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Monterey County Board of Supervisors

Response to the

2013 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury
Interim Final Report No. 1

July 1, 2014

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REPORT TITLE: Interim Final Report No. 1 – “Chualar Sewer System”
RESPONSE BY: Monterey County Board of Supervisors
RESPONSE TO: Findings F1 – F14

Finding F-1: The two sewage pumps in Chualar are two to three years old.

Response F-1: The Board agrees with this finding.

Finding F-2: From just west of the Highway 101 overpass much of the remaining two miles of pipe is over 50 years old and made of clay pipe and in some instances PVC.

Response F-2: The Board disagrees with this finding. West of Highway 101, the pipe material is High Density Polyethylene (HDPE).

Finding F-3: The clay and PVC pipe from west of the Highway 101 overpass to the treatment ponds are maintained through patching with PVC when there is a break in the line. These breaks in clay and PVC pipes happen frequently, as may be expected due to the 50-year-old materials used.

Response F-3: The Board disagrees with this finding. West of Highway 1, the HDPE pipe has not fractured or been patched with PVC.

Finding F-4: The treatment ponds are located within the 100-year floodplain of the Salinas River. Overflow of these ponds could cause major environmental contamination of the Salinas River and the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.

Response F-4: The Board partially agrees with this finding. The treatment ponds are in the 100 year floodplain. However, the extent of environmental impact would be dependent on the amount of the overflow.

Finding F-5: Since 1911 the Salinas River, due to heavy rains, has over-flowed it’s banks 23 times, the latest being February 1998. This has allowed the holding ponds to be breached by the River eight times since their inception in 1965. This overflow of the river has caused raw sewage from the treatment ponds to flow into the river and northwest into the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary.

Response F-5: The Board agrees with this finding.

Finding F-6: Standing water and the nutrients in the raw sewage in the treatment ponds provide an ideal place for cattails and reeds to grow in or along the banks of the pond. This in turn could provide an ideal place for disease carrying mosquitoes to lay their eggs.

Response F-6: The Board partially agrees with this finding. Wastewater ponds are a common component of treatment systems throughout the country and vegetation control is a

common maintenance practice. It is not clear at this time if the ponds are a breeding ground for mosquitoes because Monterer County does not monitor for mosquitos at the treatment ponds. However, the County will investigate this issue to determine if mosquito abatement activities are needed.,-but this will be investigated.

Finding F-7: The Chualar sewage holding ponds are not within the boundaries of the Northern Salinas Valley Mosquito District as established by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in the 1950s. Therefore any mosquito abatement would have to be provided by the Monterey County Health Department.

Response F-7: The Board agrees with that the Chualar ponds are not within the boundaries of the Northern Salinas Valley Mosquito Abatement District. Therefore, the responsibility for mosquito abatement will fall to the RMA-Public Works Department as the operator of the treatment ponds.

If the investigation noted in Response F-6 reveals that mosquito abatement activities are needed, then RMA-Public Works will provide mosquito abatement until such time as the treatment ponds are incorporated into the boundary of a Mosquito Abatement District.is finding.

Finding F-8: Water recovered from a sewage treatment plant, built in or near the East side of Chualar, could provide a source of an agricultural water supply for the crops grown near Chualar, just as the sewage treatment plant near Marina provides agricultural water for the Castroville area.

Response F-8: The Board partially disagrees with this finding. The suitability of treated effluent for crop irrigation from an upgraded Chualar sewage treatment systems would have to be determined and would be dependent on a number of factors including the selected treatment method and the willingness of surrounding agricultural operations to accept the treated effluent.

Finding F-9: Building the treatment plant on the East side of Chualar would prevent the need to pump raw sewage under the Highway 101 overpass and the train tracks on the West side of Chualar.

Response F-9: The Board agrees with this finding. However, when upgrading the Chualar sewage system, several treatment options should be considered including piping the sewage to an existing treatment works in the Salinas Valley.

Finding F-10: A sewage treatment plant on the East side of Chualar would eliminate the necessity for the pipeline and treatment ponds completely.

Response F-10: The Board agrees with this finding. However, when upgrading the Chualar sewage system, several treatment options should be considered including piping the sewage to an existing treatment works in the Salinas Valley.

Finding F-11: Reuse of this water would reduce the amount of water that is pumped from the underground aquifer for agricultural use. It may also help to possibly reduce salt-water intrusion into the aquifer.

