

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION

ABATEMENT ORDER NO. 80-100  
CITY OF CALIPATRIA  
WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY  
IMPERIAL COUNTY

The Executive Officer of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region, finds that:

1. The City of Calipatria, hereinafter referred to as the discharger, 101 North Lake Street, Calipatria, CA 92233, operates a wastewater treatment facility in Section 1 and 12, T12S, R13E, SBB&M, and Section 6, T12S, R14E, SBB&M.
2. The wastewater treatment and disposal facilities consist of three parts described as follows:
  - a. Primary treatment is provided for the wastewater in two mechanically aerated oxidation basins. Additional basins provide storage capacity for treated wastewater.
  - b. Treated wastewater is discharged onto fields adjacent to the wastewater treatment facility for use in irrigation of selected crops. Berming at the lower end of the fields directs surface runoff into a pump station which transports the excess irrigation water back to the wastewater storage facility, thereby eliminating the discharge of wastewater to surface waters. Some irrigation water is percolated through a six-foot minimum soil column, is collected by agricultural tile drains and is discharged to the agricultural drainage system to achieve soil salinity control.
  - c. The City's previous oxidation basins are utilized for the discharge of excess wastewater during emergencies and/or routine maintenance operations.
3. The Regional Board adopted waste discharge requirements on January 29, 1976 in Order No. 76-9 for the agricultural irrigation operation, and on September 24, 1980 in Order No. 80-70 for the emergency storage ponds.
4. Discharge Specification A.2. of Order No. 76-9 states that:
  - A.2. The direct discharge of wastewater and/or irrigation tailwaters to the Alamo River, irrigation canals, agricultural drainage ditches, to other surface waters, or to subsurface agricultural drain tile is prohibited.

*Revised  
7/31/84*

5. Discharge Specification A.5. of Order No. 80-70 states that:
  - A.5. There shall be no surface flow of sewage away from the designated disposal area or into any drainage channel.
6. On December 2, 1980, the Regional Board's staff inspected the City of Calipatria wastewater disposal facility and observed that tailwaters from recent irrigation had been directed into an existing drop box structure and discharged into an agricultural drain which discharges to Alamo River.
7. On December 3, 1980, the Board staff further inspected the wastewater facilities, accompanied by City of Calipatria representatives.
  - a. It was confirmed that irrigation tailwaters had been directly discharged to the agricultural drainage system. An earthen berm approximately three feet high and six feet thick had been constructed across the end of the field to divert the tailwaters to the pumpback system. A four foot wide section of this berm had been removed to allow the tailwaters to enter the drop box and flow to H Drain.
  - b. City representatives stated that they were unaware of the discharge, as the irrigation operation is conducted by the company which leases the land for farming. Recent changes in the lessee's management personnel may have resulted in confusion on the proper handling of the irrigation tailwaters.
  - c. City representatives stated that no supplemental Imperial Irrigation District water had been blended with the wastewater prior to irrigation.
  - d. The water level in the emergency storage basins had a freeboard depth of approximately three feet, leaving little room for additional discharge of wastewater to the basins. City representatives stated that the discharge pipes to the Alamo River have been plugged with a steel plate and tarpaulins and acknowledged that the plugs could be easily removed allowing direct discharge of wastewater to Alamo River. At the time of the inspection said plugs were submerged beneath the pond surface. Examination of the two discharge pipes at the Alamo River revealed that one pipe is discharging water to Alamo River at a rate of approximately one gallon per minute.
8. This enforcement action is exempt from provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code, Section 21000, et.seq.) in accordance with Section 2714, Chapter 3, Title 14, California Administrative Code.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that pursuant to Section 13304 of Division 7 of the California Water Code, the City of Calipatria shall:

1. Take all necessary action to immediately abate the direct discharge of tailwaters from the agricultural irrigation wastewater disposal system to H Drain.
2. Abate by January 9, 1981, the threatened discharge of wastewater to H Drain, including removal or plugging of the drop box structure described in Findings No. 6 and 7 (above) in a manner approved by the Executive Officer. The City shall notify the Regional Board office (Telephone: (714) 346-7491) at least three working days prior to the removal or plugging of the drop box structure so that the removal or plugging of the structure may be witnessed by the Regional Board Staff.
3. By January 26, 1981, submit a report to the Regional Board explaining, with a timetable, actions that the City will take to decrease its community wastewater flows and/or increase the capacity of its community wastewater treatment and disposal facilities in order to provide permanent abatement of discharge and threatened discharge of wastewater to surface drains and/or to Alamo River.

Failure to comply with this Order as directed may result in referral to the Attorney General for appropriate legal action without further notice.

Dec. 24, 1980  
Date

Atton Swajan  
Executive Officer