

# Long road ahead

## Residents push for answers regarding Paradise water contamination

Kevin Phillips looked out at a crowd of some 700 people, most of them his customers, and delivered a painful message that many had heard before from varying sources. But to get confirmation from the Paradise Irrigation District manager that it may take two to three years to get the town's water infrastructure back up and running at full capacity still sent shock waves through the large auditorium.

"There is no game book, no game plan. We're having to [create] the plan right now," Phillips explained during a short introduction outlining the process PID is going through to assess contamination in the pipelines. "We're going to have more of these meetings to keep you guys up-to-date so you can understand the process, the hurdles we're jumping through."

That, it seemed, was welcome news. And despite some in the audience who were quick to sling insults and ask accusatory questions, the mood in the room was more exasperation at a terrible situation and less anger toward the irrigation district.

A case in point: Toward the end of the three-hour meeting at Paradise Alliance Church Tuesday night (March 26), one particularly irate man told Phillips and the others onstage—including Purdue engineer Andrew Whelton, an expert on water contamination who has been consulting with the district—that he'd just spent \$200,000 on rebuilding two rentals in Paradise. "If I can't deliver water to renters, I'm losing money," he said. "If I was your boss, you'd be walking down a road."

The crowd appeared to stand behind Phillips—a round of "boos" followed this passionate outburst.

"I understand your frustration," Phillips said calmly. "We're fight-



ing for those new constructions, and to get temporary water to those new constructions."

That is the best answer he could give for the dozens of people who pleaded for clean water for their existing homes—and those they hope to rebuild in the months and years to come. As it now stands, PID is recommending not using its water for drinking, cooking, even bathing (beyond a short, cold or lukewarm, shower).

While the main culprit appears to be benzene, a known carcinogen believed to have leached into the pipelines when the Camp Fire melted plastic pipes and meters, other "volatile organic compounds" also have been found. With 173 miles of pipes, testing them all, then eliminating the contamination and restoring service, is a daunting task. It will start at the top and move down, as PID works on a gravity-based system. And it will require shutting the system down before getting it back up.

One way the district is hoping to mitigate the impacts is to provide water tanks—and water to fill them—to individual structures. Phillips said he is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and California Office of Emergency Services to secure funding for that, and he's expecting an answer in early April. Home and business owners, however, are still responsible for ensuring that their internal plumbing is safe, as the contamination has been found through testing at taps.

Many of the public speakers

Paradise Irrigation District Manager Kevin Phillips addresses a crowd of hundreds at the Paradise Alliance Church.

PHOTO BY MEREDITH J. COOPER

expressed frustration at the lack of direction they've been given, and the mixed messaging they receive depending on whom they talk to. A prime example Tuesday evening was Kristin Cooper, who was representing North State Water Treatment.

"When I spoke to our regional water quality office, it was their understanding that there had not been a single positive test [inside a home]," she said. "We have been urging people not to pay for [expensive] tests."

Whelton said he'd gotten similar mixed information from varying agencies, which he hopes will be remedied. But he affirmed that, "I have been contacted by people who have found contamination in their homes. The state is saying they don't have that information."

Going forward, Phillips said, the PID is expecting to implement the next phase of testing within 30 days. He also urged those in attendance to sign up for water system updates on the district's website (pidwater.com), where they can also find information on test results, upcoming meetings and how to register for a PID-provided water tank.

"We are dedicated to the town of Paradise and to its citizens so this town can rebuild quickly," Phillips said.

—MEREDITH J. COOPER  
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Department of Toxic Substance Control

March 2019

## Public Notice

The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated resources, enforcing hazardous waste laws, reducing hazardous waste generation, and encouraging the manufacture of chemically safer products.

### NOTICE OF STANDARDIZED PERMIT RENEWAL FOR THE HAZARDOUS WASTE STORAGE AND TRANSFER FACILITY ASBURY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES EPA ID. NO. CAL000827844

On October 22, 2018, the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) received a hazardous waste permit renewal application from Asbury Environmental Services (AES), doing business as World Oil Environmental Services (Facility) at 2549 Scott Avenue in Chico, California 95928-7188. This facility opened in 1991 as Evergreen Oil Company. DTSC is reviewing the application to ensure AES's operations continue to meet the technical and regulatory requirements to protect human health and the environment.

This Facility stores and transfers hazardous waste, used oil, waste antifreeze and oily water received from off-site generators. The Facility has a tank farm unit containing three above-ground tanks, with a capacity of 10,000, 1,000 and 500 gallons. These tanks are permitted to store used oil, waste antifreeze, and oily water. The Facility also has a container storage area that allows various size containers, not exceeding 275 gallons, to store waste antifreeze, used oil, oily sludge, oily debris, and oily water.

The current permit will remain effective until there is a final decision on the renewal application. DTSC may request additional information from the Facility before its final decision. If the application is determined to be technically complete, DTSC will then prepare a draft permit decision document for public review and comment. If DTSC renews the Permit, the Facility could continue to store/transfer hazardous waste for the next ten years.

You may review or copy the Permit Renewal application and other supporting documents at the following locations:

Chico Public Library, 1108 Sherman Avenue, Chico, California 95926  
(530) 891-2761 - Call for hours

DTSC File Room, 8800 Cal Center Drive, Sacramento, California 95826  
(916) 255-4159 - Call for appointment

You may also view this notice and project related documents at the following DTSC website:  
[https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/hwmp\\_profile\\_report.asp?global\\_id= CAL000827844](https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/hwmp_profile_report.asp?global_id= CAL000827844)

If you have any questions regarding this Notice, please contact:  
Project Manager. Mr. Lung-Yin Tai at 916-255-3615 or Lung-Yin.Tai@dtsc.ca.gov  
or Public Participation Specialist, Kerry Rasmussen  
at 916-255-3650, 866-495-5651 or Kerry.Rasmussen@dtsc.ca.gov

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