



CVCWA

Central Valley Clean Water Association

Representing Over Fifty Wastewater Agencies

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December 16, 2013

Via Electronically Only

Mr. Dale Harvey
Senior Engineer
Regional Water Quality Control Board,
Central Valley Region
Fresno, California

RE: Comments on the Tentative Waste Discharge Requirements Order R5-2014-XXXX, City of Sanger Domestic Wastewater Treatment Facility, Fresno County

Dear Mr. Harvey:

The Central Valley Clean Water Association (CVCWA) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the tentative Waste Discharge Requirements for the City of Sanger Domestic Wastewater Treatment Facility (Tentative Order). CVCWA is a non-profit association of public agencies located within the Central Valley region that provide wastewater collection, treatment, and water recycling services to millions of Central Valley residents and businesses. We approach these matters with the perspective of balancing environmental and economic interests consistent with state and federal law. In this spirit, we provide the following comments on the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's (Regional Board) requirement for nitrate reduction within two years; a technical report that includes remedial actions and clean up alternatives for nitrate-nitrogen in the groundwater that may be related to discharges from the City of Sanger's Wastewater Treatment Facility; inclusion of industrial pretreatment requirements in this permit; instantaneous compliance determination in groundwater for primary maximum contaminant levels (MCLs); and clarification and/or corrections in the permit and information sheet.

The Tentative Order Provision 19 requires the City of Sanger to submit a workplan and implementation schedule that “identifies the measures the City will employ to ensure compliance with Effluent Limitation B.3 and Discharge Specification C.2” (i.e. the nitrate limits of 10 mg/L) within six months of adoption of the order, begin implementing the workplan within one year, and submitting a final report “demonstrating complete implementation of the approved work plan and schedule” within two years of the adoption of the order. CVCWA is very concerned that requiring full implementation within two years may not be reasonable and that the outcomes of Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) may alter how compliance is determined or what solution is chosen. If the City of Sanger is able to operationally adjust its current treatment facilities to provide nitrification and partial denitrification which meets the proposed limits, this timeframe may be reasonable. However, if any structural modifications or additions are needed at the treatment plant and/or new or additional areas for water recycling are needed or alternative regional compliance strategies are identified through CV-SALTS, this timeframe is likely too short to accommodate the planning, design, environmental review, permitting, financing and construction meeting these effluent limits would normally take. CVCWA recommends the tentative order be modified to allow a more reasonable compliance timeframe and allow solutions developed in CV-SALTS to be implemented.

CVCWA is also concerned that Provision 20 of the Tentative Order is premature in light of the ongoing CV-SALTS Basin Planning process. Provision 20 would require: (1) evaluation of the horizontal and vertical extent of nitrate pollution and development of remedial actions within three (3) years; (2) implementation of such actions within three and one-half years (3.5); and compliance with the drinking water standard for nitrate in groundwater within ten years. The CV-SALTS process is looking at many issues and options with respect to how dischargers and the Regional Board should evaluate and consider nitrate pollution. This includes consideration of actual impacts to groundwater where the beneficial use is actually occurring, and developing plans for protection of that drinking water being used. The approach proposed here does not appear to be consistent with the discussions in CV-SALTS as it does not appear to take into consideration if actual drinking water uses are actually being harmed. Rather, the approach appears to be more of a clean-up and abatement approach of all immediate surrounding groundwater within ten years regardless if such efforts would relate directly to groundwater that is actually being used for drinking water purposes. This approach would be costly and may not actually result in better drinking water in the immediate future if current drinking water is harmed. Due to the ongoing efforts and discussions in CV-SALTS, CVCWA recommends that provision 20 of the tentative order be deleted until such time that CV-SALTS is completed. Or, at the very least, be revised to allow the City to consider a number of different options besides showing compliance with nitrate in the groundwater within ten years.

Provision F. 16 requires the City of Sanger to implement an industrial pretreatment program. From the fact sheet, it appears that the City’s industrial discharge is permitted separately from these proposed WDRs for its domestic sources, and that the City is complying in

this domestic discharge permit with its current permit BOD, TSS and other constituents that may have led to this requirement in the prior permit. CVCWA questions why this permit for the domestic plant necessitates an industrial pretreatment program and the additional cost associated with it. It appears that the requirement for this program more appropriately belongs with the industrial discharge WDR rather than this tentative order. CVCWA recommends that Provision F. 16 be modified to allow the City to reassess if a pretreatment program is needed for discharges to the domestic system, thus avoiding possible duplicative and unnecessary programs and costs.

The footnote to Groundwater Limitations in D.1.a indicates that "Primary MCLs applied as an instantaneous concentration." CVCWA recommends that this footnote be removed or modified in such a way that it is consistent with drinking water regulations. For example, Title 22, Chapter 15, section 64432(i) assesses compliance for inorganic MCLs on an annual running average, rather than instantaneous. Title 22, chapter 15, section 64432.1 assesses compliance with nitrate based on two samples in a 24-hour period, rather than a single sample result.

Finally there are a number of clarifications and/or corrections CVCWA recommends are made to the tentative order:

- Finding 36 of the permit explains the basis of potential salinity values to interpret the narrative objective for protection of agricultural uses. The information sheet on page 3 should be revised to be consistent with Finding 36
- Section B., Item 1. Effluent Limitations: The monthly average flow of the WWTF is 3.0 mgd, not 0.30 mgd.
- Section F., Item 17.h: Any tugged or hauled pollutants, except at points predesignated by the Discharger. Change the work "tugged" to "trucked".
- Section F., Item 19, Task a: The Discharge Specification C.2 should be changed to C.1, as referenced in that Section of the T.O.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and request that you revise the Tentative Order as suggested above. If you have any questions or if CVCWA can be of further assistance, please contact me at (530) 268-1338 or eofficer@cvcwa.org.

Sincerely,



Debbie Webster,
Executive Officer

cc: (sent via email)
Pamela Creedon, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
Jeff Pyle, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
John Mulligan, City of Sanger