



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
STAFF REPORT

Update on Keller Canyon Landfill
Forensic Audit Investigation

December 15, 2020

BACKGROUND

On April 21, 2018, the San Francisco Chronicle published an article (see Exhibit B) regarding material that may have been sent to Keller Canyon Landfill (KCL) back in 2010-2011. The article alleged falsified documentation associated with radiological waste from the former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (HPNS) was sent to one or more landfills across the state, including KCL. Initially, Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) and the Department of Conservation and Development worked with several state and federal agencies in coordination with the landfill operator to investigate if any of the waste material in question was disposed of at KCL. Very early on in the investigation it became clear to staff that the knowledge and skillset required to properly investigate these allegations was not present with CCHS so it was determined that it would be in the County's best interest to hire an independent consultant to investigate the likelihood of radiological materials being disposed of at KCL from HPNS.

Following the Board of Supervisors' direction at the May 1, 2018 Board meeting, staff put out a Request for Qualifications towards the end of month in order to contract with an independent consultant to evaluate the potential for unauthorized disposal of radioactive waste at KCL originating from HPNS. In addition, the District V Supervisor's Office requested a community meeting be held for residents of Pittsburg and Bay Point, with representatives from applicable federal, state, and local agencies to discuss the on-going investigation and potential impact of radiological waste to local communities. Staff organized a community meeting held on June 21, 2018, at the Ambrose Community Center in Bay Point. Experts from the Radiologic Health Branch of the California Department of Public Health, US Navy, San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and other state and local agencies were in attendance to speak and/or answer questions regarding the pending investigation.

Over the course of six weeks, between the end of July through early September, the County conducted a solicitation process. This involved staff collaborating with the City of Pittsburg, the landfill operator, and a representative of the local community to review the RFQs received by CCHS and interviewing the qualified consultants. TRC Solutions, Inc. (TRC) was ultimately selected. The County entered into a contract with TRC following Board approval on September 25, 2018.

TRC's forensic audit began in October 2018 and concluded in May 2019. Documents reviewed by TRC included special waste authorizations, soil analytical data reports, Hunters Point work plans and reports, Standard Operating Procedures, portal monitor calibration records, and landfill data to ascertain whether radiologically contaminated materials were received at KCL from HPNS. In addition, site visits were performed at both KCL and HPNS in April 2019.

TRC concluded, in their Forensic Audit Technical Memorandum (see Exhibit A), that it was very unlikely that radiological materials from HPNS were disposed of at KCL. The Forensic Audit Technical Memorandum was published on the CCHS website in September 2019.

Shortly after the Forensic Audit Technical Memorandum was published staff and TRC began discussions about staging a community meeting for the report findings to be formally presented to the local community. In October 2019, TRC's contract had lapsed. Staff spent the remaining months of 2019 and early 2020 renewing TRC's contract. Once TRC's contract was renewed and approved by the Board on February 25, 2020, staff and TRC recommenced discussions to hold a community meeting for TRC to review the findings of their report in a public forum. This process was ultimately postponed when staff were reassigned to assist with the County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020. Community meeting preparations took substantially longer amidst the pandemic resulting in a remote meeting occurring on November 9, 2020 (see Exhibit C).

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations in Section 4.0 of the TRC Forensic Audit Technical Memorandum states:

“Based on this review of data, reports, logs, interviews, and site visits, it is concluded that it is very unlikely that radiological materials of concern (i.e., radionuclides specific to Hunters Point contamination and in exceedance of background) were disposed of at Keller Canyon. To obtain greater certainty that no radiologically contaminated material from Hunters Point was received at Keller Canyon, limited environmental field sampling could be performed at Keller Canyon.”

Based on TRC's analysis and conclusion that it is very unlikely that radiological materials of concern were disposed of at Keller Canyon, it is staff's recommendation to not conduct environmental field sampling for the purposes of obtaining greater certainty that no radiologically contaminated material from Hunters Point was received at Keller Canyon.