



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
December 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

Contents

1. Personnel Report – *Sandra Lopez*..... 1

2. 2023 CWA NPDES National Technical Workshop – *Jose Valle de Leon, Kristin Tokheim, and Lauder Fairchok* 2

3. Advancing Restoration Interagency Summit – *Liz van Diepen* 3

4. Update on Closure Activities at the Former Coolwater Generating Station Presented at the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting of the Mojave Water Agency – *Jan Zimmerman* 5

5. Former George Air Force Base, Victorville, San Bernardino County, CERCLA Five-Year Review - Remedies Not Protective, Base Tour, Path-Forward Meeting – *Alonzo Poach, Lorien Sanders, Molina Hauv*..... 6

6. Update on Confined Animal Facility Strategy – *John Morales* 10

1. Personnel Report – *Sandra Lopez*

Vacancies

- Environmental Scientist, Planning & Assessment Unit. The position is advertised with placement in either the South Lake Tahoe or Victorville office. This position will assess water quality data to help develop the 303(d) Impaired Waters List, work to restore impaired waters, and also work on Basin Planning priorities. The position requires work based in science, policy, and public process.
- Senior Water Resource Control Engineer (Supervisor), South Lake Tahoe. This position will oversee the Regulatory and Enforcement unit. The unit is responsible for implementing the Water Board's regulatory and compliance programs within the North Lahontan Region and, under certain circumstances, throughout the Lahontan Region (e.g., National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program for Fish Hatcheries, Aquatic Pesticides application).

Departures

- Sheryl Bilbrey, Environmental Scientist, Planning & Assessment Unit, South Lake Tahoe

2. 2023 CWA NPDES National Technical Workshop – Jose Valle de Leon, Kristin Tokheim, and Lauder Fairchok

Water Board Staff attended the NPDES National Technical Inspector Workshop from November 27 through November 30, 2023 in Berkeley, CA to enhance their permit oversight and inspection skills. The workshop provided an important, multi-day classroom and field training opportunity for USEPA and state staff from across the country. This year's training was attended by Jose Valle de Leon from the Victorville office and NPDES program staff, Kristin Tokheim and Lauder Fairchok, from the Tahoe office.

The training included daily sessions with tracks for specific permit interests and skill levels. EPA staff from various states provided presentations and interactive discussions on wastewater, industrial, stormwater (industrial/construction/municipal), and pretreatment topics. Jose, Kristin, and Lauder, as new staff to Lahontan, attended beginner training sessions to receive foundational knowledge for conducting effective inspections.

The workshop also included a field demonstration day with a few different options for site visits to local facilities regulated under NPDES permits. For this portion of the workshop, Jose selected a field exercise focused on pretreatment. The site visit was to a local metal plating shop which had an onsite treatment system to remove metals from the wastewater before being discharged to the municipal collection system. During the site visit, EPA Staff demonstrated how to prepare prior to the inspection, how to conduct an initial interview, file review, and closing conference.

Kristin attended a site visit to the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant which is a large-scale facility designed to treat an average of 54 million gallons per day of wastewater from the community. The site visit included demonstrations by EPA staff and plant operators on several topics including sampling procedures, laboratory inspections, and discharge monitoring report reviews. The field outing was valuable in highlighting the various types of treatment processes and compliance issues which may be encountered at a wastewater plant during an inspection.

Lauder, who regulates sites enrolled in the Statewide (CGP) and Tahoe Construction General Permit and Industrial General Permit, opted for the stormwater field exercise to further hone her understanding of stormwater systems and best practices for conducting inspections. This included a tour around the UC Berkeley campus to discuss aspects of a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) inspection, and how this interfaces with other stormwater permits. This was followed by a group mock inspection of an academic building construction site, allowing an important opportunity to bring to the field what was learned in the classroom sessions and knowledge-share from other inspectors' professional experiences.

Beyond the training sessions and field visits, the workshop also provided numerous networking events and Q&A sessions. Engaging in these events provided a platform for

Lahontan staff to expand their learning and effectiveness in their job role. Staff were able to exchange helpful technical concepts learned over time and create professional relationships with USEPA Region 9 liaisons.



