

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT (Christine Boschen)
MEETING DATE: June 14, 2006

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: **Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, Sonoma, Sonoma County -**
Hearing to Consider Mandatory Minimum Penalty for Discharge of Partially
Treated Wastewater to Waters of the State

CHRONOLOGY: Administrative Civil Liabilities assessed in 1997, 2001, and 2003
Mandatory Minimum Penalty assessed in 2003
Cease and Desist Order issued in 2002

DISCUSSION: The Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District violated its NPDES permit's effluent limits twenty-one times from April 2002 to February 2006. There are separate causes for these violations (e.g., operator error, control system failures), but they stem mainly from problems with disinfection of the discharge. Though there has been a long history of violation, minimum penalties are appropriate for this latest set of violations because the District has made reasonable attempts to fix its past problems and has plans for additional improvements. For example, the 2002 CDO was issued for zinc violations that are not in anyway related to the violations in the attached Complaint. The District has solved its zinc problems through aggressive source control and collection of data justifying an adjustment to its zinc limit.

Over the past ten years, the District has spent roughly \$20 million in plant improvement projects. These improvements have solved some problems and reduced violations, but some violations persist. The District is spending another \$6.65 million on a tertiary treatment system, with construction beginning this fall. This system should alleviate future exceedances as it will break the chain of events that cause numerous violations. The tertiary treatment will involve filtering out small particles that interfere with the effectiveness of disinfection resulting in bacteria violations. In the past, this would cause an increase in the dose of the disinfection agent (chlorine), raising the dose of dechlorination agent, which in turn caused pH violations. For added assurance, the new system will also include an on-line chemical pH adjustment system.

The District has signed a waiver to a hearing (see Appendix B), and has remitted a check for \$12,000. The District intends to apply the remaining \$27,000 of the penalty towards a supplemental environmental project (SEP), and is working with staff to finalize its SEP proposal.

RECOMMEND-
ATION:

No action is necessary

File Number:

2149.4009 (CEB)

Appendices:

A. Complaint No. R2-2006-0013

B. Signed Waiver

APPENDIX B