

**Response to Written Comments
Draft Waste Discharge Requirements
Order No. R1-2023-0002
for the
Willow Creek Community Services District
Wastewater Treatment Facility
Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region
February 2, 2023**

The deadline for submittal of public comments regarding draft Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R1-2023-0002, for the Willow Creek Community Services District (Discharger) Wastewater Treatment Facility (Facility) was October 24, 2022. Regional Water Board Staff (staff) received three comments within the allotted public comment period from: 1) GHD Engineers on behalf of the Discharger; 2) Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services (HCDHHS); and 3) California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW);

This Response to Comments document includes the comments received, staff responses, and staff-initiated changes. Text added to the Proposed Order is identified by underline and text to be deleted from the Proposed Order is identified by ~~strike-through~~ in this document. The term “Draft Order” refers to the version of the order that was sent out for public comment. The term “Proposed Order” refers to the version of the order that has been modified in response to comments and is being presented to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) for consideration.

GHD Engineers Comments

Comment 1: Page 3, Section II.B -*The leach field is located adjacent to the Facility and is approximately 800 feet south of the Trinity River. Solids generated during wastewater collection and treatment will be disposed of at a permitted landfill. Facility is at least 900 feet. Change permitted landfill to permitted facility.*

Response 1: Section II.B of the Proposed Order has been modified as follows:

The leach field is located adjacent to the Facility and is approximately ~~800~~ 900 feet south of the Trinity River. Solids generated during wastewater collection and treatment will be disposed of at a permitted ~~landfill~~ facility.

Comment 2: Page 11, Section IV. Table 4 – *Average Monthly Effluent Limitation for Nitrogen 10 mg/L. This will be measured prior to discharge to the leach field, but there will be additional treatment in the leach field/soil column. Would it be possible to increase this number to 13 mg/L?*

Response 2: As described below, Staff agree with the requested change to the Average Monthly Effluent Limitation for Nitrogen. The nitrogen Average Monthly Effluent

Limitations in Section IV. Table 4 of the Proposed Order have been modified from ~~40 mg/L Average Monthly Effluent Limitation~~ to 13 mg/L Average Monthly Effluent Limitation nitrogen as follows:

Table 4. Effluent Limitations

Parameter	Units	Average Monthly Effluent Limitation	Maximum Daily Effluent Limitation	Instantaneous Minimum Effluent Limitation	Instantaneous Maximum Effluent Limitation
Biochemical Oxygen Demand (5-day @ 20°C)	mg/L	50	80	--	--
Total Suspended Solids	mg/L	50	80	--	--
Settleable Solids	ml/L	0.1	0.2	--	--
pH	Standard units	--	--	6.5	8.5
Nitrogen, Nitrate (as N)	mg/L	40 <u>13</u>	20	--	--

The Discharger provided a Groundwater Anti-Degradation analysis based on system design with the calculated nitrogen effluent concentration of 13 mg/L following Orenco secondary treatment prior to discharge to the leach field. Following leach field treatment, the calculated concentration of nitrogen in groundwater is less than 10 mg/L. This will be verified by groundwater monitoring wells downgradient, and adjacent to, the leach field. If groundwater monitoring indicates that actual concentrations of nitrogen in groundwater are greater than 10 mg/L, then the effluent limitation of 13 mg/L will be reassessed, and the Order may be reopened to include a more protective effluent limitation for nitrogen.

Comment 3: Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) Page 3, Table E-1 –
Discharge Point 001, effluent monitoring location following treatment prior to discharge to leach field. This would have to be done at the leach field discharge lift station. There will be additional treatment in the leach field/soil column.

Response 3: Table E-1 of the MRP has been modified as follows:

Discharge Point 001 - Effluent monitoring location following Orenco secondary treatment prior to discharge to leach field. Table E-1:

Table E-1. Monitoring Station Locations

Discharge Point Name	Monitoring Location Name	Monitoring Location Description
--	INF-001	Influent flume and sensor located at or prior to headworks.
001	EFF-001	Effluent monitoring location following <u>Orenco secondary</u> treatment prior to discharge to leach field.
--	LEACH-001	Visual observation of leach field.