Response F-11: The Board partially disagrees with this finding. Use of treated effluent for irrigation will be dependent on the treatment option chosen and the willingness of surrounding agricultural operations to accept it. In addition, it is not clear at this time what impact this potential irrigation use would have on saltwater intrusion.

Finding F-12: To enhance CSA 75 revenue, soil removed from the treatment ponds when dredged, could be sanitized and sold for use as commercial fertilizer.

Response F-12: The Board partially disagrees with this finding. It is not clear at this time if the cost of soil removal and processing would be offset by the revenues generated.

Finding F-13: The deterioration of the Chualar sewage system has a high potential to cause major problems including possible health issues. The system should be replaced as soon as possible.

Response F-13: The Board partially agrees with this finding. Deterioration of this infrastructure has and will cause problems and needs to be upgraded. However, the risk to public health is limited and similar to what other sewer systems face.

Finding F-14: Through interviews with the Monterey County Public Works Department and its own research the CGJ has determined that, if built today, the cost to build a sewage treatment plant at or near Chualar would be about four million dollars.

Response F-14: The Board agrees with this statement. However, it should be noted that this cost estimate is preliminary. A sewer master plan would need to be developed to detail available options and costs.

REPORT TITLE: Interim Final Report No. 1 – “Chualar Sewer System”
RESPONSE BY: Monterey County Board of Supervisors
RESPONSE TO: Recommendations R-1, R -2, R-3 and R-4

Recommendation R-1: A sewage treatment plant should be built on the East side of Chualar.

Response R-1: This recommendation requires further analysis. To determine the appropriate location and method of sewage treatment, a sewer master plan must be developed that considers all options available including piping of sewage to an existing sewage treatment works in the Salinas Valley. The development of a sewer master plan would require approximately \$100,000 and take about a year to complete once a consultant is under contract.

The need to upgrade the Chualar sewer system ~~was discussed with the~~ ~~has already been discussed with the~~ Budget Committee on May 28, 2014, ~~and~~ the Capital Improvement Committee on June 2, 2014, ~~and~~ of the Board of Supervisors during budget hearings on June 10, 2014. ~~– In addition, this issue was discussed with the Board of Supervisors in June 2014.~~ At these meetings, the need for \$325,000 was identified to fund short term maintenance activities such as system cleaning, equipment purchase, point repairs in the gravity sewer system, and a rate study to look at raising rates in the short term to provide adequate funding to meet current operation and maintenance needs. In addition, this funding would provide \$100,000 for a long range sewer master plan for the community of Chualar that would take into account the need to upgrade the system, improve the method of sewage treatment, and accommodate growth. As part of the sewer master plan, a long term rate study would be conducted that would determine the rate structured needed to support the capital and operating expenses of an upgraded sewer collection and treatment system for the community of Chualar.

Recommendation R-2: The Monterey County Board of Supervisors should allocate or assist in the raising of the \$4 million it is estimated would be required to build a sewage treatment plant in or near Chualar.

Response R-2: This recommendation requires further analysis. The cost to upgrade and/or replace the existing Chualar sewer collection and treatment system will be dependent on the master plan options that must be developed in cooperation with the community of Chualar. Until an ultimate solution is determined, it would be premature to seek or expend funds. The County has been successful in seeking grant funds to upgrade the Chualar sewer system and will continue seeking grant funds to help with the master planning and upgrade efforts.

~~The need to upgrade the Chualar sewer system has already been discussed with the Budget Committee and the Capital Improvement Committee of the Board of Supervisors. In addition, this issue was discussed with the Board of Supervisors in June 2014.~~

Recommendation R-3: The Monterey County Public Works Department, Monterey County Health Department and/or the Monterey County Board of Supervisors should request the Northern Salinas Valley Mosquito Abatement District to place mosquito traps in Chualar, to determine if there is a necessity to treat the treatment ponds for mosquito larva.

Response R-3: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within the next six months.

Recommendation R-4: At a minimum, the pipeline from the Highway 101 overpass to the treatment ponds should be completely replaced.

Response R-4: This recommendation requires further analysis. As part of the development of a sewer master plan, the option of replacing the existing force main should be analyzed. If the ultimate solution does not relocate the existing treatment ponds, then replacement of the force main may ~~not~~ be needed.

~~The need to upgrade the Chualar sewer system has already been discussed with the Budget Committee and the Capital Improvement Committee of the Board of Supervisors. In addition, this issue was discussed with the Board of Supervisors in June 2014.~~