

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
LAHONTAN REGION**

**BOARD ORDER NO. R6T-2009- 0005**

**RESCISSION OF WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS  
BOARD ORDER NO. 6-97-70  
WDID 6A180180909  
FOR**

**CITY OF SUSANVILLE  
LITCHFIELD GEOTHERMAL FACILITY**

\_\_\_\_\_Lassen County\_\_\_\_\_

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region (Water Board) finds:

1. The Discharger

The City of Susanville submitted a complete report of waste discharge for the Litchfield Geothermal Facility (Facility) on September 18, 1995. For the purposes of this Order, the City of Susanville is the operator of the Facility and is referred to as the Discharger.

2. History

The Water Board has previously established waste discharge requirements for the Facility under Board Orders No. 6-83-93, No. 6-85-101, No.6-93-57. The current Board Order No. 6-97-70 was adopted on June 5, 1997.

3. Description of the Facility

The Facility consists of two geothermal wells and 34 acres of land for discharge of spent geothermal waters. The Facility is located on lands owned by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Spent geothermal waters are waters pumped from the ground for the purposes of extracting heat. The Facility pumped groundwater which was passed through heat exchangers to provide hot water and space heating to the California Correctional Center at Susanville and High Desert State Prison, operated by the CDCR. No substances were added to the groundwater prior to being discharged to land.

4. Description of the Discharge

The Facility extracted heat from geothermal waters and then discharged the cooled water to land by a sprinkler system. Runoff from the land disposal area went to an unlined pond on the Facility site.

5. Reason for Action

In June 2005, the CDCR stopped purchasing geothermal heat from the Discharger. On November 9, 2006 the Discharger reported to the Water Board, that as of June 30, 2005, the City of Susanville had ceased use of the Facility and ceased the discharge. In the spring of 2008, the CDCR removed the sprinkler system.

6. Geothermal Wells

The Discharger has stopped using the Facility and the two geothermal wells, "Johnston" 1 (API No. 035-90065) and "Johnston" 2 (API No. 035-90068). However, the two geothermal wells have not been legally abandoned. California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources (Division) records show these two wells as idle as defined in Section 1920.1.1 of the California Code of Regulations, title 14. According to the Division, the Discharger is the operator of record for the two wells.

7. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

This regulatory action is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15321, subdivision (a)(2). This provision identifies the following actions as categorically exempt from CEQA:

"(a) Action by regulatory agencies to enforce or revoke a lease, permit, license, certificate or other entitlement for use issued, adopted, or prescribed by the regulatory agency or enforcement of a law, general rule, standard, or objective, administered or adopted by the regulatory agency. Such actions include, but are not limited to, the following:

. . . (2) The adoption of an administrative decision or order enforcing or revoking the lease, permit, license, certificate or entitlement for use or enforcing the general rule, standard, or objective."

This regulatory action is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15321, subdivision (a)(2) because this administrative order serves to revoke waste discharge requirements issued under Board Order No. 6-97-70.

8. Water Quality

The discharge of runoff from the sprinkler system to the unlined pond posed a threat to water quality primarily due to arsenic concentrations up to 85 µg/l. The shallow groundwater concentrations fluctuated during the seven years of discrete samples in monitoring well MW-1, near the unlined pond. MW-1 has depth to ground water from between 15 to 28 feet below ground surface and the initial arsenic concentration in 1999 was 19 µg/l and in 2005 it was 22 µg/l. The current drinking water standard for arsenic is 10 µg/l and two drinking water wells (no longer in use) up and cross-gradient of the unlined pond had concentrations of arsenic as high as 152 µg/l prior to the unlined pond being used for the discharge. Therefore, it does not appear that the presence of arsenic in the groundwater is due to surface disposal of geothermal waters but may be widespread within the area due to the presence of naturally occurring arsenic in geothermal groundwater.

9. Summary

The discharge from the Facility has ceased and no longer poses a threat to water quality. Rescinding this Order does not limit the Water Board's authority if information indicates that an actual or threatened condition of pollution or nuisance has occurred due to past operations. Therefore, it is appropriate to rescind Board Order No. 6-97-70.

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** Board Order No. 6-97-70 be rescinded.

Harold J. Singer, Executive Officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of an Order adopted by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region, on January 14, 2009.

  
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HAROLD J. SINGER  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER