



North & South Basin Groundwater Cleanup Update

October 2021

The Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) manages and protects the Orange County Groundwater Basin that underlies north and central Orange County, from which 19 cities and water agencies draw their water supply. OCWD implements a proactive groundwater and surface water monitoring program to protect the quality of the groundwater basin and ensure the water it provides meets or exceeds state and federal drinking water standards.

Industrial chemicals have impacted areas in the northern and southern parts of the groundwater basin: North Basin (near Fullerton, Anaheim, and Placentia) and South Basin (near Santa Ana, Tustin, and Irvine). OCWD is proactively seeking ways to clean up the pollution in a united effort with state and federal regulatory agencies.

Below is an update on activities in and around the North and South Basin sites. OCWD will continue to update stakeholders as the need arises.

North Basin

- With oversight from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), OCWD is conducting a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) to further characterize areas with elevated contaminant concentrations (the RI) and develop and evaluate alternatives (the FS) for an Interim Remedy to remediate parts of the plume that pose a more imminent threat to local groundwater supplies.
- OCWD has submitted several draft reports that make up the RI Report. EPA has provided review comments, and OCWD and its consultants are preparing a Final RI Report. The Final RI Report is expected to be completed in January 2022.
- OCWD and its consultants have identified practical remedial technologies that could be applied to the North Basin Interim Remedy, combined those technologies into remedial alternatives, and evaluated those alternatives using seven criteria, including effectiveness, implementability and cost. Because of the large area and depth of the VOC plume that will be remediated as part of the Interim Remedy (approximately five square miles and over 200 feet deep), the only practical means of keeping the contamination from spreading further is to use a network of extraction wells, treating the extracted groundwater to remove the contaminants, and then recharging the treated water back into the aquifer or directly using it. OCWD is currently working on a Draft FS Report for EPA and state agency review. The FS is expected to be completed in 2022.
- Two state agencies, the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), are overseeing the investigation and remediation of sites where releases of contaminants occurred. The RWQCB and DTSC oversee the work by responsible parties to investigate and eliminate sources of contamination, which is key to addressing the problem.

- EPA is starting a Comprehensive RI to investigate parts of the plume that are outside the Interim Remedy Containment Area, where additional data are needed to delineate the extent of the contamination and determine if the Interim Remedy will need to be augmented by additional remediation. The initial work being conducted by EPA includes three to five adjacent monitoring wells (each completed at a different depth) at five locations (a total of 19 wells). These monitoring wells will help define the boundaries and depth of the leading edge of the contaminant plume. The drilling and well construction work is in progress and will continue through the winter.
- OCWD and the RWQCB participated in an OCWD-hosted webinar on the North Basin groundwater cleanup efforts. A recording of the webinar is available on the [OCWD YouTube channel](#).

South Basin

- The remedial investigation phase of the South Basin Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) is complete, and the process has moved to the FS phase. Engineering Analytics, Inc. (EA), the District's RI/FS consultant, is conducting the FS to identify, develop, and evaluate potential remedial alternatives to address groundwater contamination in the South Basin area. The following activities have been completed or are being performed by EA in support of the FS:
 - Technologies for potential interim remedial measures were evaluated, and a draft technologies screening technical memo was prepared and submitted to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review in the first quarter of 2021.
 - A numerical groundwater flow model of the South Basin area was developed for use in evaluating remedial alternatives.
 - A detailed evaluation of selected remedial alternatives is currently underway and is scheduled for completion in the fourth quarter of 2021.
 - The draft FS report is scheduled for submittal to the TAC in the first quarter of 2022.
- The TAC, comprising staff from the RWQCB, the State Water Board Division of Financial Assistance (DFA), and OCWD met to discuss comments on the draft technologies screening technical memo.
- South Basin documents may be accessed via OCWD's website (see link below) and are also available for public review at the following repositories:
 - Santa Ana Public Library, 26 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701
 - OC Library - Heritage Park, 14361 Yale Avenue, Irvine, CA 92604
 - Tustin Public Library, 345 East Main Street, Tustin, CA 92780

Additional Information

For additional information, please contact Roy Herndon, chief hydrogeologist at rherndon@ocwd.com or (714) 378-3260.

- EPA North Basin website: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/orange-county-north-basin>
- North Basin general information: <https://www.ocwd.com/what-we-do/water-quality/groundwater-cleanup/north-basin/>
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