the repeated overflows.

A Notice of Violation was sent on April 11, 2003, after Regional Board staff observed a significant volume of wastewater continuously overflowing from inspection risers in the main leachfield serving the Inn. The

wastewater flow was eroding the hillside. The overflowing wastewater drained towards Ventana Inn Campground and Post Creek, a drinking water supply and tributary to Big Sur River. According to monitoring reports, wastewater has surfaced from this leachfield on other occasions as well. These overflows violate Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R3-2002-032.

A second NOV was sent on December 19, 2003, requesting the immediate submittal of a timeline for the completion of Ventana's proposed wastewater treatment system upgrades.

IMPROVEMENTS

Phase I

Ventana began improvements on the system in May 2003 by installing effluent filters, replacing failing valves, and installing monitoring stations throughout the system. All tanks were also pumped at that time to allow room for anticipated peak season occupancy. In spite of these improvements, effluent still surfaced in the disposal area during peak loading. This confirmed staff's suspicions that the existing disposal fields have

been so fouled from tank washout that they no longer effectively percolate the treated wastewater.

#### Phase II

Ventana met with Regional Board Staff on February 2, 2004, and described planned phase II improvements. The next step of improvements will be to replace seven of the individual septic tanks with one 30,000-gallon tank. This larger, centralized tank will reduce the solids that were previously allowed to wash through the individual tanks and foul the leachfield. New appropriately sized septic tanks will also replace several outlying individual units. The final step in improvement will be the development of new leachfields.

According to the attached timeline, construction is to begin on this final phase of upgrade by March 30, 2004. All construction and upgrades will be complete by June 1, 2004.

Ventana Inn has retained the services of Michael G. Allison, a grade II operator, to maintain the collection, treatment, and disposal system. During the construction period, operators at the Ventana Inn will closely monitor the existing leachfield and septic tanks for any problems. Tanks will be pumped as needed to avoid any further surfacing of effluent. Regional Board staff will also closely monitor system operation.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Timeline for disposal system improvements
2. WDRs Order No. 2002-0032