
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Status of Actions October 2023 PG&E Hinkley Chromium Contamination

Chromium Plume Boundary

In general, the Second Quarter 2023 groundwater data indicates that plume migration is not occurring but does reflect natural fluctuations of groundwater concentrations as remediation progresses. The First Quarter 2023 chromium plume maps can be viewed on GeoTracker at [Second Quarter 2023 Groundwater Monitoring Report and Domestic Well Sampling Results](https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?surl=oqgek) (<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?surl=oqgek>) and are Figures 5-1 through 5-7 of this report.

Chromium plume maps representing previous quarters are posted on the Water Board's Hinkley website at [Water Board's Hinkley website](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/projects/pge/index.shtml) (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/projects/pge/index.shtml), at the bottom of the page under the section titled "Other Documents and Information." The Third Quarter 2023 plume map is due on November 10, 2023, consistent with the reporting due dates contained in Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) No. R6V-2015-0068.

Lahontan Regional Water Board August 2023 Board Meeting

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) held a board meeting on August 30, 2023, in person and virtually at the Mojave Water Agency in Apple Valley. The meeting started with a question-and-answer session with Dr. John Izbicki with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), responding to questions on findings and methodology of the USGS Background Study Report. Following Dr. Izbicki were Water Board staff, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), and the Independent Review Panel (IRP) Manager with the annual Status Report on Cleanup Activities Concerning Chromium Contamination from PG&E's Hinkley Compressor Station. The annual update included a summary of major activities for 2022/2023, a presentation on the annual Cleanup Status and Effectiveness Report for 2022, and an update from the IRP Manager on community services provided over the past year.

Water Board staff ended the meeting with a presentation describing the implications of the background study on a revised CAO, the next steps to revise the CAO, and a workshop to provide Board members and the public the opportunity to ask questions of Water Board staff and comment on the next steps for the CAO revision. Water Board staff received comments from one community member, one board member, and PG&E.

To listen to a recording of the meeting, visit our [August 2023 Board Meeting Calendar Website](https://cal-span.org/meeting/rwqcb-laho_20230830/) (https://cal-span.org/meeting/rwqcb-laho_20230830/).

Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) R6V-2015-0068 Revision

Water Board staff are continuing to review the USGS professional paper *Natural and Anthropogenic (Human-Made) Hexavalent Chromium, Cr(VI), in Groundwater near a Mapped Plume, Hinkley, California* also known as the USGS Background Study and are reviewing the CAO for sections that may need revisions.

Water Board staff are looking to begin outreach efforts after preparing some initial proposals for changes to present to the community. These outreach efforts will include listening sessions, workshops, technical work group meetings, and community meetings. All are invited to participate. Comments will also be accepted via mail, e-mail, and phone. Water Board staff is Amanda Lopez, (amanda.lopez@waterboards.ca.gov), 760-241-7373.

Routine Monitoring Reports

PG&E submitted the following reports in accordance with the respective monitoring and reporting requirements. Water Board staff are reviewing these routine monitoring reports.

- Second Quarter 2023 Hydraulic Capture Report
- Second Quarter 2023 Groundwater Monitoring Report and Domestic Well Sampling Results
- Second Quarter 2023 Agricultural Treatment Units Monitoring Report
- First Half Semiannual 2023 Monitoring Report for the In Situ Reactive Zone and Freshwater Injection Projects

Non-routine Reports

PG&E has submitted the following reports for review and consideration for changes regarding their remediation strategies. These requests are part of the adaptive management of the project to optimize PG&E's remedial systems. Water Board staff are reviewing these reports.

- 2022 Groundwater Monitoring Optimization Proposal
- Request to Revise Area of Allowed Plume Expansion in CAO R6V-2015-0068

Acceptance of Revised Hydraulic Capture Metrics

On October 2, 2023, the Water Board accepted PG&E's request to revise CAO No. R6V-2015-0068 to allow for operation of the northern hydraulic containment system under the proposed revised hydraulic capture metrics determined by pilot test results. The Revised Hydraulic Capture Metrics Technical Memorandum provided revised capture zones for containment of the chromium plume in the shallow and deep zones of the upper aquifer. Plume containment will be demonstrated by using the revised capture metrics of groundwater elevation data for well pairs and well triplets, listed in a revised Attachment 5, and hydraulic capture zones shown on maps as revised Attachment 6 and revised Attachment 7 in the CAO.

