

December 26, 2013

Ms. Vivian Gomez-Latino ([USTClosuresComments@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:USTClosuresComments@waterboards.ca.gov))  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, P.O. Box 2231  
Sacramento, CA 95812

Subject: Comment Letter –Sabek Gas Station Case Closure Summary, 16270 Monterey Road, Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Dear Ms. Gomez-Latino,

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) is submitting the following comments on closure of the subject fuel leak site. The Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) is the groundwater management agency for Santa Clara County and also provides flood protection, stream stewardship, and water supply for the nearly two million residents of the county. Nearly half of the water used in the county comes from groundwater, and in the southern portion of the county, it is the sole drinking water supply source. Most public water systems in the county do not require wellhead treatment and the District works to aggressively protect groundwater in accordance with District Board policy.

The District believes that the Sabek Gas Station fuel leak case does not meet the closure criteria for the following reasons:

- The extent of contamination in the intermediate zone has not been defined to the northeast, east, and southeast. Based on the March 2013 monitoring results the intermediate groundwater flow direction is generally toward the north-northeast in the vicinity of well MW-21 (130,000 micrograms per liter (ug/L) Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons as Gasoline (TPHg) and 17,000 ug/L benzene). It appears that contamination is extending off-site to the northeast onto the 24 Barrett Avenue parcel, but no wells are present to determine the extent on the parcel. Additionally, the intermediate zone is not characterized to the southeast beyond well MW-21.

The Responsible Party's (RP's) consultant concluded that the extent of contamination was only defined to the west, northwest and north in the March 2011 Additional Soil and Groundwater Investigation Report. As no further site investigations have been completed, this conclusion remains valid; the extent of contamination has not been defined to the northeast, east, and southeast.

- The case closure summary indicates that free product has not been observed at the site. While this statement is true, it does not accurately portray site conditions. The March



2011 Additional Soil and Groundwater Investigation Report, states “Conditions [hydrocarbon concentrations] indicative of free-product re present in three of the intermediate groundwater samples (AEI-4, AEI-7, and AEI-9).” This conclusion is still valid as the most recent monitoring results from monitoring wells MW-20 and MW-21 have similar concentrations to the 2011 data indicating the presence of free product.

As noted in the site investigation reports and case closure summary, groundwater levels have rose significantly since the release was first discovered. It is likely that the free product is trapped beneath the water table and may be acting as a secondary source.

- While the on-site primary and secondary sources of contamination have been addressed through excavation and o-zone injection, no effort at remediation of the secondary source that has migrated off-site has been made (as indicated by the high concentrations in wells MW-20 and MW-21).
- The case closure summary states that the remaining constituents are limited, stable, and declining. The conclusion that the remaining constituents are limited is not supported by data as the extent of contamination has not been defined to northeast, east, and southeast. Trend analysis (Mann-Kendall) of the TPHg and benzene monitoring results from wells MW-20 and MW-21 indicates that there is insufficient evidence to assert a statistically significant trend, thus the conclusion that the remaining constituents are stable and declining is also not supported.
- The case closure states, “If necessary the property owner has expressed willingness to accept a land use restriction for the Site.” As a condition of closure, land use restrictions are an appropriate tool for risk protection from residual contaminants when site conditions have been properly investigated and evaluated. As the extent of contamination has not been defined to the northeast, east, and southeast, and the potential for significant contamination to have migrated beneath two adjacent parcels (20 and 24 Barrett Avenue), land use restrictions are not appropriate at this time for this site.

The District supports the State Board’s effort to pursue closure of sites that no longer pose a threat to human health and the environment. Prior to considering this case for closure, the District recommends the following required actions at a minimum:

- The lateral and vertical extent of contamination to the northeast, east and southeast must be defined.
- An effort should be made to remediate the high residual groundwater contamination in the intermediate zone that has migrated off-site in the area of wells MW-20 and MW-21. The success of the on-site remedial efforts indicates that this may be done cost-effectively.
- Demonstrate that the plume is stable or declining. Current data from wells MW-20 and MW-21 do not have sufficient data to demonstrate a statistically significant trend.

Ms. Vivian Gomez-Latino

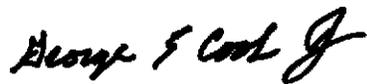
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In summary, the District believes that closure of this case is not appropriate as the site is located in the recharge area of a sensitive groundwater basin, extent of contamination is not defined, the residual groundwater contaminant concentrations indicate the presence of a significant secondary source, and no effort has been made to remediate off-site contaminants. The District encourages the State Board to protect Santa Clara County's groundwater subbasins and require the appropriate investigation and clean-up of all fuel leak sites, which includes defining the extent of contamination and remediating secondary sources to the extent practicable.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed closure of the Sabek Gas Station fuel leak site. If you have any questions, please call me at (408) 630-2964.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George E. Cook Jr." in a cursive style.

George E. Cook Jr.  
Associate Engineering Geologist  
Groundwater Monitoring and Analysis Unit  
Santa Clara Valley Water District

cc: Michael Balliet, Santa Clara County Department of Environmental Health  
Wei Liu, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region  
Karl Bjarke, City of Morgan Hill  
B. Ahmadi, V. De La Piedra