

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT  
NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

2019068122

To: Office of Planning and Research  
State Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Department of Toxic Substances Control  
Office of Permitting  
8800 Cal Center Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95826

Project Title: Blue Hills Disposal Facility, Post-Closure Permit Renewal

Project Applicant: John R. Thompson, Department of Public Works and Planning, Fresno County

Project Location: About 9 miles northeast of Coalinga, Fresno, California 93210

County: Fresno

Project Description: On June 6, 2019, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) issued its decision to renew the Hazardous Waste Facility Post-Closure Permit (Permit) for the Blue Hills Disposal Facility (Facility). The Permit allows the Facility to continue post-closure care activities at the site for 10 additional years. The Permit outlines the procedures to fulfill the post-closure care requirements which consists of three primary functions: (1) maintenance of the closure cover, (2) groundwater monitoring, and (3) maintenance of financial mechanisms to fund the post-closure care activities. The Facility applied for the renewal of their Permit in March of 2017. No changes occurred to the management or operations of the Facility.

Background: Fresno County owns the closed Facility. The site covers 32 acres of which approximately 4.5 acres were used for waste disposal. The Facility contains no structures, with the exception of groundwater monitoring well heads, a security fence, and engineered surface water drainage ditches. The site is not occupied by personnel but visited for routine site inspections and semi-annual groundwater monitoring events. The Facility is located in a remote location about 9 miles northeast of Coalinga, one mile west of Coalinga-Mendota Road (or Derrick Avenue) and approximately two miles north of the intersection of Highway 33 with the Coalinga-Mendota Road. The Facility is accessed along an approximately 0.9 mile-long, private light duty road which extends from Coalinga-Mendota Road. The County of Fresno Tax Assessor parcel number (APN) for the site is 058-180-32ST. The Facility is zoned as agricultural land with a minimum of 40 acres (AE-40).

The Facility was established by Fresno County in 1973 as a limited Class I solid waste disposal facility in response to state and agricultural interest requests to provide a safe repository for empty herbicide and pesticide containers generated by the agricultural community. The Waste Management Area (WMA) at the Facility is comprised of four clustered Waste Management Units (WMUs): (1) the First Main Trench (WMU-1), opened in November 1973 and closed in November 1975; (2) the Second Main Trench (WMU-2), opened in April 1976 and closed in November 1980; (3) the Third Main Trench (WMU-3), opened in April 1981 and closed in October 1991; and (4) the Dust and Powder area (WMU-4), which closed in 1982. WMU-1, WMU-2, and WMU-3 were estimated to have been no more than 25 feet deep and WMU-4 was a shallow excavation.

As a result of major changes in regulatory requirements in 1982, disposal activities were terminated. In December 1992, an engineered cover was constructed over the four WMUs and certification was accepted by DTSC in June 2005. The final cover includes a 2-foot soil foundation, an 18-inch low-permeability clay cover layer, and a 15-inch vegetative soil layer with native vegetation. The closure also included surface drainage control measures and monitoring of the groundwater quality through an existing network of groundwater monitoring wells. A post-closure permit was first issued for the Facility on September 7, 2007. In conjunction with that approval, DTSC filed a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the State Clearinghouse (No. 2007098342) indicating that the Project was exempt from CEQA under 14 C.C.R. § 15061(b)(3). As a requirement of the 2007 permit issuance, a Land Use Covenant was recorded on November 15, 2007 to restrict land use to post-closure care activities only in accordance with the permit.

A Class 1 permit modification was completed on October 2, 2014 to eliminate a groundwater monitoring well that was deemed unviable for groundwater sampling because of the presence of naturally occurring crude oil.

A Class 1 permit modification was completed on March 9, 2018 to update the contacts in the Contingency Plan. The Contingency Plan describes the procedures in case of a failure or breakdown of the waste handling facilities or containment systems. The plan involves notifying DTSC, RWQCB, local governments, and water users downgradient from the Site of any such failures or detection of waste escaping the Site facilities.

Project Activities:

The Permit allows the Facility to continue to conduct post-closure care activities at the site for ten (10) additional years. The activities at the Facility will not involve the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Post-closure activities authorized by the Permit include groundwater monitoring; inspections; maintenance of the engineered closure cover, drainage ditches, and monitoring wells and; reporting and record keeping.

Routine and annual inspections of the site are conducted by a professional third party to ensure the integrity of the final cover system, surface drainage and control systems, groundwater monitoring system and the security system. Following each inspection, a report or summary of findings describing the condition of the site and the above-mentioned items is submitted to DTSC for review.

A groundwater monitoring plan is implemented at the site to provide leak detection, monitor groundwater quality, and monitor groundwater levels beneath the site. The updated groundwater monitoring plan, Revised Updated Groundwater Monitoring Plan/Sampling and Analysis Plan for Corrective Action dated March 18, 2019 (SAP) eliminates sampling for inorganic analytes, including total dissolved solids, total organic carbon, and metals, from the groundwater monitoring parameter list because they are not reliable indicators of a release from the WMUs given the generally poor water quality in the area and that the waste originally received at the site was primarily spent pesticide and herbicide containers. The implementation of the groundwater monitoring plan involves the continued sampling and analyzing groundwater from seven (7) groundwater monitoring wells semi-annually.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Department of Toxic Substances Control

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Fresno County for the Blue Hills Disposal Facility

Exemption Status: (check one)

- Ministerial [PRC, Sec. 21080(b)(1); CCR, Sec. 15268]
- Declared Emergency [PRC, Sec. 21080(b)(3); CCR, Sec.15269(a)]
- Emergency Project [PRC, Sec. 21080(b)(4); CCR, Sec.15269(b)(c)]
- Categorical Exemption: [CCR, Sec. 15301]
- Statutory Exemptions: [State code section number]
- General Rule [State code section number]

Exemption Title: Existing Facilities.

Reasons Why Project is Exempt: The Facility was constructed in 1973 and was issued a Hazardous Waste Facility Post-Closure Permit in 2007. The renewal of the Permit does not include construction. The only change is the elimination of inorganic analytes sampling from the groundwater monitoring plan because they are not reliable indicators of a release from the facility. This will not result in the expansion of any existing or former use. The facility is not included in the Cortese list.

Evidence to support the above reasons is documented in the project file records, available for inspection at:

Department of Toxic Substances Control  
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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

TO BE COMPLETED BY OPR ONLY

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