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REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

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Executive Officer's Report

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State Water Board Cleanup Summit (Helen Hild and Landon Guzman)

Last month, the Water Boards hosted a multi-day Cleanup Summit in Ontario, California for all staff working in the Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program, Site Cleanup Program (SCP), and Department of Defense (DoD) Program. About 300 staff from the State and Regional Water Boards, including 32 staff from the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board attended the event. A similar event was last convened in 2017. This type of event is an important opportunity for Regional Water Board staff to learn from and interact with State Water Board staff and staff from other regions doing similar work. This is especially important now because about 45 percent of staff in our two groundwater cleanup divisions are new to our agency and many are early career professionals.



San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board Staff at the Cleanup Summit.

The first day was a half day of field demonstrations covering site investigation and air sampling techniques. Attendees were able to view and learn about different drill rigs; injection products; and soil, groundwater, and soil vapor sampling equipment. They also learned about indoor air sampling procedures including the importance of leak checks.

The next two days featured speakers, panels, and poster sessions that introduced staff to internal subject matter experts and covered topics such as the funding mechanisms for the UST, SCP, and DoD programs, the complexities of existing cleanup cases, and statewide case management challenges. The final day included an interactive session during which staff were paired up to deliberate site investigation and case closure options on a hypothetical case. During this exercise, staff knowledge of remedial practices and funding sources was used to determine the best path to site closure. By participating in this case study exercise, staff were afforded the opportunity to hear how other regions and members of other programs would tackle complex issues.

In addition, several of our staff participated by speaking on panels and preparing educational posters:

- Nicole Fry presented during the Applying a Racial Equity Lens session. She gave an overview of progress on SCP cases located in historically disadvantaged areas in our Region with CalEnviroScreen scores greater than 75 percent. Due to efforts to prioritize the roughly 150 cases (inactive and active) that have been identified since 2021, more than half of those cases are now closed, correctly identified in GeoTracker as “non-case” information, or in a cleanup/post-cleanup phase.
- Dana McCarthy presented a case study for the High-Resolution Site Characterization session. Dana’s presentation focused on several high-resolution site characterization technologies that have been implemented to move cases quickly and effectively through site investigation and into remediation.
- Ross Steenson and Ron Goloubow were panelists in the Remediation Roundtable session. Ross discussed green remediation techniques, which are approaches that can reduce a project’s environmental footprint without sacrificing the cleanup objectives of the project. Ron discussed rebound testing for various contaminants and participated in the open discussion on remedial practices.



Ross Steenson presents during the Remediation Roundtable session.

- Alyx Karpowicz and Rachelle Lim presented a poster about the potential impacts of sea level rise and groundwater rise impacts at cleanup sites. Their poster highlighted a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool they created to help staff identify sites that may be susceptible to sea level rise and groundwater rise. Their team also helps staff assess the efficacy of selected remedial actions and the risk of increased contaminant leaching, mobilization, vapor production, and damage to waste containment systems with a climate change lens.
- Ciroos Liaghat presented a poster about the sensitive receptors visualization tool that he created with Laurent Meillier, Kenny Gen-kuong, and Adam Rueckert. The visualization tool helps case managers identify sensitive receptors (e.g., preschools, surface water bodies) in proximity to contaminated sites. Case managers can use the tool to determine relative risk at each of their case sites to help prioritize their work.

Site Cleanup Requirements, Former Cabrillo Dry Cleaners (Ciroos Liaghat)

Last month, Executive Officer Eileen White, on behalf of the Regional Water Board, issued Site Cleanup Requirements Order R2-2023-0016 requiring the investigation and cleanup of soil, groundwater, and soil vapor impacted by tetrachloroethene (PCE) and its breakdown products associated with the Former Cabrillo Dry Cleaners located at the Cabrillo Shopping Center in a mixed residential and commercial neighborhood in Fremont.

The dry cleaner operated from the 1960s to 1987, at which time the Dischargers purchased the property. Subsurface investigations began in 1999 under the local oversight agency, Alameda County Water District. In October 2019, the District transferred the case to the Regional Water Board due to noncompliance, recalcitrance, vapor intrusion risk, and limited progress in delineating the vertical and horizontal extent of the contamination.

Regional Water Board staff have worked collaboratively with the Dischargers and their consultants over the last three years. As a result of this collaboration, the Dischargers voluntarily evaluated potential vapor intrusion risks to downgradient residences, implemented mitigation measures, and initiated cleanup. Since 2021, multiple soil vapor and indoor air samples have been collected at downgradient single-family residences and have confirmed there is no immediate threat to the residents. In summer 2022, as an extra precaution, the Dischargers proposed an interim vapor intrusion mitigation for one of the downgradient residences and installed a crawlspace air-pumping system to eliminate or reduce any potential PCE vapors. The mitigation system remains in operation despite the PCE concentrations in indoor air and crawlspace air remaining below the residential environmental screening levels.

The Dischargers plan to conduct additional characterization to delineate the PCE source and conduct a soil vapor extraction pilot test by the end of 2024. The issuance of this Site Cleanup Requirements Order will ensure investigation and cleanup is completed in a reasonable timeframe.

Case Closures Using the State Water Board's UST Low-Threat Closure Policy (Kevin Brown)

In April 2023, we closed two co-located leaking underground storage tank (UST) cases associated with a commercial site in Concord using the State Water Board's 2012 *Low-Threat Underground Storage Tank Case Closure Policy* ([LTCP](#)). Since 2012, all UST case closures have followed the LTCP, which allows some degree of residual petroleum contamination to remain if site conditions meet LTCP criteria. First and foremost, the criteria require that a *reasonable* effort be made to clean up petroleum discharges to the *extent practicable* to protect human health and water quality based on the *current and/or planned site use*. Each year we close 20 to 30 UST cases under the LTCP. These two, which happen to be co-located, are typical examples.