Photo 2.1: Group Photo of NPDES National Technical Workshop Attendees on November 27, 2023 (Photo Courtesy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance)

3. Advancing Restoration Interagency Summit – *Liz van Diepen*

The Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds provided an ideal setting for California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and State and Regional Water Board staff to gather for the first-ever Advancing Restoration Interagency Summit (summit) hosted by the California Landscape Stewardship Network. Attendees of the December 12-13, 2023 summit were Lahontan Water Board dredge and fill/401 water quality certification program staff Jan Zimmerman, Tiffany Steinert, and Liz van Diepen. The general purpose of the summit was to explore opportunities to reduce the regulatory burden, or “red tape,” for beneficial habitat restoration projects, commonly referred to as “cutting the green tape.” Themes of the summit included: 1) increasing the pace and scale of restoration work while protecting resources and species, 2) strengthening connections between agency staff to facilitate coordinated efforts, and 3) emphasizing common purpose to advance regulatory efficiencies.

State Water Board Vice Chair Dedi D’Adamo and CDFW Director Chuck Bonham kicked off the summit by speaking about the existential threat of climate change on habitat and the species they support, and the urgent need to increase the pace and scale of restoration. Next, attendees heard from a panel of Regional Water Board and CDFW staff on successes they’ve had with facilitating restoration projects. The

remainder of the Summit consisted primarily of focused small group intra- and inter-agency discussions and report-outs to the larger group of attendees, with topics ranging from perceived staff and agency roles for advancing restoration; benefits of utilizing general orders; barriers associated with existing general orders; and staff needs for reducing barriers to restoration permitting and grant funding.

The summit highlighted the current shift in mindset from avoiding project impacts at all costs to considering project effects to beneficial uses overall. Due to the inherent nature of dredge/fill program work, this involves a degree of risk; however, it's important to acknowledge the risk involved with no action and maintaining the status quo which is reflected by the fact that most California water bodies are impaired. Lahontan Water Board staff left the summit with a number of tasks that can be implemented immediately, in addition to some longer-term efforts permitting staff could take on to help "cut the green tape." One key takeaway was to improve communication with other agency permitting staff such as CDFW and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; another was to proactively go the extra mile to help push along ecologically beneficial projects. Lahontan Water Board staff look forward to reducing regulatory hurdles in the region for restoration projects, which is directly in line with our [2019 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy](#).



Photo 3.1: attendees from the Advancing Restoration Interagency Summit

4. Update on Closure Activities at the Former Coolwater Generating Station Presented at the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting of the Mojave Water Agency – Jan Zimmerman

Lahontan Water Board staff (Andrew Robinson, Christina Guerra, and Jan Zimmerman) attended the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting of the Mojave Water Agency (MWA) on December 7, 2023. As part of the regular meeting agenda, Mr. Robinson provided an update on the closure activities occurring at the former Coolwater Generating Station in Daggett, San Bernardino County.

