

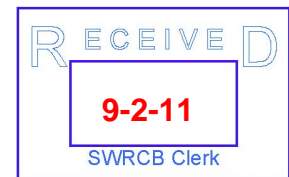
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To: Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the State Water Board  
From: David K. Luker, General Manager, Desert Water Agency  
Date: September 2, 2011



Subject: **Comment Letter – Palm Springs Oil #1 UST Case Closure Summary**

The Desert Water Agency (Agency) hereby submits the following comments in response to the State Water Resources Control Board's "Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment," dated August 15, 2011, which the Desert Water Agency (Agency) received on August 26, 2011. In preparing these comments, the Agency has reviewed the Site Closure Petition submitted by Mr. Benton C. Beckley, dated June 15, 2009, and the response letter from Ms. Sharon Boltinghouse, PG, Associate Public Health Professional Geologist, Riverside County Community Health Agency, Department of Environmental Health, dated September 23, 2009. The Agency has also reviewed the most recent petition submitted by Wayne Perry, Inc., on behalf of Benton C. Beckley, dated May 25, 2011.

The Palm Springs Oil Station #1 UST site is located within the boundaries of the Agency; more particularly, it is located within a community where the Agency pumps groundwater for potable water service. The Agency currently operates a potable water well less than a mile away from the Palm Springs Oil Station #1 UST site, and delivers said water to the surrounding community. The closure of this site is of great concern to this Agency. Ninety-five percent of our potable water supply comes from the groundwater aquifer underlying our service areas.

The Agency received the above-mentioned documents for review only a few days ago and thus, has not had the time necessary to do a detailed review and investigation into the facts. However, the Agency believes, based on its experience in drilling many water wells in its service area and its review of the drilling logs of nearby wells, that the drilling equipment used may not have been adequate to satisfactorily determine the depth to bedrock. The Agency believes that drilling equipment capable of drilling through the tightly packed sand gravel and boulders that were encountered at the refusal depth (91 feet) was not used. It is imperative that it be demonstrated that bedrock was indeed encountered at 91 feet and not to rely on trigonometric projections and other similar mathematical theories and constructs to scientifically support this conclusion.

If it is determined that bedrock is 91 feet below the site, the Agency agrees with Ms. Sharon Boltinghouse's statement that drilling refusal encountered at bedrock is not an indication of the absence of heavy groundwater contamination. According to the soil sampling data records provided, the highest contamination was encountered in the deepest soil samples at 80 feet below ground surface (bgs). Furthermore, movement of this contamination could occur due to on-site and neighboring septic systems. In fact, the Agency has already lost at least one well in



Cathedral City due to high levels of contamination related to nitrates from septic systems. This situation is further exacerbated by the high transmissivity of the soils found in this area. It is certain that the discharge from septic systems surrounding Palm Springs Oil Station #1 is finding its way into the local groundwater system and carrying with it any and all contaminants in its path. Therefore, further investigation is absolutely necessary.

As stated by Mr. Beckley's consultant, Wayne Perry, Inc. (WPI), and as confirmed by our review of various records and documents, there are three wells located to the northwest of the subject UST site. Two of the wells appear to be within 1,000 feet of the contamination site. Records also indicate that one of the wells was drilled in 1971 for Mr. Beckley. The log for this well indicates that there were boulders to 93 feet followed by sand and gravels to 136 feet. This would indicate that perhaps bedrock was not the cause of drilling refusal encountered at 91 feet by WPI. The Agency is also working on gaining access to one of the three wells, which is owned by the City of Palm Springs and is located 1,600 feet northerly of the contamination site near the intersection of Golf Club Drive and Bolero Road in Palm Springs. The Agency hopes to measure groundwater levels at this well and perhaps sample the well if the pump is operational.

The Agency's sampling proposal is consistent with the suggestion made by WPI that since impacts to groundwater are of concern, it would be beneficial to review groundwater quality analyses, if available, from these wells. We completely agree. Groundwater impacts are of supreme importance to this Agency and it has not been definitively proven yet that groundwater contamination has not occurred. It is imperative that all available resources be utilized to determine the actual extent of the contamination and potential for future groundwater contamination.

The Agency has conducted sampling in its water wells nearest to the contamination site. The results of these tests will not be available before the deadline for comments at 12:00 noon on Friday, September 2, 2011.

In light of these facts and circumstances, the Agency respectfully requests that more investigation be conducted to assure that the water quality of the Agency's groundwater supply is not threatened by this contamination. The Agency believes that closure of this site without knowing the full extent of the contamination is premature. Many sources of information have not been fully investigated that, together, may answer this question definitively.

Also, the Agency respectfully requests an extension to the public comment deadline of September 2 in order to enable the Agency to sample and analyze the water quality in various wells located in the vicinity of the subject UST site. Towards this goal, the Agency requests a comment deadline extension to September 30, 2011. By that time, the Agency will have more data and information upon which to provide a more thorough and informed set of comments about this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David K. Luker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

David K. Luker  
General Manager-Chief Engineer