

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

**STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 10, 2005**

Prepared on January 20, 2005

**ITEM NUMBER:** 24

**SUBJECT:** **Rescission of Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. 90-20 for Wilbur-Ellis Company, 20750 Spence Road, Salinas, Monterey County**

**KEY INFORMATION:**

Location: 20750 Spence Road, Salinas, Monterey County  
Type of Waste: Pesticide or fertilizer contaminated wastewater  
Discharge Volume: Undetermined amount of pesticide or fertilizer contaminated wastewater from improper handling or from accidental leaks and spills  
Existing Order: Order No. 90-20

**SUMMARY**

Wilbur-Ellis Company (Discharger) owned and operated a pesticide/fertilizer sales and application business at 20750 Spence Road, Salinas until mid-2000. Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. 90-20 (Attachment 1) contains prohibitions for the discharge of wastes and hazardous materials at the facility and specifies conditions for the management and appropriate disposal of wastes, hazardous materials, and contaminated stormwater runoff.

On October 22, 2000, Discharger requested rescission of Waste Discharge Requirements since the facility was no longer in operation. Regional Board staff directed Discharger to conduct a site assessment to determine whether past operations had resulted in soil or groundwater contamination. Results of the site assessment indicated groundwater was not impacted by nitrate or pesticides; however, soil was contaminated with toxaphene, an organochlorine pesticide, in some areas.

Regional Board staff agreed with Discharger's corrective action plan to cleanup the soil to the United States EPA Industrial Preliminary Remediation Goal of 1.6 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) for toxaphene with the condition that Discharger would record a deed restriction limiting

the use of the property to industrial, light industrial or commercial uses. On December 16, 2004, the Monterey County Records Office recorded the deed restriction (Attachment 2).

**DISCUSSION**

The Wilbur-Ellis facility sold agricultural pesticides, fertilizers, and conducted application services on 6 acres of flat land in a rural area of predominantly agricultural, industrial, and light industrial uses. The site is approximately 5 miles south of the City of Salinas. Discharger operated at this site from 1980 to mid 2000. Past activities at the site included retail sales, storage of product, vehicle maintenance, storage of vehicles and application equipment, and office activities. Pesticides and fertilizers were transported to the point of application and mixed and applied in the field. On-site soil contamination may have resulted from leaks, accidental spills, or improper handling and disposal of contaminated wastes.

The site lies in approximately the center of the lower Salinas River Valley. The lower Salinas River Valley is underlain by perched groundwater of low quality at a seasonally variable depth of 40-70 feet below ground surface (bgs) which in turn is underlain by two drinking water aquifers, known as

the Pressure 180-foot aquifer and the Pressure 400-foot aquifer.

On October 22, 2000, the Discharger requested rescission of Waste Discharge Requirements, Order No. 90-20 because operation at the facility had ceased. Regional Board staff directed the Discharger to conduct a site assessment to determine whether past operations had resulted in contamination at the site.

In November 2000, the Discharger conducted a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment to evaluate the possible presence of residual chemicals from past agricultural chemical usage. Soil samples were collected and analyzed for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, carbamates, organochlorine pesticides, organophosphate pesticides, phenoxy herbicides, total lead, and nitrates. Results of the site assessment indicated that toxaphene (maximum concentration of 23 mg/kg), an organochlorine pesticide, exceeded the United States EPA Industrial Preliminary Remediation Goal (PRG) of 1.6 mg/kg. Nitrate exceeding the Regional Board's guidance cleanup level of 50 mg/kg has been detected at a maximum depth of 15 feet bgs. Other detected constituents were below their respective Industrial PRGs. As directed by Regional Board staff, the Discharger conducted an additional soil investigation to determine the extent of nitrate and toxaphene exceeding guidance or Industrial PRG levels.

In September 2002, Discharger conducted a shallow groundwater assessment to determine whether nitrate in soil had impacted the underlying perched groundwater. Four monitoring wells were installed and the depth to groundwater ranged from 41 to 43 feet bgs, with a northerly flow direction. Analytical laboratory results indicated that groundwater was not impacted by the facility's past operation above elevated background levels. The average nitrate background groundwater concentration was 322 milligrams per liter (mg/l). The nitrate problem in the general Salinas Valley is well known, widespread, and predates the Discharger's operation. Although the nitrate concentration in soil exceeded the cleanup goal of 50 mg/kg, no soil remediation was needed since groundwater assessment indicated that groundwater was not impacted by Discharger's past operations.

Toxaphene was not included in the groundwater assessment since the toxaphene contamination was predominantly detected within the top layer of soil (to one foot bgs), has limited solubility in water, and is strongly adsorbed by the soil matrix.

Excavation of the toxaphene-contaminated soil was initiated in September 2003. At that time, the United States EPA Industrial PRG of toxaphene was lowered from 2.2 mg/kg to 1.6 mg/kg and Discharger agreed to cleanup soil to 1.6 mg/kg. Excavation and disposal of the contaminated soil was completed in April 2004. Approximately 1,600 tons of contaminated soil was disposed at the Chemical Waste Management facility in Kettleman City. The four monitoring wells were destroyed on October 21, 2003, and the on-site supply well was destroyed on September 22, 2004, as directed by Regional Board staff.

On December 16, 2004, the Monterey County Records Office recorded the deed restriction limiting the use of the property to industrial, light industrial or commercial uses. On December 17, 2004, Regional Board staff notified the Discharger and interested parties of the proposed rescission of Order No. 90-20 and requested comments by January 10, 2005. The Discharger and interested parties have not submitted any objection or comments to the proposed rescission of the Order.

## COMPLIANCE HISTORY

Aside from the discharge violations that required the soil cleanup discussed above, the Discharger has been in compliance with Order No. 90-20.

## RECOMMENDATION

Rescind Order No. 90-20

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Order No. 90-20
2. Deed Restriction

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