Background

The site, located at the southern intersection of Treat Boulevard and Clayton Road in a high-traffic area of Concord, is a former gasoline service station. Automotive fueling and repair work began at the site in 1964. In 1989, British Petroleum acquired the gas station from Mobil. In 2004, a Falcon Gas Station began operations at the site.



Source Property – 4300 Clayton Road, Concord – looking southeast.

Leak Case #1

During 1992-1993, gasoline contamination was discovered, and investigations were conducted to define the extent of the release in groundwater and soil. Soil and groundwater samples were analyzed, and monitoring and remediation wells were installed. Soil vapor extraction was conducted in 1995 to reduce the gasoline contamination in the ground. In 2008, monitored natural attenuation was implemented to determine its efficacy.

Leak Case #2

In early 2011, during a routine sampling event, gasoline was discovered floating atop the groundwater in several monitoring wells. It was determined that a catastrophic failure of a single-walled, fiberglass UST occurred, and the gas station was shut down. Vacuum extraction was implemented to remove free product from impacted wells.

Between 2013 and 2020, the fuel USTs were removed, and the site was further investigated to define the extent of contamination. Several tons of contaminated soil were excavated and disposed of. Additionally, over 500,000 gallons of groundwater were extracted and treated, and more soil vapor extraction was conducted. In all, remedial activities removed over 10,000 pounds of gasoline contamination.

Closure

Post-remediation effectiveness monitoring confirmed that the residual contamination, for both historic releases, poses little risk to current and future building occupants. At the request of the responsible parties, Regional Water Board staff evaluated the site against the LTCP. We determined that all General and Media-Specific Criteria were met for both leak cases. In accordance with the LTCP, public notices of our intention to close the cases were mailed out to neighboring property owners and other interested parties. No comments were received. Subsequently, British Petroleum and the property owner were directed to destroy the remaining 15 monitoring and remediation wells, which is routinely required so they do not serve as a potential conduit for future surface spills to reach groundwater. On April 13, 2023, the Dischargers for both cases received "No Further Action" documentation—including legislatively-mandated "Uniform Case Closure Letters"—and the cases were assigned "Case Closure" status in our GeoTracker database. The case closures are protective of human health and the environment, and we envision redevelopment of the parcel in the future. We do not anticipate reevaluating the property's environmental status.

Community Engagement (Staff)

Merritt College Outreach

On September 19, 2023, Celina Hernandez, Senior Engineering Geologist, was a guest speaker at Merritt College in Oakland. Celina presented to about 20 students in a class on careers in government at Merritt College's Natural History and Sustainability Program. The program offers three Certificates of Achievement in Conservation and Resource Management, Natural History and Resources, and Urban Agroecology. Celina presented an overview of the Water Boards and job opportunities. This outreach is part of a larger effort at the Regional Water Board to develop a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Sixth Annual Western Groundwater Congress

On September 12–14, 2023, Jessica Watkins, Groundwater Protection and Waste Containment Division Manager, attended the Groundwater Resources Association of California's Sixth Annual Western Groundwater Congress in Burbank. Jessica attended conference sessions on topics such as contaminant fate and transport, PFAS remediation, and innovative technologies to manage site characterization and monitored natural attenuation. During the Opening Keynote, she learned that condensate water captured during the industrial processing of [tomatoes](#) could be a significant source of high-quality water for drinking water, groundwater replenishment, and community projects. She reported on what she learned at the monthly division meeting.

Enforcement Actions (Brian Thompson and James Parrish)

On behalf of the Board, the Executive Officer approved the following settled enforcement action since last month's report:

Discharger	Violations	Imposed Penalty	Supplemental Environmental Project
Lehigh Southwest Cement Company	Potable Water Spill	\$600,310	\$300,000 ¹

¹ Includes Supplemental Environmental Project to restore a segment of Permanente Creek to its natural condition by removing a historical in-stream concrete retention dam.

401 Water Quality Certification Applications Received (Abigail Smith)

The table below lists those applications received for Clean Water Act section 401 water quality certification from August 17 through September 13, 2023. A check mark in the right-hand column indicates a project with work that may be in Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) jurisdiction.

Project Name	City/Location	County	May have BCDC Jurisdiction
Goldsmith Culvert Repair	Berkeley	Alameda	
Upper San Leandro Reservoir Emergency Drain Valve Structure Sediment Removal	Castro Valley	Alameda	
Rubber Dam 3 and Kaiser Pond Fish Screen facility	Fremont	Alameda	
Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Pilot	Oakland	Alameda	✓
Creek Bank Scour Protection Martinez Early Childhood Center	Martinez	Contra Costa	
25 Brookbank Rd Orinda Erosion Control	Orinda	Contra Costa	
Diablo Glen Continuing Care Retirement Community	Unincorporated	Contra Costa	
CA ERFO PORE 2023 Palomarin Road Emergency Repairs	Unincorporated	Marin	
Deer Island Basin Tidal Restoration Phase 1 Bird Ponds	Unincorporated	Marin	✓
1025 Green Valley Rd	Napa	Napa	
Spine Ridge Trail Culvert Replacement at Ember Ridge Equestrian Center	Moss Beach	San Mateo	
Sand Hill Farm Emergency Culvert Replacement	Unincorporated	San Mateo	
Berryessa Mixed Use	San Jose	Santa Clara	
Yerba Buena Emergency Bridge Repair	San Jose	Santa Clara	

Project Name	City/Location	County	May have BCDC Jurisdiction
Scott Ranch Residential Development	Petaluma	Sonoma	
Viansa Emergency Flap Gate Repair	Unincorporated	Sonoma	✓