

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Hinkley Chromium Cleanup, 2020 Second-Semiannual Status Update – Amanda Lopez

PG&E continues to implement cleanup actions to abate the effects of chromium waste discharges in Hinkley, in accordance with Cleanup and Abatement Order No. R6V-2015-0068 (2015 CAO). Over the course of the second half of 2020, Water Board staff have participated in several meetings and reviewed various reports associated with PG&E's cleanup actions, as summarized below.

Hinkley Community Meetings

During the second half of 2020, Water Board staff attended two Hinkley Community Meetings, one on July 23, 2020 and the other on October 22, 2020. Due to the COVID emergency, the community meetings were held outdoors, in a drive-thru format, with those in attendance wearing masks and practicing social distancing. While community members stayed in their vehicles, they were given the option of either hard copy handouts or USB thumb drive of all the remediation and background study updates provided by the Independent Review Panel (IRP) Manager. Water Board staff answered questions from community members regarding PG&E's cleanup actions and listened to community members general concerns regarding water quality and water quantity in the Hinkley and Water Valleys. The information from these meetings is available on the [IRP Hinkley Groundwater Website](http://www.hinkleygroundwater.com/) (<http://www.hinkleygroundwater.com/>). This format was successful and will continue for the foreseeable future.

Technical Report Review

Water Board staff reviewed several technical documents associated with the Hinkley chromium cleanup, many of which warrant a response for PG&E to adapt their cleanup actions in real-time to address changing site conditions. Water Board staff reviewed the following technical reports.

- *Four-Year Comprehensive Cleanup Status and Effectiveness Report for Years 2016 through 2019* - The four-year report evaluated the progress of remedial actions to reaching cleanup timeframes.
- *Remedial Timeframe Assessment Action Plan* - This report presented recommendations to enhance remedial activities and increase remedy effectiveness to reach the goals set out in the 2015 CAO.
- *Lower Aquifer Remediation Pilot Test of Modified Groundwater Extraction* - This pilot test will determine if modified pumping at targeted extraction wells on the western edge of the lower aquifer plume will promote remediation of the chromium in the lower aquifer.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Hydraulic Capture Report* - Meets the 2015 CAO reporting requirements.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Groundwater Monitoring Report and Domestic Well Sampling Results* - Meets the 2015 CAO reporting requirements.

- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Monitoring Report for the In-Situ Reactive Zone and Northwest Freshwater Injection Projects* - Meets Board Order No. R6V-2008-0014 reporting requirements.
- *1st & 2nd Quarter 2020 Agricultural Treatment Units Monitoring Report* - Meets Board Order No. R6V-2014-0023 reporting requirements.

To improve communication and collaboration with the IRP Manager, Water Board staff solicited their review of these technical reports, which were then shared with PG&E.

Request to Expand In-Situ Remediation Zone Permitted Area

PG&E requested a revision to the In-Situ Remediation Zone (IRZ) permitted area under the existing Notice of Applicability (NOA) of General Waste Discharge Requirements, Board Order No. R6V-2008-0014. PG&E proposes to expand the IRZ areas as follows: 600 feet to the west for the Central Area; and 140 feet to the west and 650 feet to the north for the South-Central ReInjection Area. The proposal also includes changes to the sentry well monitoring network used to monitor for treatment byproducts from IRZ operations. The increased size of the IRZ areas is conservative and would allow for future remedial expansion.

Expanding the permitted IRZ areas will require reissuance of the NOA. Water Board staff are exploring ways to build flexibility into the new NOA that would allow PG&E to implement adaptive management as remediation progresses. PG&E is also requesting a change from quarterly to semi-annual reporting, while continuing to collect monitoring data on a quarterly basis. The process by which notifications of adverse conditions are reported will remain unchanged. Water Board staff are working with the IRP Manager to identify ways to allow for public participation by community members prior to release of a draft NOA for public comment.

Chromium Background Study

The final draft of the Hinkley Chromium Background Study Report continues to move through the United States Geological Survey (USGS) internal review process. Dr. John Izbicki, the study's lead scientist, reports that progress is going smoothly and that each step within the review process adds to the quality of the final report. The report is prioritized within the USGS review process, and review staff are working hard to move the report along through the steps.

As of December 2020, the final report is anticipated for release within the first quarter of 2021. Additional USGS review requirements for data releases, imposed after the report schedule was first envisioned, and the "work from home" transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have added some time to the reviewing schedule.