

November 10, 2010

Lahontan Water Board Actions to Ensure PG&E Cleanup of Chromium Contaminated Groundwater in Hinkley, California

LOCATION AND CURRENT STATUS OF GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION
(See plume map attached or at our website at
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/projects/pge/index.shtml)

PG&E discharged chromium tainted cooling water to the ground during the 1950s and 1960s at a compressor station in Hinkley south of Community Boulevard. Since then, this chromium has entered the shallow groundwater. Groundwater naturally migrates in a northerly direction. The area affected by PG&E's past discharge of chromium is over 2-1/2 miles in length and over 1 mile wide. PG&E has acquired most of the land where groundwater contains concentrations greater than 50 parts per billion (current drinking water standard), so no drinking water supply wells are affected by this level of chromium.

West of the Desert View Dairy (near the intersection of Santa Fe Avenue and Mountain View Road) chromium has been detected in the lower aquifer near an area where the shallow and deep aquifers converge into one aquifer. Water Board has required additional investigation of groundwater and the clay layer separating the two aquifers in this northwest portion of the PG&E chromium-affected groundwater.

North of Santa Fe Avenue and the railroad, and east of the Desert View Dairy, low concentrations (less than the drinking water standard but above background/natural levels) of chromium have migrated in the groundwater beneath lands owned by Hinkley residents. Water Board has required additional investigation of groundwater and actions to contain the plume in this area.

KEY POINTS

- Our strategy has always been to protect people first and ensure they have safe drinking water.
- Water Board issued a Cleanup and Abatement Order in 2008. This Order requires PG&E conduct active and ongoing groundwater remediation of chromium and plume containment. This Order also requires quarterly monitoring and reporting of over 100 wells (shallow and deep monitoring wells and supply wells).
- In December 2010, Water Board staff plans to amend the Cleanup and Abatement Order (a formal enforcement order) to cite the ongoing violations and to clarify requirements to contain and reduce the groundwater contamination plume and require improved ground water monitoring reports and maps.
- In March 2010, Water Board staff determined PG&E had violated a requirement of the Cleanup and Abatement Order to contain the

groundwater contamination within a defined plume boundary. Water Board staff notified PG&E. PG&E submitted a corrective action plan for plume containment and additional monitoring wells (March 23). Water Board staff accepted the plan (May).

- In July 2010, the Water Board at a public hearing amended a permit authorizing increased pumping and additional groundwater remediation.
- In August 2010, based on well results continuing to show chromium concentrations increasing outside the plume boundary. Water Board staff ordered additional investigation (i.e., required installation and monitoring of additional monitoring wells along the eastern edge of the groundwater contamination).
- In October 2010, Water Board staff requested PG&E investigate the northwestern extent of the lower aquifer contamination. PG&E installed two new monitoring wells.
- In November 2010, Water Board staff ordered additional wells and further investigation of the extent of the lower aquifer contamination and the clay layer separating the lower and upper aquifers.
- In September 2010 in response to the Water Board's 2008 Order, PG&E submitted a Feasibility Study that describes final site cleanup options and gives a recommended option. The Water Board members will consider approval of the plan and a new enforcement order against PG&E at its May 2011 Board meeting following a series of public meetings and comment periods. The Water Board staff is launching this public outreach and environmental analysis effort beginning December 1 with a public meeting in Hinkley. We plan to hold Water Board staff meetings in Hinkley December 1, late January, late February, and April. The Water Board will likely meet in Barstow during its regular board meeting schedule in March and May 2011.

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is a California state agency responsible for controlling the discharge of pollutants to ensure preservation, enhancement, and restoration of water quality east of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada crests from the Oregon border through the Mojave Desert.