



State of California

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**Governor**



California Environmental  
Protection Agency

**Jared Blumenfeld,**  
**Secretary of the**  
**Environment**



State Water Resources  
Control Board

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Control Board,  
Central Valley Region

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Regional Water Quality  
Control Board,  
Central Valley Region

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## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

### **Proposed No Further Action Determination**

**Former Bena Phosphate Fertilizer Facility**  
**(GeoTracker ID #SLT5FS304448)**  
**23500 Bena Road, Arvin, Kern County, California**

**Public Notice:** The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) invites public comment on a proposed regulatory case closure for the J.R. Simplot Company (Simplot) former Bena Fertilizer Facility located at 23500 Bena Road in Arvin, California (Site).

This Public Notice fact sheet provides general information on the Site. A map showing the location of the Site is attached (Site Map)

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

30 June – 30 July 2022 (30 Days)

#### **CASE SUMMARY:**

The Site was developed 1961 as a phosphate fertilizer manufacturing facility. The fertilizer manufacturing process generated wastewater from the processing of mined phosphate deposits that was discharged into gunite-lined evaporation ponds. Excess wastewater was discharged to unlined impoundments and in 1980 the Central Valley Water Board issued wastewater and groundwater monitoring requirements for the Site. Discharges of wastewater to the unlined impoundments ceased in 1984.

Wastewater samples collected from 1979 to 1984 had elevated salt concentrations, and wastewater samples collected in 1979 also contained uranium, gross alpha and total radium counts that were above regulatory limits for drinking water. Groundwater analytical data from 1984 indicated elevated concentrations of electrical conductivity (EC), sulfate, and phosphate. Groundwater beneath the Site consists of shallow intermittent water atop a laterally extensive clay unit that isolates it from the underlying regional aquifer which is the primary supply for domestic, municipal, and irrigation use in the area. Sediment was removed from the impoundments in 1986. The manufacturing facility was closed in June 1987.

Additional assessment in 2018 through 2021 concluded that previously elevated EC, sulfate, and phosphate concentrations in the perched groundwater zone had decreased to background concentrations, uranium concentrations were below regulatory limits for drinking water, and residual gross alpha, gross beta, and radium counts in excess of background is limited to the shallow perched groundwater zone within the footprint of the Site. The clay aquitard immediately beneath the perched groundwater zone was dry during the 2018 to 2021 groundwater assessment, indicating that it is an effective barrier to vertical migration of groundwater from the perched groundwater zone to underlying aquifers.

Based on Site data, Simplot requested regulatory case closure for the Site. Central Valley Water Board staff reviewed the case file and determined that surface water and groundwater uses were not threatened. Central Valley Water Board staff requested a review of the case for potential human health impacts by the California Department of Public Health Radiologic Health Branch, Radiological Assessment Unit. No excess risk was identified and concurrence with case closure was provided.

Based on the data compiled, the Site does not pose a significant threat to human health or the environment. The Central Valley Water Board is considering case closure. Once all public comments have been reviewed, the Central Valley Water Board will direct further corrective action or close the case, as appropriate.

