

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

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 22-23, 2023

Prepared on June 6, 2023

ITEM NUMBER: 13

SUBJECT: Draft Cleanup and Abatement Order to County of San Luis Obispo and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for Replacement Water and Investigation, Cleanup, and Abatement of Waste Discharged to Waters of the State Associated with Discharges of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) at the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport

STAFF CONTACTS: Harvey Packard, (805) 542-4639
Harvey.Packard@waterboards.ca.gov

Amber Sellinger, (805) 549-3886
Amber.Sellinger@waterboards.ca.gov

KEY INFORMATION

Location: San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport
975 Airport Drive, San Luis Obispo, California

Type of Discharge: Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

ACTION: Information/Discussion

DISCUSSION

The Central Coast Water Board Site Cleanup Program released draft Cleanup and Abatement Order No. R3-2023-XXXX (CAO) on February 16, 2023. The draft CAO identifies San Luis Obispo County and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) as dischargers responsible for various investigation, remediation, and water replacement requirements associated with discharges of a class of chemicals known as "PFAS" (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) from the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport. The public comment period, originally from February 16, 2023, until April 3, 2023, was extended to April 28, 2023, to allow additional time for continued negotiations between the named parties and program staff, with the potential to resolve the requirements included in the draft CAO in an expedited and collaborative manner.

The purpose of this item is to provide an opportunity for the parties and interested persons to make oral comments to the Central Coast Water Board on the draft CAO prior to a public hearing for the Board to consider the issuance of a final CAO or ratify a voluntary settlement agreement between the Central Coast Water Board, San Luis

Obispo County and CAL FIRE. The Board will listen to oral comments but will not provide direction to staff or take any action at this time. A Board meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 21, 2023, at the Central Coast Water Board office in San Luis Obispo for the purpose of either considering a proposed CAO or ratifying a voluntary settlement agreement. An additional opportunity to provide oral comments on the proposed CAO or voluntary settlement agreement will be provided during the July 21, 2023 meeting. If a voluntary settlement agreement is reached between Central Coast Water Board staff, San Luis Obispo County, and CAL FIRE, it will be released prior to the July 21, 2023 meeting with an opportunity to provide written comment.

Background

The draft CAO addresses pollution by PFAS and related wastes of soil, soil gas, sediment, groundwater, and water supply wells serving rural residences and industrial facilities in the vicinity of the airport. The airport property is surrounded by a mix of undeveloped and agricultural, commercial, industrial, and residential land uses in incorporated San Luis Obispo City and in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County. Most of the residences and businesses in the area south and west of the airport, which includes the Buckley Road area, are not served by public water systems, and rely on private drinking water wells or private regulated and unregulated water systems served by one or more wells. The draft CAO alleges that the responsible parties discharged or allowed the discharge of aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) fire suppressants to the ground on the airport property in the process of firefighting preparedness operations. AFFF are fluorinated foams that contain diverse mixtures of PFAS (both known and unidentified PFAS). The specific mixtures depend on manufacturer, date of formulation, and firefighting specifications.

The Site Cleanup Program first learned about the detections of PFAS in domestic wells in the vicinity of the airport in June 2022, at which time Site Cleanup Program staff requested that the county (on June 30, 2022) and CAL FIRE (on July 7, 2022) provide replacement drinking water to users of affected groundwater supply wells. Currently, the Site Cleanup Program is aware of at least 52 groundwater supply wells in the airport vicinity with one or more PFAS exceeding a drinking water response level¹ meant to be protective of public health. Although most of these groundwater supply well users currently have some form of treatment for drinking water for contaminants other than PFAS that provide various levels of PFAS treatment, there is generally no PFAS treatment for other household water uses, such as bathing, toilet flushing, cooking, and clothes washing. There are also wells identified for which the status of treatment is unknown, and there are some wells where treatment does not remove all PFAS. Considering the need for replacement water, the Site Cleanup Program released the draft CAO on February 16, 2023.

Copies of February 16, 2023 letter transmitting the draft CAO, the draft CAO No. R3-2023-XXXX, the letter from the Site Cleanup Program extending the public comment

¹ Response level is a concentration of a pollutant in drinking water above which the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water recommends taking a water source out of service.

period, and the written comments received from the public on the draft CAO are not web accessible but they are available on GeoTracker at the links provided as follows:

Copy of February 16, 2023 letter transmitting the draft CAO:

https://documents.geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/regulators/deliverable_documents/4572309195/02-16-2023_SCP_SLO%20County%20Regional%20Airport%20-%20Draft%20CAO%20-%20Cover%20Letter.pdf

A copy of the draft CAO No. R3-2023-XXXX:

https://documents.geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/regulators/deliverable_documents/4572309195/02-16-2023_SCP_SLO%20County%20Regional%20Airport%20-%20Draft%20CAO.pdf

A copy of the Site Cleanup Program letter extending the public comment period:

https://documents.geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/regulators/deliverable_documents/4504331290/2023-03-30_SCP_SLO%20County%20Regional%20Airport%20-%20CAO%20Public%20Comment%20Period%20Extension.pdf

Copies of the written public comments received on the draft CAO:

<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/?surl=v03o9>

CONCLUSION

The Board will listen to oral comments but will not provide direction to staff or take any action. A Board meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 21, 2023, at the Central Coast Water Board office in San Luis Obispo for the purpose of either considering a proposed CAO or ratifying a voluntary settlement agreement.