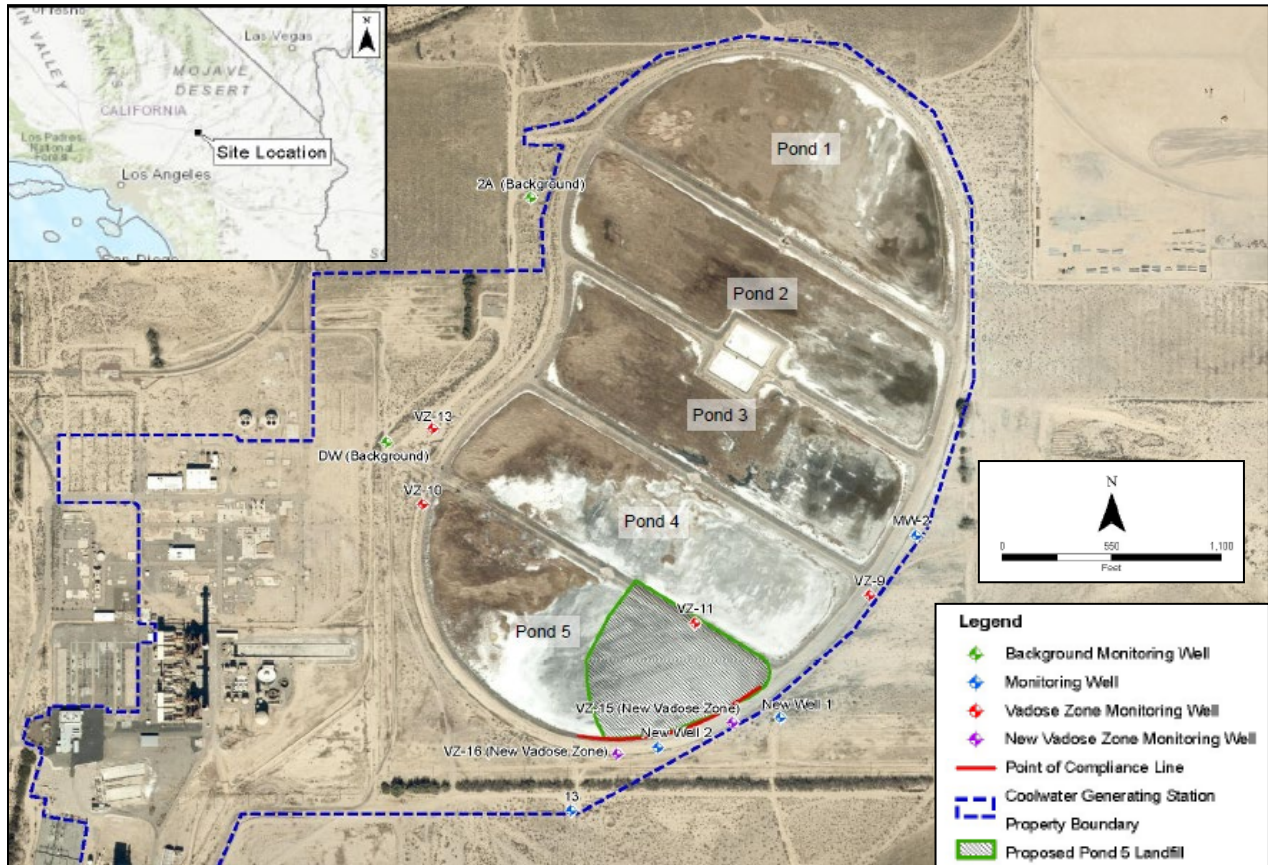


Figure 4.1: Site layout for surface impoundments and proposed landfill for closure

The Closure and Post-Closure Waste Discharge Requirements for the Coolwater Generating Station were adopted by the Board in May 2022. The plan is to clean-close the surface impoundments (Ponds 1, 2, 3, 4, and a portion of Pond 5) by removing all waste and consolidating that waste material in the eastern portion of Pond 5 (Figure 1). The consolidated waste in Pond 5 will then be closed as a landfill pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 27. Following clean-closure of the surface impoundments any liner materials that are found to be unimpacted by waste may be reused onsite or left in place, and any berms not used as part of the Pond 5 Landfill containment will be removed (regraded onsite). Additionally, windblown wastes deposited on the ground

surface outside of the surface impoundments (primarily north and east in the direction of prevailing winds) will be collected and consolidated in the landfill as part of the closure.

Between May 2022 and July 2023, the discharger finalized engineering plans, obtained materials and equipment, and secured a contractor to do the work. Closure activities onsite began in summer 2023 and consolidation of the waste into the onsite landfill was completed by December 2023. Samples of the clay liners and subsurface have been collected to verify clean closure. Consolidation of offsite windblow waste is pending an Incidental Take Permit that the discharger is currently obtaining from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for desert tortoise. In the interim, an interim soil cover has been placed over the landfill, and the final cover will be constructed once all waste is consolidated in the landfill.

The presentation was well received by TAC members. Several comments were made by TAC members including the concern for groundwater contamination from the consolidated waste landfill and the process by which Water Board staff informed the community of the pending adoption of the Coolwater Generating Station Closure and Post-Closure Board Order. Mr. Robinson assured the TAC members that long-term groundwater monitoring has occurred at this site since the 1980's and that the monitoring will continue through the post-closure period; to date there is no indication that there has been a release to groundwater from this site. Mr. Robinson also explained the process by which Water Board staff inform local communities, interested persons, and other local and state agencies when a new or revised Board Order goes before the Water Board for adoption. It seems that some TAC members felt our notification process for adopting the Coolwater Generating Station Closure and Post-Closure Board Order fell short of their expectations as they were unaware of it at the time. To address this, Water Board staff are committed to informing TAC members of pending Water Board actions within the jurisdiction of the Mojave Water Agency at future TAC meetings.

Other business related to the TAC was also discussed. The next TAC meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2024.

