

**Response to Comments  
for the  
Sierra Nevada Cheese Company and Gregersen Properties  
Sierra Nevada Cheese Processing Plant  
Tentative Waste Discharge Requirements  
Glenn County**

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At a public hearing scheduled for 18-19 April 2024, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board) will consider adoption of tentative Waste Discharge Requirements for Sierra Nevada Cheese Company and Gregersen Properties (Discharger) Sierra Nevada Cheese Processing Facility (Facility). This document contains responses to written comments received from interested persons and parties in response to the tentative Order. Written comments from interested persons and parties were required to be received by the Central Valley Water Board by 13 March 2024 in order to receive full consideration. Comments were received prior to the deadline from:

1. Jo Anne Kipps (received 13 March 2024)

Written comments from the above interested person are summarized below, followed by the response of Central Valley Water Board staff.

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**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENTS**

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #1 – Pond Nomenclature**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order be revised “to use the same nomenclature as the Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) for Ponds 1 to 3 (treatment) and Ponds 4 to 7 (overflow).”

**Response:**

WDRs were changed to reflect consistency with the use of the terms treatment pond and overflow ponds.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #2 – New Retail/Storage Space and Pond Routing**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order be revised “to: (1) identify Sierra Nevada Cheese Company’s new building and, if applicable, any non-domestic waste streams generated from its use; and (2) explain the apparent discharges to Ponds 4 and/or 5 evident in Google Earth images from May 2017 to May 2023. Also, describe the general location of each overflow pond’s inlet (e.g., perimeter, bottom) and how the overflow ponds are hydraulically connected.

**Response:**

Finding 19 was added to the Tentative WDRs that includes information regarding the building adjacent to Pond 5, stormwater discharge from the building and building site into Pond 5, as well as the excavation that was performed in Pond 5 for material for the building site, including that there is no process wastewater produced at the building or discharge from the building into Pond 5 other than stormwater discharge.

Information was added to Finding 12 regarding how wastewater is conveyed from Pond 3 to Ponds 4 or 5 and how they are hydraulically connected to Ponds 6 and 7.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #3 – Pond 100-Year Flood Elevation**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order be revised “to include a provision requiring the Discharger to submit an engineering certification that the berms surrounding the overflow ponds are adequate to prevent inundation or washout from floods with a 100-year return frequency “and “revise the tentative order to authorize discharge to the overflow ponds only after the Discharger satisfies the provision.”

**Response:**

Staff concurs with the inclusion of a provision (Provision H.1.b) requiring engineering certification of the berms surrounding the overflow ponds to show they are adequate to prevent inundation or wash out from storms and flooding with a 100-year return frequency and includes that this provision must be met before discharge into the overflow ponds occurs.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #4 – Monitoring Well Installation Time Schedule**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order be revised to include a time schedule for a Groundwater Monitoring Well Installation Work Plan and installation of a groundwater monitoring well if an additional well is required in the future.

**Response:**

Staff concurs with the inclusion of a time schedule for a Groundwater Monitoring Well Installation Work Plan and installation of a groundwater monitoring well if an additional well is required in the future. Added to Provision H.1.a.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #5 – Milk Processing Capacity**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order be revised “to identify the Facility’s current processing capacity in terms of milk per month.”

**Response:**

The Discharger currently processes approximately 400,000 gallons of milk per month. Finding 10 has been revised to include current volume of milk processed.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #6 – Treatment Plant Inflow Limitation**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order be revised “to define the effluent cited in Flow Limitation C.1 (e.g., Effluent flow from the treatment plant to Pond 1 shall not exceed a maximum daily flow limit of 60,000 gallons per day).”

**Response:**

Staff concurs with revising the language cited in Flow Limitation C.1., Requirements C.1. was revised to define effluent as “Treatment plant effluent.”

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #7 – Table 5 Labeling and COD vs BOD**

“Clarify Table 5’s column headers for Ponds 1 and 2 to identify sampling location (e.g., pond influent, pond water collected opposite its inlet). Consider removing from Table 5 the row for Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) values, as each sampling result is “ND,” which typically means “non detect.” Please explain the COD results in Table 5, including COD results of “non detect” for samples that also had measurable BOD.”

