



**EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT • December 2020**  
 Covers October 16, 2020 – November 15, 2020

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*State and Regional*

**1. Personnel Report – Eric Shay**

**New Hires**

- Chris Spellman, Scientific Aid, Cleanup/Site Investigation & Enforcement Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position assists staff with administering the site cleanup, underground storage tank, land disposal, and enforcement programs; reviewing reports, and maintaining databases; reviews self-monitoring reports for cases, permits and enforcement actions; reviews project files and water quality data to prepare for field inspections and permit updates; assists with field inspections; and reviews California Environmental Quality Act documents.

**Vacancies**

- Executive Officer for the Lahontan Region.
- Scientific Aid, Planning & Assessment Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position helps the SWAMP program collect and process water quality samples and ensure data quality. The position supports the TMDL and Basin Planning programs through mapping and data analysis, outreach, and reporting.
- Environmental Scientist, Forestry / Dredge & Fill Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will engage in permit development and/or enrollments under the Lahontan Timber Waiver, Clean Water Act section 401 Water Certification for activities in Waters of the U.S., dredge and fill permits for Waters of the State, environmental document preparation or compliance for projects where the LRWQCB is a lead or responsible agency under CEQA, and regulatory actions as needed.

## 2. Fall 2020 Soil Disturbance Prohibition Variances – Rob Tucker

The Water Board grants variances to the soil disturbance prohibition for projects and activities occurring between October 15 and May 1 in the Lake Tahoe Basin, provided adequate controls are in place to protect water quality. The soil disturbance prohibition was established by the Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region and is included in the Lake Tahoe Basin NPDES Storm Water Construction General Permit. The soil disturbance prohibition has also been added to other Water Board Orders for some projects outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin in similarly high elevations (e.g., Truckee, Mammoth Lakes). The following projects received soil disturbance prohibition variances:

### Infrastructure/Maintenance Projects

- Liberty Utilities, Kings Beach Substation Installation. Issued for October 16 – 30.
- Likar, New Recreational Pier. Issued for October 21 – 30.

### 401 Certification Order Projects

- Karadanis, Lake Edge Stabilization Project. Issued for October 16 – November 7.
- Stonebridge Properties, Coldstream Specific Plan. Four (4) variances issued for October 15 – November 13.
- El Dorado County, South Tahoe Greenway Shared Use Trail. Two (2) variances issued for October 15 – 30.
- California Tahoe Conservancy, UTR and Marsh Restoration Project. Issued for October 15 – 19.

### Timber Harvest Waiver

- U.S. Forest Service, West Shore Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Reductions Project. Two (2) variances issued for October 15 – November 2.

### Underground Storage Tank Remedial Action

- Kuldeep Singh Mand, Econolodge Heating Oil Tank Removal. Issued for November 9 – 23.

Additional variances may be granted for work between now and May 1, 2021, on an individual basis.

## 3. Former George Air Force Base, Victorville, San Bernardino County Record of Decision Amendment, Operable Unit 3, Landfill Site LF044 — Linda Stone

The Air Force is proposing changing the selected remedy for the former George Air Force Base Landfill Site, LF044, from landuse controls to clean closure through removal and offsite disposal of waste and impacted soil. The remedy of landuse controls was selected for Site LF044 in a 1998 Record of Decision (ROD). The Air Force will submit an Amendment to the ROD to document the change in remedy to clean closure without restrictions.

The 1.7-acre landfill site is located at the base of a steep gully that contains an ephemeral wash. The wash discharges to the Mojave River approximately 0.4 mile downgradient of Site LF044 at a location that is approximately 1 mile south of the Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority's treatment facility. There is no documentation of the type or quantity of waste disposed at this site. Visible surface debris consisted primarily of

construction debris, i.e., concrete, drywall, metal, and wood. Based on groundwater monitoring, the site has not impacted underlying groundwater, which is over 100 feet below ground surface.

Because of the uncertainty regarding the landfill contents, cleanup goals in the proposed ROD Amendment include a broad range of analytes, including volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, dioxins/furans, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), total petroleum hydrocarbons, and metals. The cleanup goals are based on human and ecological risk and threats to groundwater and surface water (i.e., Mojave River). Finalization of the ROD Amendment has been delayed because the Air Force determined eight of the 165 cleanup goals in the proposed ROD Amendment were below the Air Force's laboratory detection limits. In consultation with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Air Force, Water Board staff agreed there was a low probability that the eight compounds with detection limits above clean up goals would be present in the landfill. Therefore, Air Force will submit a revised ROD Amendment that explains the rationale for the deletion of these eight analytes as constituents of concern.