5. Former George Air Force Base, Victorville, San Bernardino County, CERCLA Five-Year Review - Remedies Not Protective, Base Tour, Path-Forward Meeting – Alonzo Poach, Lorien Sanders, Molina Hauv

During the most recent Five-Year Review at former George Air Force Base (AFB), Air Force and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determined that several of the existing remedies are not protective of human health and the environment including the Operable Unit (OU) 1 CG070 trichloroethylene (TCE) and the OU3 OT069 TCE groundwater plumes (see figure 1, Extent of Groundwater Plumes 2021). Protectiveness is generally defined in the National Contingency Plan (NCP) by the risk range for carcinogens and the hazard index (HI) for non-cancer effects. A Five-Year Review is required at George AFB by the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). The purpose of the Five-Year Review process is to evaluate the performance and protectiveness of remedies formally

adopted in CERCLA decision documents (e.g., Records of Decision). With EPA's findings that several of the remedies were not protective a meeting was requested to begin working on a schedule to select or restart protective remedies for the site.

The meeting requested by EPA was held on November 7 and 8, 2023. Air Force, EPA, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and Lahontan Water Board staff met via Microsoft Teams and in-person at former George AFB for a tour of the former base and to discuss a path forward for basewide remediation (i.e. protective cleanup). Photos from the site tour are below. The majority of former George AFB has been transferred from Air Force and operates as Southern California Logistics Airport. Other former George AFB property uses include a federal prison, commercial and industrial, two schools, and one church. Air Force is in the process awarding contracts for continued assessment, feasibility studies, and remediation work. The status of remaining property transfer from Air Force, the Air Force's petition regarding City of Adelanto Wastewater Treatment Plant, and general redevelopment at former George AFB were also discussed. Post-meeting follow-up items include non-urgent administrative and document-related tasks. Notably, Air Force, EPA, DTSC and Lahontan Water Board staff agreed to meet routinely for status updates and continue regular meetings to discuss site progress and document submittals.

