

## **Water/Utilities Report May, 2015**

**Submitted by: Joan Licari**

### **Clean-Tech Project in Irwindale**

Many years ago, water wells used by the San Gabriel Valley Water Company and other local companies from aquifers in the San Gabriel Groundwater Basin became polluted by the cumulative impact of decades of spills, improper chemical handling and disposal practices. Residents in Hacienda Heights were required to use bottled water for drinking and cooking. We were told it was best not to shower with hot water because harmful volatile organic compounds would be released. The presence of pollutants forced the closure of a number of public water supply wells in the area. Approximately 30 square miles of the 170 square mile San Gabriel Valley Groundwater Basin were/are contaminated. The EPA designated four Superfund sites in the San Gabriel River Channel area and clean-up of groundwater continues today. Our local water companies still pump water from these aquifers.

Recently an oil processing facility in the Irwindale area was permitted by the California State Department of Substances Control (DTSC) above these aquifers. The used oil recycling facility and CA designated hazardous waste collection facility is located on a current .98 acre owned by CleanTech. The site is close to Santa Fe Dam recreation area and above the aquifers. In the past, the oil to be recycled was hauled, stored a short time at this site, and then trucked to other sites in the harbor area for recycling.

The recycling plant has been operating since February, 2014. A spill at this plant could potentially affect our water resources in Hacienda Heights.

The project is as follows:

1. The project is designed to accept and process up to 1.5 million gallons of used oil per month and addition hazardous wastes (waste antifreeze, non-RCRA wastewater such as oily wastewater and oil-contaminated solid waste. It would receive drummed and containerized materials to be stored in tanks. Berms will be constructed around the plant.
2. The plant is located above the sands and gravels of the local aquifers.
3. The reason for siting here is because the company already had the site for processing. CleanTech claims there will be less than significant impact from the facility except for air quality and transportation impacts.
4. The alternative to this site would require the owner to buy property down in port area and would require trucking to that location, resulting in additional air pollution from travel.

#### **Project history**

- The permit application was first submitted to DTSC Sept. 1, 2010. DTSC completed an Initial Study/Negative Declaration (11/11/11).

- During the comment period (11/18/11-1/9/12), significant issues arose that caused DTSC to prepare a Response to Comments (5/14/12) and a revised EIS with another comment period (5/18/12-7/5/12).
- The hazardous waste facility permit was issued in Dec. 2012. Two petitions for review were received. CEQA required an EIR. Also the Health and Safety Code set 1,000 tons per month as an EIR trigger for hazardous waste facilities. The permit was vacated. An EIR was prepared.
- DEIR prepared. The comment period was from 12/30/13-1/31/14.

Study of the EIR revealed 2 major areas of concern that could affect water supply to Hacienda Heights:

- There was no seismic analysis. In checking the Irwindale General Plan and earthquake data, indicates the area could be subject to violent shaking and is located on unconsolidated gravels, clays, sands. This could result in damage to the facility and a spill.
- The hydrology section does not address aquifers in the Upper San Gabriel groundwater basin. The groundwater basin is already site of 4 Superfund sites and provides drinking water for many communities in the area utilizing water wells, including Hacienda Heights.
- There are 4 Superfund sites in the region and it is located near to the Significant Ecological Area at Santa Fe Dam.

If a spill occurred at the Irwindale plant, it could potentially contaminate the drinking water for residents and businesses in areas served by wells in the San Gabriel Main Groundwater Basin.

The environmental/CEQA process was not publicized well; few were aware of it. The comment period is now closed. A consumer watchdog group, local residents, representatives from local water districts and environmental groups are hoping to block this hazardous waste operation located near the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area. Those opposing the continued operation of this plant claim that the DTSC did not adequately evaluate the potential for groundwater contamination of local aquifers used by local water companies.

Opposition has been voiced to the Irwindale City Council by local communities around the plant because of inadequate evaluation of the geologic setting of the plant above aquifers serving local areas. They have requested action on the part of Governor Jerry Brown to stop the operation of the CleanTech Environmental facility.

Concerns were raised at several Irwindale City Council meeting about allowing this company to operate as a hazardous waste facility. The City claims they have no control over the project and the State is responsible for allowing this to operate. The claim there is that there is no need for a CUP from the city. The coalition opposing the facility claims it violates the city's zoning code

and general plan and has indicated that CleanTech has been cited numerous times in the past for violations of regulations.