Citing contractual issues, the Air Force implemented removal and offsite disposal of waste and impacted soil in July of this year, prior to finalization of the ROD Amendment and the Remedial Action Work Plan. The implementation of the remedial action prior to regulatory approval of these documents is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) process. Consequently, the Air Force is at risk that its early actions may not satisfy all regulatory requirements, including California Code of Regulations, title 27, requirements for clean closure of landfills. After the ROD Amendment has received regulatory approval, the Air Force must provide documentation in the Remedial Action Closure Report that adequately demonstrates all the requirements in the approved ROD Amendment have been met. If the regulators determine the requirements have not been adequately met, additional actions will be necessary to achieve site closure with no restrictions.

#### **4. Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Hinkley Chromium Cleanup, 2020 Second-Semiannual Status Update – *Amanda Lopez***

PG&E continues to implement cleanup actions to abate the effects of chromium waste discharges in Hinkley, in accordance with Cleanup and Abatement Order No. R6V-2015-0068 (2015 CAO). Over the course of the second half of 2020, Water Board staff have participated in several meetings and reviewed various reports associated with PG&E's cleanup actions, as summarized below.

##### **Hinkley Community Meetings**

During the second half of 2020, Water Board staff attended two Hinkley Community Meetings, one on July 23, 2020 and the other on October 22, 2020. Due to the COVID emergency, the community meetings were held outdoors, in a drive-thru format, with those in attendance wearing masks and practicing social distancing. While community members stayed in their vehicles, they were given the option of either hard copy handouts or USB thumb drive of all the remediation and background study updates provided by the Independent Review Panel (IRP) Manager. Water Board staff answered questions from community members regarding PG&E's cleanup actions and listened to community members general concerns regarding water quality and water quantity in the Hinkley and Water Valleys. The information from these meetings is available on the [IRP Hinkley Groundwater Website](http://www.hinkleygroundwater.com/) (<http://www.hinkleygroundwater.com/>). This format was successful and will continue for the foreseeable future.

## Technical Report Review

Water Board staff reviewed several technical documents associated with the Hinkley chromium cleanup, many of which warrant a response for PG&E to adapt their cleanup actions in real-time to address changing site conditions. Water Board staff reviewed the following technical reports.

- *Four-Year Comprehensive Cleanup Status and Effectiveness Report for Years 2016 through 2019* - The four-year report evaluated the progress of remedial actions to reaching cleanup timeframes.
- *Remedial Timeframe Assessment Action Plan* - This report presented recommendations to enhance remedial activities and increase remedy effectiveness to reach the goals set out in the 2015 CAO.
- *Lower Aquifer Remediation Pilot Test of Modified Groundwater Extraction* - This pilot test will determine if modified pumping at targeted extraction wells on the western edge of the lower aquifer plume will promote remediation of the chromium in the lower aquifer.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Hydraulic Capture Report* - Meets the 2015 CAO reporting requirements.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Groundwater Monitoring Report and Domestic Well Sampling Results* - Meets the 2015 CAO reporting requirements.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Monitoring Report for the In-Situ Reactive Zone and Northwest Freshwater Injection Projects* - Meets Board Order No. R6V-2008-0014 reporting requirements.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Agricultural Treatment Units Monitoring Report* - Meets Board Order No. R6V-2014-0023 reporting requirements.

To improve communication and collaboration with the IRP Manager, Water Board staff solicited their review of these technical reports, which were then shared with PG&E.

### Request to Expand In-Situ Remediation Zone Permitted Area

PG&E requested a revision to the In-Situ Remediation Zone (IRZ) permitted area under the existing Notice of Applicability (NOA) of General Waste Discharge Requirements, Board Order No. R6V-2008-0014. PG&E proposes to expand the IRZ areas as follows: 600 feet to the west for the Central Area; and 140 feet to the west and 650 feet to the north for the South-Central Reinjection Area. The proposal also includes changes to the sentry well monitoring network used to monitor for treatment byproducts from IRZ operations. The increased size of the IRZ areas is conservative and would allow for future remedial expansion.

Expanding the permitted IRZ areas will require reissuance of the NOA. Water Board staff are exploring ways to build flexibility into the new NOA that would allow PG&E to implement adaptive management as remediation progresses. PG&E is also requesting a change from quarterly to semi-annual reporting, while continuing to collect monitoring data on a quarterly basis. The process by which notifications of adverse conditions are reported will remain unchanged. Water Board staff are working with the IRP Manager to identify ways to allow for public participation by community members prior to release of a draft NOA for public comment.

## **Chromium Background Study**

The final draft of the Hinkley Chromium Background Study Report continues to move through the United States Geological Survey (USGS) internal review process. Dr. John Izbicki, the study's lead scientist, reports that progress is going smoothly and that each step within the review process adds to the quality of the final report. The report is prioritized within the USGS review process, and review staff are working hard move the report along through the steps.

As of December 2020, the final report is anticipated for release within first quarter of 2021. Additional USGS review requirements for data releases, imposed after the report schedule was first envisioned, and the "work from home" transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have added some time to the reviewing schedule.