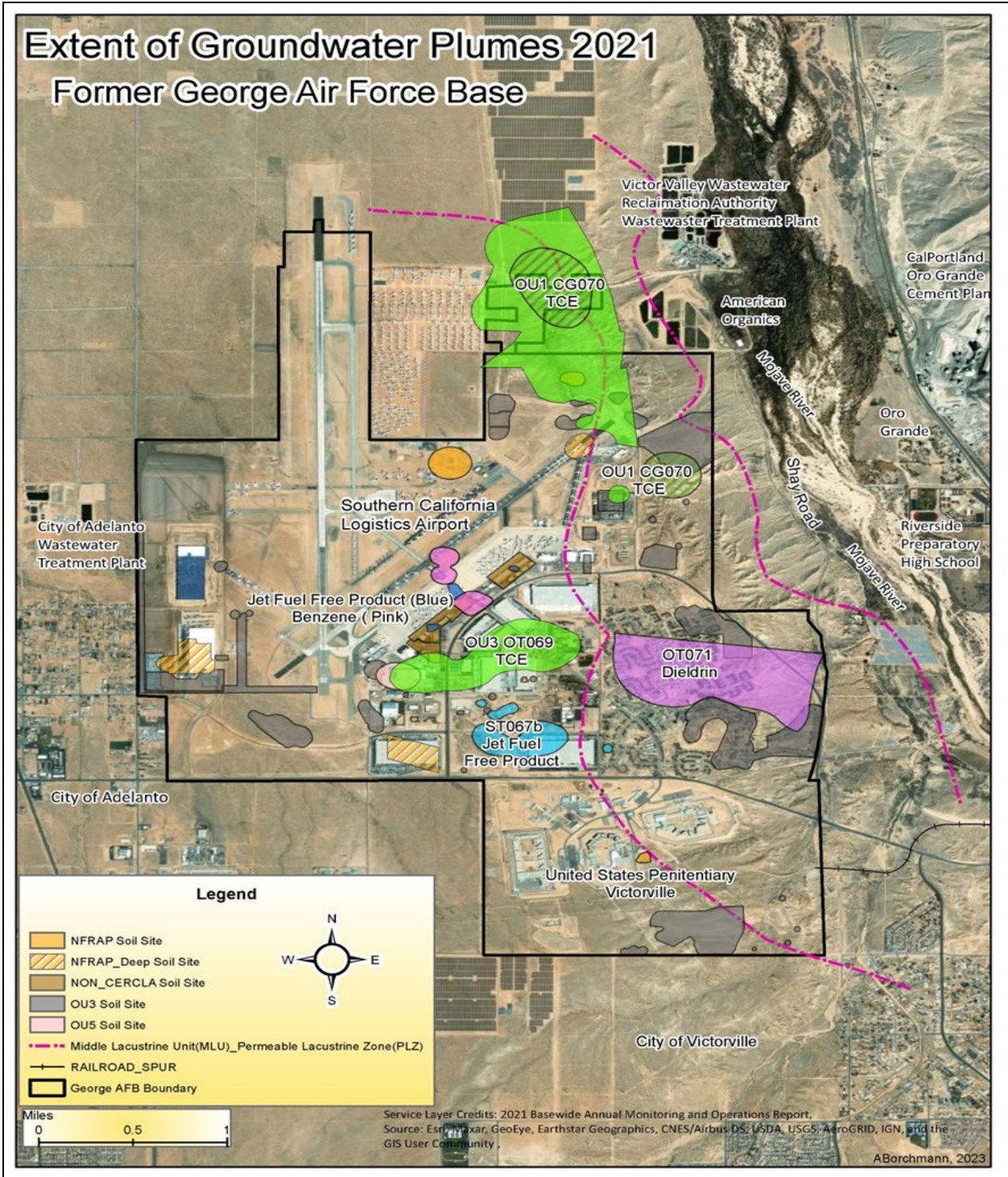


Figure 5.1: Extent of Groundwater Plumes 2021. Aerial map illustrating the groundwater plumes located on Former George Air Force Base.



Photo 5.2: A portion of the airfield of Former George AFB, currently Southern California Logistics Airport.



Photo 5.3: Transferred property, owned by Federal Bureau of Prisons: former munitions site.



Photo 5.4: Transferred property, owned by a private developer: former housing area slated for warehouse redevelopment.



Photo 5.5: Air Force, EPA, and Lahontan Water Board staff during basewide tour. This picture is taken at the site of a remediation treatability study using in-situ carbon (Plume Stop by Regenesis). Names and association of those pictures from left to right: Joe Reyna (Air Force), Ana Nieves (Air Force), Calvin Cox (Air Force Contract support), Alonzo Poach (Water Board), Omer Shalev (EPA), Christiana Hewitt (Air Force), Molina Hauv (Water Board), Lorien Sanders (Water Board), John Hopkins (EPA).

6. Update on Confined Animal Facility Strategy – *John Morales*

On August 15, 2015, the previous Executive Officer instructed staff to draft a regional General Order for Confined Animal Facilities (CAFs) after receiving approval by the Board. Since then, staff had worked diligently with external and internal stakeholders to draft a General Order and to bring it to the Board for adoption in April 2023. However, due to the multitude of challenges that were faced in writing a General Order and to better address the threat to water quality that each CAF poses based on site-specific conditions, we are pivoting our strategy to regulate the CAFs with individual orders instead of a regionwide General Order.

