
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

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SUBJECT: OIL FIELD PRODUCED WATER POND STATUS REPORT #3

The Central Valley Water Board (CVWB) has undertaken a significant effort to address issues associated with unlined surface impoundments (ponds) used to dispose of water produced as a by-product of oil production. A work plan was prepared by CVWB staff in November of 2014 identifying work needed to be completed and an implementation schedule for completion of this program by the end of 2016. This status report identifies where we are in the process and what impediments have been encountered and whether the schedule is being maintained.

Inventory

The inventory of produced water impoundments has been completed. Staff identified potential surface ponds, that CVWB staff were unaware of, from aerial photographs and information from the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). This information was then correlated to facilities currently regulated by waste discharge requirements (WDRs) and used to determine areas where inspections were needed.

Field Inspections

All of the identified impoundments (including those that were previously unknown) on 265 facilities have been inspected. Approximately 10 inspection reports remain to be completed and this task will be completed the week of 6 April.

Findings of the inspection have identified 578 active ponds and 355 inactive ponds. Inactive ponds are those that have no indication of recent discharge and the operators have no intent of future discharge. Of the 578 active ponds, 370 are covered by WDRs and 208 are not currently regulated. As a note, some of the inactive ponds are also covered under WDRs

The inspection reports were sent as Notices of Violation (NOVs) for facilities that have active ponds that are not covered by WDRs and there is no record of a Report of Waste Discharge

(RWD) having been submitted. Inspections reports for inactive ponds not covered under WDRs lay out the requirement for submitting RWDs and getting coverage under WDRs before discharge can occur to these ponds.

Section 13267 orders were issued to 77 oil producers the week of 30 March requiring comprehensive characterization of wastewater discharged to those ponds. The orders were sent to operators of active ponds at 169 facilities. These order require submittal of analytical data for produced water waste constituents including general minerals (major cations and anions), total dissolved solids, metals, radionuclides, organic compounds (such as polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes), and others (such as boron, lithium, and strontium). These orders were issued to answer questions about specifically what is in the wastewater. The orders also include a list of known ponds and require operations to inform us of any additional discharges that are occurring. Submittals are due by 15 June 2015. We issued this because we need this data sooner than the enforcement orders would allow.

Within the next two weeks, additional orders will be issued to oil producers that do have active ponds to confirm and certify that they do not have any land discharges of which the CVWB is unaware. This is being done to identify any discharges that have been missed.

Enforcement Orders

We are working on drafting enforcement orders for those facilities that are not covered by WDRs and where the current WDRs need to be updated. The first two cleanup and abatement orders (CAOs) were sent to the operators of those ponds as administrative drafts for comment. The first two CAOs were sent out as tentative for public comment 3 April 2015 to be considered by the CVWB at the June 2015 meeting. It is anticipated that subsequent CAOs will be issued by staff under authority delegated by the Board. We have approximately 180 enforcement orders to issue. The schedule is to have enforcement orders completed by the end of calendar year 2015.

We have drafted the first cease and desist order (CDO) for a large facility under an outdated set of waste discharge requirements (WDRs). We anticipate having this order for consideration by the Board at the scheduled July 2015 board meeting.

The tentative orders propose periodic monitoring of the effluent (an extension of the 13267 orders), hydrogeologic characterization of the area around the ponds, an evaluation of the nature and extent of any impacts to groundwater, a survey of water supply wells within a mile of the ponds, and sampling of domestic wells. The orders also contain clauses to allow recovery of staff costs and providing replacement water if the discharge has impaired beneficial use of groundwater.

Other actions may be taken based on the results of investigations being completed. These other actions will be taken on a case-by-case basis depending on the site-specific circumstances.

Permitting Activities

Drafting of general WDRs will begin this summer.