



Enforcement News

Chino-based Environmental Lab Fined \$90,000 for False Representations in Reports

April 10, 2020

Contact: Blair Robertson
Blair.Robertson@waterboards.ca.gov

A Chino environmental testing laboratory has been fined \$90,000 and denied renewal accreditation by the State Water Resources Control Board's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) for making false representations about a wastewater treatment facility's compliance with permit requirements.

Adopted Tuesday by the State Water Board, the fine stems from an [investigation that found](#) privately owned Western Analytical Laboratories, Inc. created reports for the Skyline Ranch Country Club in San Diego County with data taken by an unaccredited laboratory at the wastewater treatment plant. This was the first laboratory enforcement to come before the board for adoption since the program moved over from the California Department of Public Health in July 2014.

"It's important the data we are receiving can be trusted because state agencies rely on this data to make decisions that affect public health and the environment," State Water Board member Sean Maguire said. "These reports falsely represented that the analysis was done by Western Analytical, but it was not."

ELAP launched an investigation in April 2018 after the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board observed Skyline personnel performing laboratory tests during a routine inspection of the wastewater treatment facility. This conflicted with monitoring reports submitted to the Regional Board indicating the tests were performed by Western Analytical.

During an unannounced inspection in June 2018, ELAP found that Western Analytical was using data from the unaccredited lab in official lab reports for regulatory purposes. Regulators require tests to be performed by an accredited lab to ensure data reliability and accuracy.

The State Water Board agreed to allow Western Analytical's current accreditation to remain in place and continue to process samples for clients while it works to correct issues with its quality assurance program, including implementation of a data integrity and ethics training program for employees.



In addition, the \$90,000 penalty will be reduced by \$50,000 if Western Analytical implements a quality management system that includes data integrity procedures that are above and beyond what is currently required by law. The Board also indicated it would consider extending the due date of the fine because of economic conditions created by the COVID-19 response.

This [draft order](#) provides more detail on the investigation that led to the penalty.