**Response:**

Staff concurs with the recommendation of identifying sampling locations in Ponds 1 and 2 and have been added to Table 5. Staff concurs with removal of non-detect values for COD, they have been removed from Table 5. The lab data sheets from the 3 May 2023 sampling event shows a reporting limit for COD as 100 mg/L for the influent and 10 mg/L for the remaining sampling points. Staff is unsure why there is measurable BOD with little COD but it is possible that microbiologically oxidizable chemicals such as ammonium could boost BOD readings.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #8 – Treatment Plant Influent Monitoring**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order “revise the MRP to define a monitoring location for treatment plant influent and require quarterly monitoring at this location for BOD and Total Nitrogen on the same day as monthly monitoring of treatment plant effluent to Pond 1. Also, identify the detention time provided by the treatment plant and explain why grab samples are adequately representative of treatment plant effluent.”

**Response:**

Staff concurs with the comment and has revised the MRP to include quarterly influent monitoring of BOD and Total Nitrogen at the influent wet well on the same day that

monthly effluent monitoring is performed. Influent was added to MRP Table 1 and influent monitoring to Specific Monitoring Requirements A. Additionally, Finding 12 was revised to include the retention time of the treatment facility, approximately one day, and included volumes of the influent wet well and storage tanks.

Grab samples are adequately representative of treatment plant effluent due to mixing in the two 30,000-gallon storage tanks that are arranged in series, as well as mixing in the influent wet well and SAF unit.

#### **JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #9 – Vadose Zone Depth**

“Consider revising Finding 29 to include a table presenting for active well the reference elevation (feet amsl), total depth (feet bgs), perforated interval (feet bgs), and location relative to groundwater flow direction (e.g., cross-gradient, upgradient, downgradient). And, also provide the range of groundwater depths corresponding to the cited elevation data, in part, to disclose the depth of vadose zone available for soil treatment of decomposable waste constituents in pond seepage.”

#### **Response:**

Table 7 has been added to Finding 29, now Finding 30 to include top of well casing, ground surface elevation, screen length, bottom of screen, and bottom of boring. The exact elevations at the bottom of the ponds are unknown at this time, a requirement for calculating the elevations of the bottom of the ponds was added to Provision H.1.b and to be submitted with the engineering certification indicating that the ponds are sufficient in the event of a flood with a 100-year return frequency.

#### **JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #10 – Table 9 Error and MW-6 Treatment Pond Influence**

“Confirm that the 248.8 mg/L result for chloride in MW-6 in the 4th quarter 2017 is an error and revise Table 9 accordingly. Also, revise the tentative order to disclose that groundwater passing through upgradient well, MW-6, may not always be representative of groundwater upgradient from uninfluenced by the treatment pond seepage discharge.

#### **Response:**

Staff confirms that the result for chloride of 248.8 mg/L is an error, the result was 24.8 mg/L, as such Table 9 now Table 10, Table 8 – Groundwater Monitoring from 2017-2022, and the Table in Attachment C have been revised to include the changed average value for MW-6.

Finding 38 acknowledges that MW-6 may not always represent background water quality due to its proximity to Walker Creek and the treatment pond.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #11 – Pond Dissolved Oxygen Minimum and Monitoring**

“Revise the tentative order’s Discharge Specification B. 5 to require the DO content in the upper one foot of all ponds to be at least 1.0 mg/L at all times. And, revise the MRP to require pond DO monitoring be performed in the morning (e.g., from 8:00 am to 10:00 am), as this is when ponds DO levels may be lowest as a result of algae respiration.

**Response:**

Staff partially concurs with the recommendation to specify dissolved oxygen monitoring to be performed between the hours of 8:00 am and 10:00 am. Although dissolved oxygen levels are expected to be lowest at the hours specified, there have been no indications or history of any odor issues at the Facility since the Discharger made upgrades to their treatment plant to address CDO R5-2015-0114.

However, the proposed Order was revised to specify that dissolved oxygen monitoring to be performed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., as feasible.

Tentative WDRs were revised to remove “for three consecutive weekly sampling events” to “at all times.”

