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Central Valley Water Quality Control Board

Via email to: Daniel.Benas@waterboards.ca.gov

**Comments— Tentative WDRs for Grimmway Enterprises, Inc. and Minter Field Airport District, Shafter Carrot Packing Plant, Kern County**

This letter transmits my comments on the subject tentative Waste Discharge Requirements (tentative Order or tentative WDRs).

I am a resident of Fresno County and a California registered civil engineer with 12 years experience working for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board). During my employment from February 1998 through December 2010 in the Regional Board's Fresno Office, I worked primarily in the WDR regulatory program. As a result, I was fortunate to have gained expertise in evaluating the effects to soil and groundwater from discharges of food processing and winery wastewater to land for treatment and disposal.

The tentative Order is for the discharge of carrot washing wastewater from an existing facility owned and operated by Grimmway Enterprises, Inc. located at 6301 South Zerker Road, Shafter. Findings 1 and 2 identify the Facility's location in terms of legal description and APN, but not street address.

Finding 14 characterizes Facility effluent for various constituents of concern, but not influent. Because of this, it is not possible to assess the potential for the wastewater undergoing various phases of pond treatment to unreasonably degrade groundwater. Soils in the vicinity of the Facility and LAA are "nonsaline to slightly saline, relatively shallow to very deep, well drained, and moderately rapidly permeable;" (Finding 23). Groundwater underlying the LAA occurs about 360 feet below ground surface (Finding 29). Finding 30 characterizes area groundwater for select constituents in the discharge.

Even though groundwater is relatively deep, the "moderately rapidly permeable" soils in the vicinity increase the risk to groundwater posed by the impoundment of carrot wash wastewater in the Facility's "system of unlined process wastewater ponds" (Finding 9). The tentative Order should be revised to include a characterization of the Facility's discharge to the initial pond. Should this characterization reveal that impounded waste threatens to violate Discharge Specification D.1 (No waste constituent shall be released, discharged, or placed where it will be released or discharged, in a concentration or in a mass that causes violation of the Groundwater Limitations of this Order) and Discharge Specification D.2 (Wastewater treatment, storage, and disposal shall not cause pollution or a nuisance as defined by Water Code section 13050), then the tentative Order should be revised to require the Discharger to

equip all Facility ponds with a liner (similar to the recently adopted Statewide Winery General Order) or provide technical justification why this is not necessary.

Finding 22, regarding solids disposal, has the Discharger characterized the carrot wash solids and/or settling pond sludge to ensure its disposal (off-site fill material) does not pose a threat to water quality? If not, staff should consider including at least a one-time characterization of these two waste streams (i.e., carrot wash screenings and pond sludge).

Finding 27, edit: "...neither the Facility or the LAA is not located within a 100-year floodplain."

"ATTACHMENT A—SITE MAP" has the legend, "LAND APPLICATION AREA MAP," and appears identical to "ATTACHMENT C—LAND APPLICATION AREA MAP." The Land Application Area Map should also show the boundaries of the APN identified in Finding 2.

ATTACHMENT B—FACILITY MAP. Historical imagery available from Google Earth shows multiple images showing liquid impounded in the "Emergency Pond" east of Pond-001. And, these historical images also show liquid in a square area (about ½ acre) rimmed with mature vegetation immediately east of the Emergency Pond. What is this feature?

#### **REQUIREMENTS – IT IS HEREBY ORDERED**

Provision H.5, regarding increasing waste flows, typically applies to municipal wastewater treatment facilities. Consider deleting.

Provision H.10 states, "The Discharger shall use the best practicable cost-effective control technique(s) including proper operation and maintenance, to comply with this Order." State Water Resources Control Board Resolution No. 68-16 (Antidegradation Policy) requires discharges of wastes to high quality waters to "meet waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to assure that (a) a pollution or nuisance will not occur and (b) the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the State will be maintained." The State Water Resources Control Board has not revised its Antidegradation Policy to include the qualifier, "cost-effective," in its requirement for best practicable treatment or control. Accordingly, the tentative Order's use of the qualifier, "cost-effective," in Provision H.10 is inappropriate and should be removed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.



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