

April 8, 2015

Dear Chairperson Wolff and Board Members,

In January, I wrote to thank you for your help in convincing the City of Morro Bay to test the Morro Basin municipal wells for the presence of sewage. The tests had been done, and clear evidence of sewage contamination had been found in our drinking water wells.

At that time, I was optimistic that work would soon begin to resolve the problem. Unfortunately, and evidently due to advice given by RWQCB staff, the City does not appear to be planning prompt action to correct the problem.

In a recent email to me, the Morro Bay City Manager, Mr. Buckingham, said, "...the water board - the CA regulating agency that has over-watch on the safety of MB water - has told us that whatever leakage there may be from sewer lines in Morro Bay has not caused a water supply concern that reaches the nuisance level." and, "the water board watches our water very very closely and I am confident that if there was a measurable concern they would tell us, quickly, in no uncertain terms. To date, I have not received any communication from the water board questioning the general integrity of our sewer system / its effect on our drinking water. "

I find this not only very troubling, but shocking. It appears that your staff is telling City of Morro Bay staff that the sewage contamination in the wells is not anything to be concerned about. Yet, the sucralose test results show levels that exceed the reporting level for the SWRCB's own CEC monitoring program for recycled water.

As you know, on January 22, 2013, the SWRCB adopted a policy for recycled water. That policy contains very specific monitoring and reporting levels for a variety of contaminants of emerging concern (CEC's), and one of those is sucralose. The reporting level for sucralose is ".1 µg/l". This is, of course, equivalent to 100 ng/l.

Sample Location	Analyte	Results Parts per trillion (ng/l)
Flippos Well	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	91
High School Well 1	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	140
High School Well 2	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	170
Well 3	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	100
Well 4	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	64
Well 14	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	120
Well 15	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	90
Well 13	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	110
Manhole 13.36 (Wastewater)	Caffeine	280,000
	Sucralose	3,300
State Water	Caffeine	2
	Sucralose	120
1301 Little Morro Creek Rd	Caffeine	ND
	Sucralose	ND

Here, once again, are the test results for the Morro Basin wells. Five of the wells within City limits had sucralose levels at or exceeding 100 ng/l. The only well that did not have any sucralose was one east of town and not subject to the influence of the City sewer system.

I am sure my concern is obvious. According to the SWRCB policy for recycled water, a sucralose level of 100 ng/l or higher is significant for water that is to be returned to the ground.

Yet, it appears that your staff does not consider that same sucralose level important when it is detected in our drinking water wells. They don't even think it is at a "nuisance level".

I believe that the best that could be said of your staff's attitude is that it is very puzzling. For many years, they denied that exfiltrated sewage could be a source of the nitrate problems in the City wells. They resisted the idea of testing for sewage

contamination of the wells. Now, the presence of significant amount of sewage in the wells has been proven, and I would think that they would simply admit their mistake and encourage the City to fix the problem. Instead, they have downplayed the seriousness of the situation.

I ask that you take whatever action is necessary to impress upon your staff that this is a serious problem and that it needs to be fixed. It appears that, without your help, the ongoing contamination of the aquifer, our drinking water, and the ocean will likely continue for some time to come.

Sincerely,

Linda Stedjee
Morro Bay

cc:

David Buckingham, Morro Bay City Manager
Justin Buhr, California Coastal Commission
Dan Carl, California Coastal Commission