



**2016**

**Triennial Public Health Goal  
Report**

# 2016

## Triennial Public Health Goal Report

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# 2016 Triennial Public Health Goal Report

California Health and Safety Code Section 116470(b)

## Background

Provisions of the California Health and Safety Code specify that public water systems serving more than 10,000 service connections prepare a special report if any of their water quality measurements have exceeded any Public Health Goals (PHG's). PHG's are non-enforceable goals established by the Cal-EPA's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). The law also requires that where OEHHA has not adopted a PHG for a constituent, the water suppliers are to use the non-enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLG's) adopted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

If a constituent was detected in Vista Irrigation District's (District's) water supply in the years 2013 through 2015 at a level exceeding an applicable PHG or MCLG, this report identifies the constituent and provides the information required by the law. Where available, the numerical public health risk, the category of health risk, the best treatment technology available to remove or reduce the constituent and an estimate of the cost to install the treatment are included.

## Public Health Goals (PHG's)

PHG's are based solely on public health risk considerations. None of the practical risk-management factors that are considered by the USEPA or the California Division of Drinking Water (DDW) in setting drinking water standards (Maximum Contaminant Levels or MCL's) are considered in setting the PHG's. These factors include analytical detection capability, treatment technology available, benefits and costs. ***The PHG's are not enforceable and are not required to be met by any public water system. MCLG's are the federal equivalent to PHG's.***

## Water Quality Data Considered

All the water quality data collected for the District system in 2013, 2014, and 2015 for purposes of determining compliance with drinking water standards was considered. This data was summarized in the annual Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs) for the same years which were mailed to our customers in 2013 and made available to customers online via the District's website for 2014 and 2015. Paper copies of the 2014 and 2015 CCRs were provided to customers upon request.

## **Best Available Treatment Technology and Cost Estimates**

Both the USEPA and the DDW adopted what are known as Best Available Technologies (BAT's). These methods are some of the most effective at reducing constituent levels to or below the MCL. Costs can be estimated for such technologies. However, since many PHG's and all MCLG's are set much lower than the MCL, it is not always possible to determine what treatment is needed to further reduce a constituent downward to or near the PHG or MCLG, many of which are set at zero. Estimating the costs to reduce a constituent to zero is difficult, if not impossible because it is not possible to verify by analytical means that the level has been lowered to zero. In some cases, installing treatment to try and further reduce very low levels of one constituent may have adverse effects on other aspects of water quality.

### **2013-2015 Constituents detected that exceed a PHG or MCLG**

Constituent	Units	MCL	PHG (MCLG)	Highest Level Detected		
				2013 (Location)	2014 (Location)	2015 (Location)
Arsenic	ug/L	10	0.004	<b>2.0</b> (a)	<b>3.4</b> (a)	<b>3.0</b> (a)
Chlorite	mg/L	1	0.05	<b>0.68</b> (b)	<b>0.73</b> (b)	<b>0.70</b> (b)
Copper	mg/L	1.3	0.3	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>0.55*</b> (d)
Uranium	pCi/L	20	0.43	<b>3.6</b> (c)	<b>3.6</b> (c)	<b>3.6</b> (c)
Coliform Bacteria	Presence	>5% per month	0% per month	0.00% (d)	0.97% (d)	0.97% (d)

(a)= Twin Oaks Water Treatment Plant

(b)= Escondido/Vista Water Treatment Plant

(c)= Robert A. Weese Filtration Plant

(d)= Vista Irrigation District

\* = 90<sup>th</sup> percentile

The following is a discussion of constituents that were detected in the District's source water or distributed water at levels above the PHG, or if no PHG, above the MCLG.

### **Coliform Bacteria**

Each month, District employees collect 100 to 125 samples from the distribution system for coliform analysis. Occasionally, a sample was found to be positive for coliform bacteria, but repeat samples were negative in all cases. In any given month, a

maximum of 0.97% of the samples, or 1 sample, was coliform positive. The MCL for coliform bacteria is >5% positive samples out of all samples analyzed per month.

The MCLG for coliform bacteria is zero. Coliforms are indicator organisms that are not generally considered harmful, but may indicate the presence of potential pathogens. Pathogens are organisms that may cause waterborne disease. The reason for the coliform standard is to minimize the possibility of water containing pathogens. Coliform is only a surrogate indicator of the potential presence of pathogens, so it is not possible to state a specific numerical health risk.

There are many steps that the District takes to minimize the potential for coliform bacteria. They are:

- Maintain and monitor the disinfectant residual throughout the distribution system
- Utilize clean, self-contained distribution sample test points.
- Maintain positive pressures in the distribution system.
- Maintain an effective cross-connection control program.

## **Arsenic**

The MCL for arsenic is 10 ug/L. A PHG of 0.004 ug/L was adopted by OEHHA in 2004. The level of arsenic detected in source water supplied by the Twin Oaks Water Treatment Plant was 2.0 ug/L in 2013, 3.4 ug/L in 2014 and 3.0 ug/L in 2015.

The EPA states, "Some people who drink water containing arsenic in excess of the MCL for many years could experience skin damage or problems with their circulatory system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer." The cancer health risk is  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  (1 per million) at the PHG and  $2.5 \times 10^{-3}$  (2.5 per thousand) at the MCL.

The following treatment methods have proven effective for removing arsenic to below the MCL of 10 ug/L: adsorption media, ion exchange, coagulation/ filtration, oxidation/filtration, and point of use or point of entry treatment using activated alumina or reverse osmosis.