Comment 4: MRP Page 4, Table E-2 – Sample Type for Biochemical Oxygen Demand and Total Suspended Solids, can the District have the option to do either a grab sample or 24-hour composite sample?

Response 4: - Table E-2 of the MRP has been modified as follows:

Biochemical Oxygen Demand and Total Suspended Solids Sample Type Grab or Composite. Table E-2:

Table E-2. Influent Flow – Monitoring Location INF-001

Parameter	Units	Sample Type	Minimum Sampling Frequency
Flow (Daily, Monthly Average)	mgd	Flow Sensor	Continuous
Biochemical Oxygen Demand (5-day @ 20°C)	mg/L	Grab <u>or</u> Composite	Monthly
Total Suspended Solids	mg/L	Grab <u>or</u> Composite	Monthly

Comment 5: MRP Page 5, III.E. – Groundwater Monitoring. Following installation of the groundwater monitoring wells, the Discharger shall monitor groundwater in the groundwater monitoring wells as described in Table E-5. Is there a formal approval of our proposed groundwater monitoring well locations (shown on plans)? Should we have a map included with this WDR document that shows the approved MW locations? What about approval of the MW construction detail?

Response 5: -Section VIII.R of the Proposed Order requires submittal of a scope of work to evaluate potential impacts to groundwater with 24 months after Order adoption. This scope of work shall include details of the proposed groundwater monitoring wells. Staff will review and provide written approval of the scope of work. Once the scope of work is approved, the MRP may be revised to include a map of the approved monitoring well locations. No changes were made to the Proposed Order in response to this comment.

HCDHHS Comments

Comment 1: *What is the plan for destruction of existing septic tanks in the proposed service area?*

Response 1: Existing septic tanks in the proposed service area will be pumped, filled with gravel, and will have lids crushed. No changes were made to the Proposed Order in response to this comment.

Comment 2: - *Are existing grease interceptor tanks going to stay in place? (At least a couple of downtown food facilities have had issues over the years with FOGs carryover causing OWTS failures, and it would seem a good practice to keep FOGs out of the new collection and treatment system.)*

Response 2: - Existing grease interceptor tanks will remain in place. New sewer lateral connections will be made downstream of existing grease traps, upstream of existing septic tanks. No changes were made to the Proposed Order in response to this comment.

Comment 3: - *Is there a plan for any additional residences or businesses being able to connect to the new collection and treatment system?*

Response 3: - The facility was designed for an average daily dry weather flow of 38,000 gpd and a peak daily wet weather flow of 114,000 gpd. Startup flows should be lower than these values, and considerations for having the ability for future additional connections to the system were addressed in the design. The design also includes stub-outs to vacant lots within the system. No changes were made to the Proposed Order in response to this comment.

Comment 4: - *Another related question/discussion topic that comes to mind is planning for future OWTS failures on properties that are just outside of the new centralized sewer system – we typically cite county code that requires connecting to public sewer if the subject property is within 300 feet, in these cases.*

Response 4: - As mentioned in Response 3 above, the system will have capacity for additional flows. No changes were made to the Proposed Order in response to this comment.

CDFW Comment

Comment 1: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) provided a comment indicating that Monty Larson is now the lead for CDFW for this project.

Response 1: The Notice of Public Hearing and interested parties list has been updated to include Monty Larson as the lead for CDFW for this project.

Staff Initiated Changes

The following sections describe changes made to the draft Order, initiated by Regional Water Board staff to demonstrate compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the newly codified Water Code section 189.7, and the newly adopted statewide General Order for Sanitary Sewer Systems (WQ 2022-0103-DWQ). The proposed changes are either required by law or do not materially impact the Permittee. The Permittee was notified of the proposed changes via email on 1/12/2023.

