

Safe Drinking Water Act Enforcement: U.S. Department of Justice and Thermal, California Mobile Home Park Enter into Consent Decree



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

01/28/2025

The United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) on behalf of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) entered into a January 16th Consent Decree (“CD”) with the operators of the Oasis Mobile Home Park (“Park”) for alleged violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act (“SDWA”). See United States District Court (Central District of California) Civil No. 5:23-cv-01650-MRA-DTBx.

The Park is located in the Eastern Coachella Valley, within the Torres Martinez Desert, Cahuilla Indian Reservation in Thermal, California.

The Park is described as predominantly serving agricultural workers and constitutes the Valley’s largest mobile home facility with an estimated population of 1,000 people.

DOJ had filed a Complaint alleging four claims for relief:

1. Failure to provide EPA with certain inventory information about the Park’s septic systems, which are class V wells.
2. Failure to comply with an EPA 2021 Emergency Administrative Order, as amended under the SDWA.
3. Arsenic is alleged to be present and likely to enter the public water system at the park.
4. Contaminants from the Park’s wastewater treatment system are likely to enter the public water system at the Park.

A \$50,000.00 penalty is assessed. Further, the CD requires implementation of certain upgrades and operational improvements, which include:

- Installation of alarms on the drinking water treatment system to monitor its operation.
- Addition of at least 80,000 gallons of water storage capacity.
- Installation of a booster pump and purchase of critical replacement parts.
- Ensuring that qualified public water system operators are at the Park seven days per week until the Park’s operators install the alarm system, at which point the operators must be on-site as necessary to meet all SDWA requirements.
- Development of comprehensive standard operating procedures with the assistance of an EPA-provided contractor to ensure the proper operation of the public water system.

- Mandatory quarterly meetings with EPA to review compliance progress with the consent decree.
- Notification to EPA as soon as possible and no later than twenty-four hours if consent decree violations or other issues pose an immediate threat to public health or the environment.

A copy of the CD can be downloaded [here](#).