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #12 – MRP Revisions**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order revise “MRP’s Table 5 to substitute TOC for BOD, and to eliminate monitoring for nitrite and for dissolved metals except for dissolved arsenic, dissolved iron, and dissolved manganese. Alternatively, provide sufficient technical justification for requiring groundwater monitoring for nitrite, the cited list of dissolved metals, and total arsenic, iron, and manganese.”

**Response:**

Staff concurs with substituting TOC for BOD as a groundwater monitoring constituent. Staff also concurs with the removal of monitoring of dissolved metals except manganese, arsenic, and iron, as well as nitrite. MRP Table 5, now Table 6 includes TOC, dissolved metals and nitrite have been removed.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #13 – General Minerals Footnote**

Ms. Kipps requested that the tentative Order revise “MRP Tables 2 and 6 to include footnotes identifying General Mineral constituents comparable to Table 5.

**Response:**

Staff concurs with including footnotes for MRP Tables 2 now 3 and 6 now 7 identifying General Mineral constituents comparable to MRP Table 5 now 6. MRP Tables 3 and 7 have been updated to include footnotes for General Mineral constituents.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #14 – MRP Schedule for General Minerals**

“Revise Table 6 to require quarterly monitoring for General Minerals in the first year following order adoption and annually thereafter (in December). Alternatively, provide technical justification for requiring ongoing quarterly monitoring of source water for General Minerals.”

**Response:**

Staff concurs that there is no need for quarterly monitoring of General Minerals of the source water, this was an error, generally the Water Board requires annual monitoring of General Minerals in the source water. MRP Table 7 has been revised from quarterly to annual monitoring of General Minerals, as there is no need for higher frequency of monitoring.

**JO ANNE KIPPS COMMENT #15 – Residual Solids Characterization**

“Consider revising the MRP to require the Discharger to submit copies of waste characterizations of residual solids within 90 days from providing this documentation to third parties.”

**Response:**

The MRP has been revised to include waste characterization of residual solids from the RO and SAF units as required by the receiver of the solids.

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**STAFF REVISIONS**

1. Changed nomenclature to treatment ponds. Findings 6; 8; Table 2; Information Sheet page 5, first paragraph; and Information Sheet page 6, first line.  
  
Changed nomenclature to overflow ponds. Findings 7; 8; and information sheet page 5, first paragraph.
2. Added information to Findings 12 regarding the discharge to Ponds 4-7 and how they are hydraulically connected.  
  
Added Findings 19 to include information regarding new building.
3. Provisions H.1.b was added to require an engineering certification indicating that the berms for the overflow ponds are sufficient to prevent inundation or washout from storms with a 100-year return frequency.

4. Provisions H.1.a was changed to include a time schedule order for a Groundwater Monitoring Well Installation Work Plan and installation of a groundwater monitoring well if an additional well is required in the future.
5. Finding 10 has been revised to include current amount of milk processed monthly.
6. Requirements C.1. was revised to define effluent as "Treatment plant effluent flows."
7. Table 5 has been updated to include sample locations for Ponds 1 and 2, as well as removal of non-detect COD data.
8. Influent monitoring of BOD and Total Nitrogen at the influent wet well was added to the Tentative MRP.  
  
Finding 12 was revised to include the retention time of the treatment facility, approximately one day, and included volumes of the influent wet well and storage tanks.
9. Table 7 has been added to the Tentative WDRs, Finding 30 to include well log data. Provision H.1.b. has been revised to include the requirement of establishing pond invert elevation of all treatment and overflow ponds.
10. Table 9 now Table 10, Table 8 – Groundwater Monitoring from 2017-2022, and the Table in Attachment C have been revised to include the changed average value for MW-6.
11. The proposed Order was revised to specify that dissolved oxygen monitoring to be performed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., as feasible.  
  
Tentative WDRs were revised to remove "for three consecutive weekly sampling events" to "at all times."
12. MRP Table 6 has been revised to substitute TOC for BOD, dissolved metals and nitrite have been removed.
13. MRP Tables 3 and 7 have been updated to include footnotes for General Mineral constituents.
14. MRP Table 7 has been revised from quarterly to annual monitoring of General Minerals.
15. MRP II.G. Solids Monitoring has been revised to include the submittal of waste characterization of residual solids from the RO and SAF units as required by the receiver.