



# Enforcement News

## Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/>

### Settlement Agreement Reached with Kern County Oil Firm for Illegal Discharging of Hydraulic Fracturing Fluid

**For Immediate Release**  
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**FRESNO** – The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board has reached an agreement with Vintage Production California LLC that requires the company to pay a \$60,000 penalty, the maximum allowable, for discharging hydraulic fracturing fluid into an unlined pit.

The Central Valley Water Board prosecution team's investigation determined that Vintage periodically discharged hydraulic fracturing fluid to the pit over a period of 12 days in September and October of 2012. The pit was next to a new oil well that Vintage drilled near Shafter in Kern County.

The prosecution team concluded that the discharge posed a threat to groundwater quality, and that Vintage violated the California Water Code for unpermitted discharge of wastewater to land. The penalty is the result of a settlement agreement between Vintage and the Central Valley Water Board. The settlement also requires Vintage to assess the leaching potential of the solidified material in the pit and whether groundwater has been impacted.

The investigation began after a YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mx671gbmkY>) was brought to the prosecution team's attention. An investigative order was issued requiring Vintage to provide a technical report with specific details about the operation of the well and the discharges to the sump.

Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer Pamela Creedon said, "The discharge of high-salinity water to unlined pits in areas with good groundwater quality, such as at the Vintage site near Shafter, is not consistent with the Tulare Lake Basin Plan. We are concerned that similar discharges have occurred elsewhere in the Central Valley and are working to ensure that discharges of oilfield derived wastes are in compliance with the basin plan and protective of water quality."

In addition to the Vintage investigation, Creedon issued investigative orders to 78 other oil and gas operators that require them to report back to the Central Valley Water Board with detailed information about their discharges of fluids to pits, for the period from Jan. 1, 2012 to Nov. 15, 2013.

The information that will be generated by the additional investigative orders is required to identify the characteristics and volumes of waste discharged to unlined pits, and to evaluate the possible impacts to water quality posed by the discharge of these fluids. In addition, how the operators close pits may cause impacts or threatened impacts to water quality.



Review of the submitted information could result in Central Valley Water Board staff taking appropriate actions, including issuing enforcement orders, to protect water quality.

The signed Stipulated Order is at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/kern/r5-2013-0587\\_stip.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/kern/r5-2013-0587_stip.pdf)

The Central Valley Water Board is a California state agency with the mission of preserving, protecting, enhancing, and restoring water quality within the Central Valley of California. For more information on the Central Valley Water Board, please visit the home page at:

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/>

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