

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

**STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 18, 2021**

Prepared on June 2, 2021

**ITEM NUMBER:** 10

**SUBJECT:** Executive Officer's Report to the Board

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**ACTION:** Information/Discussion

**KEY INFORMATION:** This item presents a brief discussion of issues that may interest the Board. Upon request, staff can provide more detailed information about any item.

**UPDATE ON BUCKLEY ROAD TRICHLOROETHYLENE GROUNDWATER INVESTIGATION**

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This item provides an overview of the Buckley Road trichloroethylene groundwater investigation including activities conducted or underway since the last update contained in the Executive Officer's report for the January 30-31, 2020 meeting.

**Background**

Trichloroethylene (TCE) is present in private and industrial water supply wells south of Buckley Road, near the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport (Airport). Central Coast Water Board staff investigated drinking water supply wells in the area between 2015 and 2020 and identified 14 wells that had TCE above the drinking water standard (maximum contaminant level or MCL) of 5 micrograms per liter ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ ). Based on the distribution of TCE concentrations detected in wells, the primary focus area of the investigation includes the area surrounded by: Thread Lane (also known as Noll Road), Buckley Road, Davenport Creek Road, and Evans Road, and includes Angie Lou Lane, Mello Lane, and Three Sisters Road. The TCE detections in the Buckley Road area form a 1/2-mile-long by 1/3-mile wide plume extending from approximately Thread Lane to Davenport Creek Road. As required by a Cleanup and Abatement Order, responsible parties have been conducting routine sampling of drinking water wells in the affected area since June 2020 and are now providing clean replacement water to all accessible properties with wells containing TCE concentration above the MCL. Eleven out of 14 properties have agreed to provide access to receive replacement water treatment systems. Currently, 10 wells tested have concentrations above the MCL and the highest

concentration of TCE is in a private domestic well located on Thread Lane. A map and other information are available on the Buckley Road area TCE Investigation webpage at:

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water\\_issues/hot\\_topics/tce\\_pce\\_info/tce\\_pce\\_index.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/hot_topics/tce_pce_info/tce_pce_index.html)

### **Communication and Outreach**

Central Coast Water Board staff provides regular updates to the public and the Board on the source area investigation and well water quality conditions. Staff continues outreach efforts to residents and businesses in the Buckley Road area and updates the Buckley Road TCE Investigation-specific webpage as new information becomes available. Ongoing outreach includes email server list notifications when webpage updates occur and responding to phone inquiries from members of the community.

On May 21, 2019, Central Coast Water Board staff held a public meeting to provide information on the status of the TCE investigation and to provide an overview of a draft version of the Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) during a public comment period. Staff explained at the meeting that the CAO requires the responsible parties to provide or pay for replacement drinking water; submit a replacement water plan; conduct additional investigation of TCE and associated pollutants in soil, soil gas, and groundwater; implement a cleanup plan; and implement a groundwater monitoring program that includes sampling of domestic wells. The Central Coast Water Board issued the final CAO on July 31, 2019. The CAO names former and current owners and operators of the property located at 4665 Thread Lane in San Luis Obispo.

Since the CAO was issued, Central Coast Water Board staff has sent notifications to interested parties via an email server list when important developments in the cleanup action occur. The most recent notification was on May 26, 2021, to inform interested parties that the Water Board issued a letter to responsible parties concurring with transitioning the replacement water program's (RWP) monitoring and reporting frequency from monthly to quarterly in response to reaching the milestone of providing clean replacement water to all accessible affected properties.

### **Well Sampling and Replacement Water Program**

From 2015 to 2020, Central Coast Water Board staff conducted public outreach, obtained site access, and sampled 69 supply wells, including repeated sampling at select locations to monitor the TCE plume. Analytical results from the first sampling events revealed that 14 supply wells in the Buckley Road area had TCE above the MCL during at least one sampling event. The responsible parties took over supply well monitoring in June 2020, pursuant to the CAO requiring that they establish and implement a RWP and monitoring program.