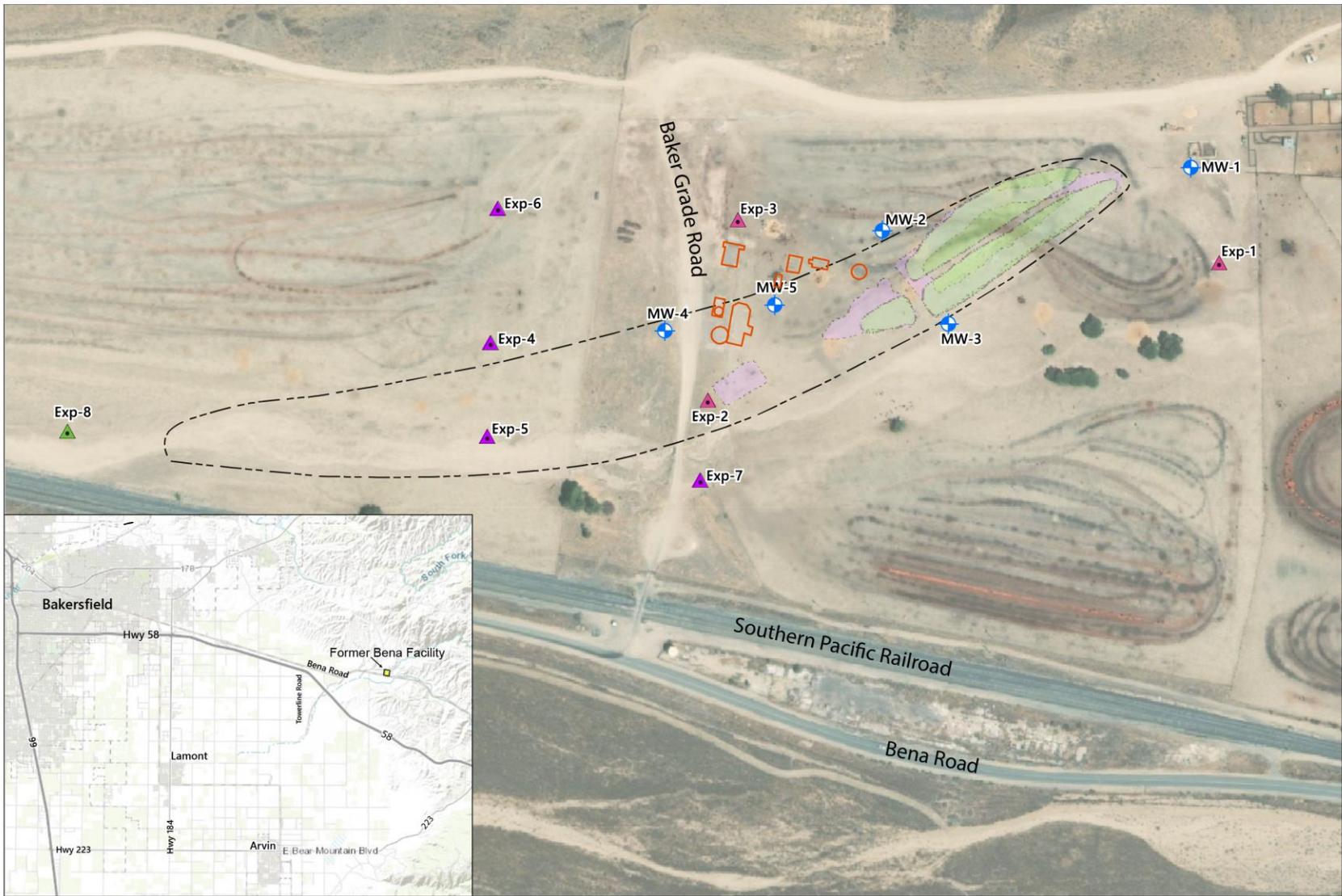
### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Additional information is available on the [State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker website](https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=SLT5FS304448) ([https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile\\_report.asp?global\\_id=SLT5FS304448](https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=SLT5FS304448)). Please contact Chad Neptune with the Central Valley Water Board if you have any comments/questions regarding environmental investigation or cleanup activities at the Site, or any of the information in this Public Notice. Written comments or questions on the planned regulatory case closure for the Site must be submitted to Chad Neptune at the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board by **30 July 2022**.

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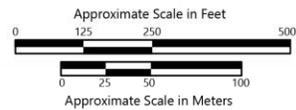
### **Notice to the Hearing Impaired**

TDD users can obtain information about the Site by using the California State Relay Service (800) 735-2929 to reach the Public Participation Specialist. Ask them to contact the Central Valley Water Board at (916) 464-3291 regarding the proposed "No Further Action" determination for the Former Bena Phosphate Fertilizer Facility, Arvin (GeoTracker ID #SLT5FS304448).



**Explanation**

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|---|--|
|  Groundwater monitoring well location    |  Facility ruins   |
|  Exploratory boring location (Phase I)   |  Impoundments (1968 configuration)  |
|  Exploratory boring location (Phase II)  |  Impoundments (1984-1987 configuration)   |
|  Exploratory boring location (Phase III) |  Approximate lateral extent of residual radionuclides in perched groundwater zone |



Site Map