1. The Proposed Order includes the following change to the CEQA finding:

M. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Pursuant to CEQA, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared in September 2015, and a Notice of Determination was completed by the Discharger on September 24, 2015, certifying that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. An EIR Addendum was prepared in April 2016, and a Notice of Determination was completed by the Discharger on May 5, 2016, certifying that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. An additional EIR Addendum was prepared in July 2021, and a Notice of Determination was completed by the Discharger on July 22, 2021, certifying that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15096, as a responsible agency under CEQA, the Regional Water Board has reviewed and considered the environmental documentation prepared by the lead agency and finds that none of the conditions described in California Code of Regulations title 14, section 15162 have occurred such that preparation of additional environmental documents pursuant to CEQA is required.

The Regional Water Board will file a Notice of Determination in accordance with California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15094 following adoption of this Order.

2. The Proposed Order includes the following new finding required pursuant to Water Code section 189.7:

Q. AB 2108 Requirements

The Regional Water Board publicly noticed the Order and provided opportunities for public comment. Public notice was provided to interested persons and public agencies

in the region with jurisdiction over natural resources in the affected area, including the Humboldt County Health Department. The Regional Water Board conducted outreach in potentially affected disadvantaged communities. As noted above, this is a new facility and the cumulative benefit of a centralized wastewater treatment system that will replace numerous, concentrated individual wastewater systems is expected to result in a net benefit to water quality within the community. The Order does not contain a compliance schedule for meeting applicable water quality objectives, all requirements must be met upon Order adoption. Accordingly, the discharge regulated by this Order is not expected to result in a disproportionate impact to tribal or disadvantaged communities. The Regional Water Board has satisfied the outreach requirements set forth in Water Code section 189.7.

3. The following finding was removed from the Proposed Order because it has become unnecessary with the reissuance of Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems, Order No. 2022-0103_DWQ:

~~III.E. Any sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) that results in a discharge of untreated or partially treated wastewater to (a) waters of the state or (b) land that creates pollution, contamination, or nuisance, as defined in Water Code section 13050 is prohibited.~~

4. The following finding was added to the Proposed Order acknowledge the newly adopted statewide General Order for Sanitary Sewer Systems (WQ 2022-0103-DWQ, which applies to the Willow Creek CSD:

D. Sanitary Sewer Overflows

On May 2, 2006, the State Water Board adopted State Water Board Order No. 2006-0003-DWQ, Statewide General WDRs for Sanitary Sewer Systems. Order No. 2006-0003-DWQ requires that all public agencies that currently own or operate sanitary sewer systems apply for coverage under the General WDRs by November 2, 2006. On September 9, 2013, the State Water Board adopted Order No. WQ-2013-0058-EXEC amending Monitoring and Reporting Program for Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems. The Discharger shall apply for coverage under Order Nos. 2006-0003-DWQ and WQ-2013-0058-EXEC and any future revisions thereto for operation of its wastewater collection system.

On December 6, 2022, the State Water Board adopted State Water Board Order No. 2022-0103-DWQ, Statewide Waste Discharge Requirements General Order For Sanitary Sewer Systems. Order No. 2022-0103-DWQ requires that all public agencies that currently own or operate sanitary sewer systems certify and continue coverage under Order No. 2022-0103-DWQ within 60 days prior to the effective date of the Order.

5. The following was added to the Spill Notification requirements set forth in the section IV.C.2 of the MRP to acknowledge the newly adopted statewide General Order for Sanitary Sewer Systems (WQ 2022-0103-DWQ, which applies to the Willow Creek CSD:

Sanitary Sewer Overflows. Notification and reporting of sanitary sewer overflows is conducted in accordance with the requirements of State Water Resources Control Board Order No. 2006-0003-DWQ (Statewide General WDRs for Sanitary Sewer Systems), as amended by State Water Resources Control Board Order No. WQ 2013-0058-EXEC, and any revisions thereto, including Order No. 2022-0103-DWQ.

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