In August 2020, under the RWP, responsible parties began seeking access at properties with a TCE impacted well and started installing and testing wellhead treatment systems as access was obtained. By January 2021, the responsible parties had installed treatment systems at 10 accessible properties and conducted three rounds of groundwater/system performance monitoring in the Buckley Road Area. After gaining property access, responsible parties installed an eleventh treatment system in March 2021 and conducted a fourth round of monitoring. Performance sampling results indicate that all systems were functioning properly and removing TCE to non-detect levels. The remaining three of the 14 originally identified impacted properties include 4665 Thread Lane, which has an existing community water treatment system, and two properties where the owners are not interested in receiving a treatment system. Results from the latest sampling in March 2021 indicate that 10 supply wells (seven private domestic wells and three industrial wells tested), out of 70 locations sampled since 2015 had concentrations exceeding the MCL. The current maximum detected concentrations of TCE in a private domestic well and industrial well are 93 and 52 µg/L, respectively, and occur in the Thread Lane area. The maximum historical TCE concentration of 320 µg/L was detected in a Thread Lane industrial supply well in 2003. Plume migration appears to be influenced locally near the source in the Thread Lane industrial area by pumping wells, and stable to declining in the downgradient rural community west of Thread Lane.

### **TCE Source Identification**

In 2016, the Central Coast Water Board required San Luis Obispo County (County) to conduct soil gas and groundwater investigations on its regional airport property (Airport) to investigate potential sources of TCE associated with industrial operations and old dump sites at the airport. The County completed their fieldwork investigation in September 2016. The results of the County's soil gas and groundwater investigation indicated there is no evidence of a TCE source present on the airport property contributing to the Buckley Road Area TCE plume. Given the results from the County's soil gas and groundwater investigations, the next step was to conduct additional investigations and delineate TCE in the industrial area overlying the highest concentrations of TCE along Thread Lane. Investigations at 825 Buckley Road and 795 Buckley Road were completed and investigation reports were submitted by mid-2017. Based on the results reviewed for the two investigations, a TCE source remained undiscovered and an investigation at 4665 Thread Lane was required. The property owner for 4665 Thread Lane conducted the work with a grant from the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board) Site Cleanup Subaccount Program (SCAP; Senate Bill 445) to assist with funding the investigation costs. Central Coast Water Board staff worked with the property owner and State Water Board grant personnel to secure funding, which resulted in investigation work being implemented from August through December 2018.

Though no shallow source of soil and soil gas discharges were identified during the investigation at 4665 Thread Lane, TCE was detected at elevated concentrations in deep groundwater grab sample beneath the property at a concentration of 783 µg/L, with significantly lower concentrations detected at upgradient locations. This TCE

concentration is approximately 157 times greater than the MCL. Maps showing the distribution of TCE in the vicinity of Buckley Road and Thread Lane were prepared by Central Coast Water Board staff and are available on GeoTracker:

<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?surl=jfi7e>

The investigation results indicate that a release or source of TCE in the Buckley Road area originated from 4665 Thread Lane. The July 31, 2019 CAO required responsible parties to investigate, cleanup and abate the TCE. On February 24, 2020, staff concurred with remedial investigation/feasibility study and groundwater monitoring plans (for onsite and offsite areas) submitted on behalf of the responsible parties. Staff continue to work with State Water Board staff to process the responsible parties' requests for additional SB 445 SCAP grant funding to implement the ongoing investigation activities and evaluate, design, and implement cleanup actions.

In October 2020, the County investigated a former World War II aircraft hangar site located directly north of Thread Lane on Airport property. During the investigation, the County collected soil gas and groundwater samples in the vicinity of the former hangar, including at the 795 Buckley Road property, located between the hangar and 4665 Thread Lane. The investigation found a relatively high TCE concentration in a soil gas probe along the east side of the 795 Buckley Road property, indicating a possible source of TCE discharge on the property. Parties associated with the 795 Buckley Road property were subsequently issued an order to submit a work plan to further investigate TCE in soil, soil gas, and groundwater beneath the property. The work plan is currently under review by staff.

### **Next Steps**

In addition to providing regular updates to the public and the Board, Central Coast Water Board staff will continue reviewing RWP quarterly reports to ensure the affected community is receiving clean replacement water and assisting in establishing funding for investigating and cleaning up TCE at Thread Lane and in the greater Buckley Road area.

The additional SCAP pending grant will allow the responsible parties to implement their remedial investigation/feasibility study work plan. This work is important to provide information needed to prepare and implement a remedial action plan. Following execution of a grant agreement, staff will work with the responsible parties to implement the plan. Central Coast Water Board staff will continue to provide updates to the Board on this project via the EO report.

## **PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Please see the following standard attachments.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Table 1 - 401 Water Quality Certification Applications Received
2. Table 2 - 401 Water Quality Certifications Issued
3. Table 3 - Groundwater Section, Case Closure Performance Scoreboard
4. Table 4 - Groundwater Case Closures
5. Table 5 - Enrollments In General Orders/Waivers

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