



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Yucca Valley Septic Discharge Prohibitions on Existing Tanks Now Law

On Tuesday, April 10, 2012, the State Office of Administrative Law approved the California Regional Water Quality Control Board's septic discharge prohibition on existing septic systems in the Town of Yucca Valley. The prohibition is now an official regulation that will be effective beginning May 19, 2016.

Under the California Water Code, the State and Regional Water Boards are charged with protecting water quality, preserving water resources and preventing pollution, nuisance, contamination, and degradation of the quality of the water. The Regional Board is responsible for enforcing and implementing the regulation.

The Regional Water Board acted in response to the negative impacts septic systems have had on Yucca Valley's water quality, which can lead to irreversible damage to the groundwater basin. The Regional Water Board found existing septic tanks at Yucca Valley homes and businesses continue to discharge wastewater heavy in nitrates and other waste products into the soils.

Yucca Valley relies on groundwater as the primary source of drinking water. While Hi-Desert Water District has been importing additional water supplies to recharge the groundwater for over 15 years, water levels have not returned to historic levels. The use of septic systems has caused high nitrate concentrations within portions of the aquifer, limiting the District's ability to produce water from these sections and threatening areas that are not currently affected by the high concentrations. The increase in nitrate concentrations in the soils reduces the amount of safe storage space for recharge water, as the nitrates make their way down to the water table.

“Building a Wastewater Treatment and Water Reclamation system is the most practical way to comply with the regulation and avoid enforcement. We are working to protect our groundwater while seeking financial assistance to do so,” explained Ed Muzik, General Manager of the Hi-Desert Water District.

Hi-Desert is seeking grants to underwrite the cost of the system. To date, over \$6 million has been granted from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Water Resources, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and other funding sources. The State Water Board awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the Cleanup and Abatement Account to mitigate the impacts of the prohibition due to the economic challenges in Yucca Valley. “The goal is lowest possible cost to the customers,” said Muzik.

Hi-Desert Water District is currently collecting field data to help with the design of the collection system which will begin in the coming months. In addition, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, a large grant source, has approved the Federal Environmental clearance.

General Manager Ed Muzik adds, “As we continue to work to deliver an affordable project for the protection of our water supply, we are encouraged by lower construction costs in the current economy. We plan to take advantage of these savings by moving our project forward as quickly as possible and creating jobs along the way.”

Hi-Desert Water District’s mission is to provide a dependable water supply and wastewater treatment for the customers in a safe, efficient, and financially responsible manner. For more information visit www.YuccaValleyWastewater.org or call (760) 228-6267.

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