It is unclear whether treatment to lower arsenic below the PHG would be feasible, as BAT's are designated for treatment to achieve compliance with the corresponding MCL only, and not PHGs. Also, it should be noted that cost estimates are developed for treatment to the MCL and not to the lower PHG level.

## **Chlorite**

Chlorite is a disinfection byproduct produced in the treatment of drinking water with chlorine dioxide. Chlorine dioxide has been used to control tastes and odors associated with algae and decaying vegetation in the raw water supply, as well as to lower the concentration of disinfectant-by-products such as total trihalomethanes (TTHMs) and

haloacetic acid (five) (HAA5) in drinking water. Chlorine dioxide was applied seasonally at the Escondido/Vista Water Treatment Plant when Lake Wohlford water was used as part of the raw water supply.

The MCL for chlorite is 1.0 mg/L. A PHG of 0.05 mg/L for chlorite was adopted by OEHHA in 2009. Chlorite was detected at the effluent of the Escondido/Vista Water Treatment Plant during those periods that chlorine dioxide was being applied at an average of 0.63 mg/L in 2013, 0.55 mg/L in 2014 and a 0.59 mg/L in 2015.

Several studies reveal that oral exposure to chlorite can result in hematological, endocrine, reproductive, and gastrointestinal effects, as well as changes in neurobehavioral development at levels higher than the MCL.

There are no acceptable carcinogenicity studies on chlorite; however, the existing lower-quality cancer studies and the limited positive genotoxicity data suggest that chlorite may be a weak carcinogen or have carcinogenic potential.

## **Copper**

There is no MCL for copper. Instead, the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value of all samples from household taps in the distribution system cannot exceed an Action Level of 1.3 mg/L for copper. This means that 90% of the samples must be below the Action Level. All 53 samples (100%) collected in 2015 were below the action level. The PHG for copper is 0.3 mg/L. Of all the samples collected in 2015 for copper, 20 of the 53 were higher than the 0.3 mg/L PHG.

The category of health risk for copper is gastrointestinal irritation. Numerical health risk data on copper has not yet been provided by OEHHA.

The District's water system is in full compliance with the Federal and State Lead and Copper Rule. Based on our sampling, it was determined according to State regulatory requirements that we are below the Action Level for Copper. Therefore we are deemed by DDW to have "optimized corrosion control" and are placed on a reduced monitoring schedule of once every three years.

There is no detectable copper in the water that the District receives from its various sources. Research has shown that elevated copper levels may still be observed in household water taps due to the corrosion of copper and brass fittings in household plumbing. Optimizing water quality parameters to minimize corrosion is considered the best available technology for reducing the incidence of elevated household tap copper levels. The District monitors water quality parameters which relate to corrosion, such as pH, hardness, alkalinity and total dissolved solids.

Since the District meets the "optimized corrosion control" requirements, it is not prudent to initiate additional treatment which would involve the addition of other chemicals which could raise other water quality issues. Therefore, no estimate of cost has been included.

## **Uranium**

Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive element found in the earth's crust and is present in ground and surface waters due to its natural occurrence in geological formations. The MCL for uranium is 20 pCi/L. A PHG of 0.43 pCi/L for uranium was adopted by OEHHA in 2001.

The level of uranium detected in source water supplied by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California averaged 1.0 pCi/L in 2013 and 2.0 pCi/L in 2014-2015. Samples taken from the source water supplied by the Twin Oaks Water Treatment Plant averaged 2.0 pCi/L (2013-2015). Source water analyzed from the Weese Treatment Plant averaged 3.6 pCi/L (2013-2015).

The presence of uranium increases the risk of cancer and is toxic to kidney function. The cancer health risk is  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  (1 per million) at the PHG and  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  (5 per hundred thousand) at the MCL. Uranium intake from water is about equal to the total from other dietary components.

The BAT's to lower the level of uranium below the MCL include the following:

- Enhanced coagulation followed by filtration
- Lime softening
- Ion exchange
- Reverse osmosis.

The first technique, enhanced coagulation followed by filtration is a technology that is applicable to surface waters and is utilized at the treatment plants when warranted by raw water conditions.

Lime softening and ion exchange are not used at the EVWTP as the plant was not designed to facilitate these technologies. Extensive plant redesign would be required to incorporate them and the effort is impractical due to the space limitations of the treatment plant site.

It is unclear whether treatment to lower uranium below the PHG would be feasible, as BAT's are designated for treatment to achieve compliance with the corresponding MCL only, and not PHGs. Likewise, it should be noted that cost estimates are developed for treatment to the MCL and not to the lower PHG level.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION:**

Vista Irrigation District's water quality meets all state and federal drinking water standards set to protect public health. The levels of the constituents identified in this report are already significantly below the health-based Maximum Contaminant Levels established to provide "safe drinking water." The effectiveness of additional costly treatment processes to provide any significant reductions in constituent levels at these

already low values is uncertain. The health protection benefits of these further hypothetical reductions are not clear and may not be quantifiable. Therefore, no action to incorporate new treatment technologies to reduce constituent levels to below PHG or MCLG levels is proposed. The District continuously monitors and assesses water quality parameters to ensure compliance with all state and federal regulations for safe drinking water. Although, the District does not treat drinking water, the District utilizes operational controls, monitoring, testing, data collection and analysis, and partnering with our water providers and regulatory authorities to ensure that the water we deliver meets the highest quality water standards feasible.