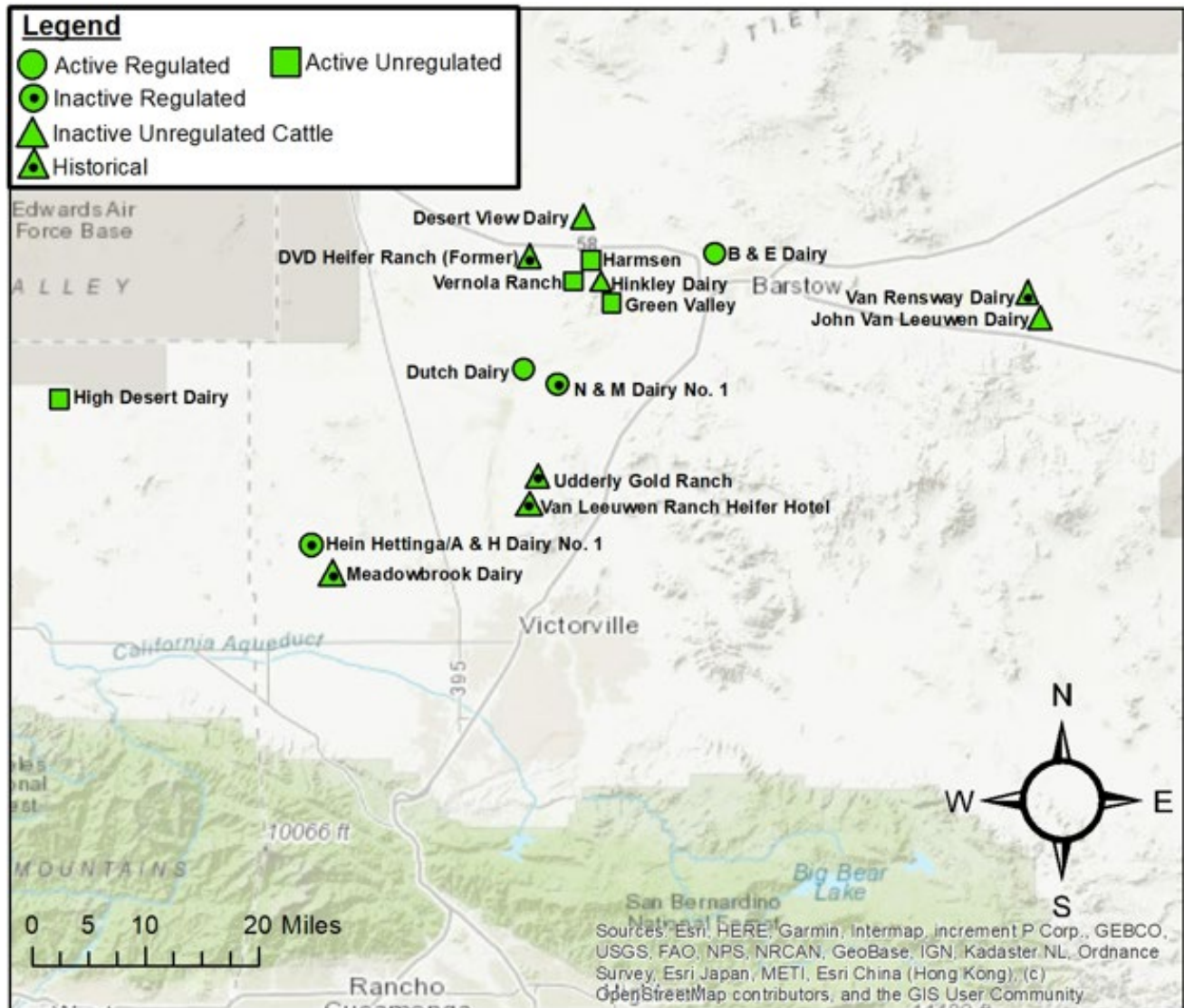


Figure 6.1: Map showing CAFs in and around the Victorville, Hinkley, and Barstow areas

There are a number of CAFs in the region, with most located in the southern part of the region (Figure 1). Each varies substantially by farm management practices, the number of animals onsite, milking cows versus feed lots only, and active and closed facilities that require a varied level of cleanup. Also, a generic one-size fits all monitoring and reporting program, such as what would be included in a General Order, may not be protective of water quality. Some CAFs require a greater extent of parameters to monitor due to a greater threat to water quality based on the quantity of on-site animals, and whether the facility includes wash water from milking activities. CAFs also have a variation in the amount and location for manure disposal. Some dispose of the manure in on-site crop fields, sell the manure as fertilizer to be used for agricultural uses, or haul it to golf courses for composting and use on green landscapes. Additionally, there are CAFs in the region that do not have wash pens to wash the cows; instead, these CAFs use Iodine to clean and disinfect the milking cows, a water saving alternative. Because

of these differences in CAFs within the region, staff determined that it would be more beneficial to write individual orders tailored to the needs of each site.

Individual orders for each facility would still address the same concerns as was included in the General Order. These concerns include:

1. unlined wash water disposal ponds,
2. over application of manure and wash water to land,
3. storm water run-off from corrals and dairy sites, and
4. prevention of further groundwater pollution caused by the CAF operation.

Staff have been in discussions with several dairymen and their consultants regarding this change in strategy, and there has been a better reception of the individual order rather than the General Order by most dairymen that we have spoken to.

Six CAFs are regulated under a Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) requiring delivery of replacement water for drinking and cooking to residents whose supply wells are affected by groundwater pollution from CAF discharges. Replacement drinking water must be provided to any resident within the affected area having nitrate and total dissolved solids concentrations close to and/or over the primary and secondary drinking water standards. Approximately 30 residents currently receive replacement drinking water from five dairies and one heifer ranch that have polluted down gradient residential supply wells. The individual orders would not address cleanup of groundwater pollution or replace existing CAOs, a CAO or other enforcement order/action would remain separate and in addition to an individual order.

We have developed a prioritization scheme to help identify for which CAFs individual orders will be prepared first. Considerations include number of animals, proximity to the Mojave River or other surface water, and quality of best management practices implemented. Staff are currently drafting the first individual order with a target of bringing that first order to the Board for adoption in Fall 2024.

Staff will be presenting an informational item on the updated CAF strategy to the Board during the regularly scheduled April 2024 Board meeting. The presentation will provide a more detailed review of the benefits of an individual order and why we are pivoting our strategy to regulate CAFs with individual orders instead of a regionwide General Order.

