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## Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Greg Bishop  
Senior Engineering Geologist  
**SITE CLEANUP PROGRAM**

**DATE:** May 19, 2021

**SUBJECT: SITE CLEANUP PROGRAM, CUYAMA RIVER TANKER TRUCK OIL SPILL, STATE ROUTE 166, SANTA BARBARA AND SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTIES – PUBLIC NOTICE OF CASE CLOSURE**

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) is the state regulatory agency responsible for the protection of groundwater and surface water quality within the central coast region. As such, we are overseeing the investigation and cleanup of petroleum hydrocarbons released at the Cuyama River Tanker Truck Oil Spill site. Golden Valley Transfer, Inc. (GVT) is the party responsible for investigation and cleanup of the site. We are notifying the responsible party and other potentially interested parties of the proposed closure of this case. Please provide your comments or concerns regarding closure of this Site Cleanup Program (SCP) case to this office by **June 21, 2021**. It is not necessary to respond if you have no comments. Information on the SCP case investigation and cleanup is available for review at the State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker database:

[https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile\\_report.asp?global\\_id=T10000014301](https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T10000014301)

The spill site is located approximately 14 miles east of Santa Maria, in the Cuyama River adjacent to mile post 25.0 to 27.1 along State Route 166, on the county line between San Luis Obispo County and Santa Barbara County, California.

The spill incident occurred on March 21, 2020, when a tanker truck transporting approximately 6,000 gallons of crude oil lost its trailer while traveling westbound on State Route 166. The trailer left the roadway, descended the bank of the Cuyama River, and came to rest near the eastern bank of the river, where it then spilled oil. Oil was released into the Cuyama River and the spill extended approximately two miles downstream.

The following agencies responded and were part of the Incident Command team for the emergency spill response: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Office of

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DR. JEAN-PIERRE WOLFF, CHAIR | MATTHEW T. KEELING, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBCFD), Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services (SBCEHS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

The emergency spill response included the use of oil containment booms and vacuum trucks to skim oil from the river, earthen berms with water diversion, and oil absorbent pads. Oiled rocks and cobbles were cleaned by hand, and vegetation was cleaned when feasible or otherwise removed. A temporary containment dam was built across the Cuyama River near the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Pine Canyon Fire Station by the SBCFD.

In June of 2020, after spill containment and the initial cleanup were complete, shallow soil and surface water assessment activities were conducted to evaluate the degree of oil contamination remaining. The shallow soil and surface water assessment activities were documented in a report dated July 30, 2020, prepared by Padre Associates Inc. (Padre) on behalf of GVT. The assessment activities were completed in accordance with Padre's May 4, 2020 Technical Work Plan, which was approved by Central Coast Water Board staff in a Conditional Workplan Approval letter dated May 29, 2020.

Nineteen hand auger borings were advanced from the spill site downstream to the temporary dam location for the purpose of collecting soil samples. Two additional hand augers were advanced upstream of the spill site to characterize background conditions. Twenty-two soil samples were analyzed by a laboratory and the results were compared to Tier 1 Soil Environmental Screening Levels (ESLs). Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were not detected in the soil samples. Poly aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were detected in 4 samples:

- Chrysene, fluoranthene, naphthalene, phenanthrene, and pyrene were detected in two upstream samples at 2 to 4 orders of magnitude below ESLs. These concentrations appear to reflect background environmental conditions and may not be attributable to the spill.
- Benzo (a) pyrene was detected at the spill site (J flag) in one sample, at two orders of magnitude below the respective ESL. (J Flag detections are estimated, non-quantifiable concentrations of compounds that exceeded laboratory method detection limits, but were below laboratory quantitation limits).
- Phenanthrene was detected downstream of the spill site (J flag) in one sample, at three orders of magnitude below the respective ESL.

Gasoline carbon chain range total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) were not detected in the soil samples. Diesel and oil range TPH were detected in two soil samples. The TPH diesel carbon chain concentrations were 16 mg/kg and 32 mg/kg, both an order of magnitude below the Tier 1 Soil ESL of 260 mg/kg. The TPH oil carbon chain concentrations were 58 mg/kg and 110 mg/kg, two to three orders of magnitude below

the ESL of 1,600 mg/kg. Hydrocarbon odor or staining was not noted in the field logs for these samples.

Five surface water samples were collected between the spill site and the temporary dam location. One additional water sample was collected upstream of the spill site to characterize background conditions. Results were compared to Tier 1 groundwater ESLs. No VOCs or PAHs were detected in the water samples. Two water samples had detections for TPH gasoline at 55 and 88 µg/L. Both detections are below the ESL of 100 µg/L. Padre and the laboratory suggested these detections are due to a lab contaminant (methanol). One additional water sample had an estimated detection for TPHo of 72 µg/L (J Flag), which is below the ESL.

After reviewing the soil and water sample results, Central Coast Water Board staff has determined that there is no significant threat to soil or water resources, or human health at this site. The pollutant mass has been removed from the site to the maximum extent practicable, and data indicate pollutant concentrations in soil and surface water are below screening levels and will likely continue to decrease in time. Further cleanup activities are considered more likely to damage habitat than result in meaningful reductions in pollutant concentrations. Site restoration and revegetation is ongoing, under the regulatory oversight of the CDFW.

Central Coast Water Board staff have collaborated closely with Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services (SBCEHS) during the soil and surface water assessment. SBCEHS concurs with Central Coast Water Board staff that no further assessment or cleanup is necessary at the site.

Following the public comment period and resolution of any comments, the Executive Officer may issue a case closure letter. If you wish to obtain additional information, provide comments, or if you need assistance accessing GeoTracker or have any other questions, please contact Mark Davis at **(805) 542-4629** ([mark.davis@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:mark.davis@waterboards.ca.gov)) or Greg Bishop at (805) 549-3132.

Sincerely,

for Matthew T. Keeling  
Executive Officer

GT: T10000014301  
Site ID: 2030162

cc:

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