

Regional Water Quality Control Board  
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report  
Thursday, April 7, 2016  
Eureka, California

- ITEM: 4
- SUBJECT: Public Hearing to consider adoption of Order No. R1-2016-0013  
Waste Discharge Requirements for the JH Ranch Wastewater  
Treatment Facility, WDID No. 1A14143RSIS (*Roy O'Connor*)
- BOARD ACTION: The Board will consider adoption of Waste Discharge Requirements  
Order No. R1-2016-0013. The Order will impose effluent limitations  
and other requirements for discharges of waste from the  
wastewater treatment facility to leachfield areas adjacent to the  
treatment facility.
- BACKGROUND: The JH Ranch (Discharger) is a faith-based leadership development  
center located near the town of Etna, in Siskiyou County. The  
Discharger owns and operates the JH Ranch Wastewater Treatment  
and Disposal Facility (Facility), a domestic wastewater facility  
designed to treat up to 45,000 gallons per day (gpd) of domestic  
wastewater.
- The Facility includes a gravity collection system, two 20,000-gpd  
and one 5,000-gpd multi-staged aerobic fixed media treatment  
tanks, an 1,800 linear feet subsurface leachfield designed for a  
discharge of 10,800 gpd, and a subsurface drip disposal leachfield  
designed for a discharge of 38,100 gpd. The Discharger has  
operated the Facility since 2001. From 2001 to the present the  
Facility was regulated by Siskiyou County. Prior to 2001,  
wastewater treatment and disposal at the JH Ranch was through  
individual septic tanks and leachfields.
- A copy of the draft Order was posted on the Regional Water Quality  
Control Board website and was available for public comment from  
August 26, 2015 through September 26, 2015. In light of the  
comments received, we postponed the hearing date from November  
2015 to April 2016 so that the hearing venue is closer to the  
interested parties to facilitate public participation.
- ISSUES: Order No. R1-2016-0013 proposes effluent limitations and quarterly  
monitoring and reporting. The Monitoring and Reporting Program  
requires routine monitoring to ensure that concentrations of  
pollutants will not adversely impact beneficial uses.

The Order requires that the Discharger submit to the Regional Water Board Executive Officer for approval a work plan to assess groundwater conditions in the vicinity of the waste disposal area. The plan must include a monitoring network to establish the local groundwater gradient and to monitor groundwater quality downgradient of the leachfield areas. The discharger is required to conduct groundwater monitoring in accordance with the approved work plan.

Regional Water Board staff received comment letters from private individuals, the Friends of French Creek, and from the Siskiyou County Community Development Department. Responses to all written comments received during the comment period are presented in the attached Response to Comments document. Comments from private individuals involved complaints of noise and odors from the existing Facility and concerns about the impact of the existing discharge on water quality and salmonids in French Creek. The Siskiyou County Community Development Department requested, and staff has confirmed, that the discharge volume authorized by the proposed Order constitutes no increase over what the County had previously permitted and that the proposed Order will include new groundwater monitoring wells between the leachfield and French Creek.

A general concern expressed by commenters was the potential water quality impacts to French Creek from the Facility discharge, including the subsurface leachfield system. Regional Water Board staff has no evidence that the discharge of treated wastewater from the Facility is creating a condition of pollution or nuisance in French Creek. The discharge of waste to surface waters, which includes French Creek, is explicitly prohibited under the proposed Order. In addition, the proposed Order requires the Discharger to prepare and submit a hydrogeologic study and conduct appropriate groundwater monitoring in accordance with an Executive Officer-approved work plan to (1) determine the fate and transport of pollutants in the Facility discharge and (2) assess whether the disposal system is protective of local groundwater and surface water quality.

Commenters were also concerned with our CEQA categorical exemption determination and the potential cumulative effects of the Facility discharge. The proposed Order authorizes a discharge flow of 45,000 gpd, which is the design capacity of the currently operating Facility as permitted through Siskiyou County. The proposed Order does not permit any expansion of the treatment and disposal over 45,000 gpd. The proposed Order prohibits flow over 45,000 gpd. Thus, the Regional Water Board's action to adopt waste

discharge requirements for this existing facility is exempt from provisions of CEQA.

Commenters also expressed disappointment with the Regional Water Board's public notification procedures, and requested to be better informed in the future. It is the Regional Water Board's practice to provide notice of the availability of documents concerning proposed waste discharge requirements by posting the public notice on the Regional Water Board's website in addition to posting the notice in at least one local newspaper. This practice was followed for the proposed Order. In addition, the Hearing date was postponed to the April Board meeting in Eureka, a location closer to the interested parties.

To ensure that local residents and interested parties are kept aware of developments regarding the Facility and other projects in the Etna area, we have added the Friends of French Creek on our interested parties list for additional notifications. We provided a 45-day notice of the April public hearing to all parties, including the Friends of French Creek.

Regional Water Board staff made minor changes to the Response to Comments document subsequent to the 45-day notice of public hearing in order to clarify and further expand on some responses summarized here. The revised Response to Comments document was transmitted to all interested parties and posted on our website 14 days prior to the April 7 public hearing.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt Order No. R1-2016-0013, as proposed.

**SUPPORTING  
DOCUMENTS:**

1. Proposed Order No. R1-2016-0013
2. Response to Comments on Order No. R1-2016-0013
3. Comment Letters
4. Public Notice