Public Comment Period on the Summary of Lower Aquifer Extraction Pilot Test Results and Request to Modify Plan for Enhancement of Lower Aquifer Remedy

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) requested public review and comments on a proposed modification of remedial actions required in Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) No. R6V-2015-0068. PG&E is requesting that the “Plan for Enhancement of Lower Aquifer Remedy,” be modified to operate extraction wells EX-29, EX-30, and EX-37 as part of adaptive operations and as needed for agricultural treatment unit supply, rather than continuously.

The Water Board posted PG&E’s April 1, 2022, document, “Summary of Lower Aquifer Extraction Pilot Test Results and Request to Modify Plan for Enhancement of Lower Aquifer Remedy,” on GeoTracker at <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?surl=75o41>. The comment period closed on October 23, 2023. Based on comments that were received, the Water Board Executive Officer will decide whether to accept the proposed modification.

Public Comment Period on the Request to Modify the Western Action Plan to Remove Northwestern Freshwater Injection System Operation

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) requested public review and comments on a proposed modification of remedial actions required in accordance with Investigative Order R6V-2013-0087 and CAO No. R6V-2015-0068. PG&E is requesting that the “Action Plan for the Area West of the Northwest Freshwater Injection System” be modified to permanently discontinue operation of the Northwest Freshwater Injection system wells.

The Water Board has posted PG&E’s September 7, 2022, document, “Request to Modify Western Action Plan to Remove Northwest Freshwater Injection System Operation,” on GeoTracker at <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?surl=7yap7>. The comment period closed on October 23, 2023. Based on comments that were received, the Water Board Executive Officer will decide whether to accept the proposed modification.

New Proposed Area of Allowable Expansion

During the Second and Third Quarters 2022, increased In-situ Remediation Zone (IRZ) injections resulted in plume expansion along Summerset Road between Community Boulevard and Frontier Road. The 2015 CAO Requirement V.H allows for temporary plume expansion in this area during implementation of remedial action. It was observed that the plume expansion was reaching the fringes of the 2008 Area of Allowable Expansion. Similar plume expansion occurred previously in 2020 when injections were occurring, so plume expansion in this area was anticipated. PG&E decreased IRZ injections into this target treatment area in spring 2022 to stop further expansion. PG&E stopped IRZ injections altogether in August 2022, and resumed minimal operations in December 2022. PG&E is requesting a revised Area of Allowable Expansion to allow for further expansion to the east in order to perform IRZ injections at the rate required for remediation. The significant reduction in IRZ injections is limiting progress toward remedial timeframe targets. Water Board staff plan to draft a revised CAO specifically for the Proposed Area of Allowable Expansion and issue the draft for public comment.

Release of Initial Statement of Reasons, Draft Environmental Impact Report, and Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Report to Establish a Maximum Contaminant Level for Hexavalent Chromium

On June 16, 2023, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) announced the release of an Initial Statement of Reasons, Draft Environmental Impact Report, and Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Report for establishing a maximum contaminant level (MCL) for hexavalent chromium. The proposed hexavalent chromium MCL is 10 parts per billion (ppb). In November 2015, the Regional Board issued Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) No. R6V-2015-0068 to Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) to clean up and abate waste discharges of total and hexavalent chromium to the groundwaters of the Mojave Hydrologic Unit. At the time the CAO was issued, the MCL for hexavalent chromium was 10 ppb; however, the MCL was subsequently invalidated in 2017. Depending on the final State Water Board adopted MCL for hexavalent chromium, the Regional Board may need to update the CAO to reflect the then current regulatory level. Water Board staff do not anticipate that a final MCL of 10 ppb hexavalent chromium will affect the cleanup goals established in the CAO.

Water Board PG&E Hinkley Chromium Cleanup Webpage

Water Board staff have updated our [PG&E Hinkley Chromium Cleanup Project webpage](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahtontan/water_issues/projects/pge/) (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahtontan/water_issues/projects/pge/). The project webpage hosts certain documents and announcements related to PG&E's corrective actions, as well as copies of past and current plume maps to access or download and print from the webpage. Please contact Water Board staff with any questions or for assistance.

Your Water Board Staff Contacts

Water Board oversight of the PG&E Hinkley Chromium Cleanup project is provided by staff in the Water Board's Victorville office located at 15095 Amargosa Road, Building 2, Suite 210, Victorville, CA 92394. Your Water Board staff contacts are listed below. Please feel free to contact any of the those listed should you need assistance.

Amanda Lopez, Engineering Geologist
(760) 241-7373, amanda.lopez@waterboards.ca.gov

Christina Guerra, Senior Engineering Geologist
(760) 241-7333, christina.guerra@waterboards.ca.gov

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
(760) 241-6583, general number
<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahtontan/>