Planning, Building & Environmental Services



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Director

Public Water System Backwash Guidelines

The disposal of backwash water from water systems must be evaluated on a project by project basis. The source water chemical sampling results and type of treatment proposed must be evaluated and understood when reviewing water system plans for proper handling of backwash water. Have the engineer indicate the method of backwash disposal/reuse in the plan and verify method was installed as approved during final water system construction inspection.

- When source water does not have any constituents over the MCL and the water system is not required to treat for any constituent, discharge of backwash to land via irrigation (including adding it to process waste stream and applying via surface drip) is acceptable; however, irrigation may not run off the parcel, may not pond nor create a nuisance. If adding backwash to process waste stream the additional waste water generated from backwash must be included in the waste water system design. The Consumer Protection team will have the Land Use team verify the waste water system is sized to accommodate the backwash prior to approving the water system application.
- When using a softener or some other treatment that creates a briny waste the applicant shall
 dispose of the backwash in accordance with the gray water standards or other approved method.
 Backwash may not run off the parcel, may not pond nor create a nuisance. Refer the applicant to
 the Land Use Team for gray water system requirements. The Consumer Protection Team will
 verify the backwash plan has been approved by the Land Use Team prior to approving the water
 system application.
- When source water has constituents over the primary MCL and/or the water system is treating
 the source water to reduce constituent(s) the backwash disposal must be approved by the
 Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) if discharging to pond, septic system or surface
 of ground. Encourage the engineer to look for alternative treatment that does not require
 backwashing in this instance. The Land Use team will coordinate/refer applicants to the RWQCB
 if necessary.
- If an existing system is found to discharge backwash to an inappropriate place (storm drain, creek or river, septic system, surface of ground) refer the operator to the Land Use team. The Land Use team will notify the Consumer Protection team of the ultimate disposition so Consumer Protection can verify compliance during routine inspections.

If asked about the requirements for the discharge of residential water treatment backwash, direct homeowners to the Land Use Team for gray water system requirements.