



## Advisory Notice of Elevated Groundwater in Ojai Valley – May 2023

Due to heavy rains this year, groundwater has risen significantly to elevated levels at or near the surface in areas throughout the Ojai valley region, potentially impacting proposed Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) where proposed dispersal fields may be in direct contact with elevated groundwater.

Submitted applications for proposed OWTS may be impacted by the newly elevated groundwater levels. The vertical distance separating the designed/proposed bottom of the dispersal field and the new historical high groundwater level may have been reduced to less than the minimum of five vertical feet. If the five vertical foot distance between the designed dispersal field bottom and groundwater is not possible due to the elevated groundwater, a redesigned dispersal field and/or an alternative OWTS will be required for ALL PROPOSED OWTS PROJECTS WITHIN THE OJAI VALLEY AREA.

**Background:** In 2016, the Ventura River Groundwater Basin and the Ventura River Watershed (Watershed) was identified as a federally listed impaired watershed under section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act. The Watershed is currently under a State Water Board-issued Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) aimed at reducing nutrient loading, including loading from OWTS. The TMDL required all existing and new dwellings served by OWTS to either connect to public sewer or switch to an advanced treatment (alternative) OWTS. However, a study to further identify areas within the Watershed that are impacted by OWTS remains ongoing with the State Water Board. As a result, this Division has not issued a moratorium/advisory for the installation of new conventional OWTS.

All newly proposed, submitted applications and OWTS permits for conventional leach lines will require an observation trench/boring at time of inspection to determine if groundwater has risen to levels that will impact your proposed OWTS project.

1. Prior to conducting an inspection, a test pit dug to a depth of 5 feet below the proposed leach trench bottom will be required.
2. Contact this Division at 805-477-7136 to schedule the inspection.
3. An inspection will be conducted to determine if groundwater has risen to levels of concern.
4. If groundwater is observed to levels of concern, current OWTS building permits will be suspended until such time that a new system design is approved by this Division.

If you have any questions, please contact your OWTS specialist, Ernest Dragan, at [Ernest.Dragan@ventura.org](mailto:Ernest.Dragan@ventura.org) or 805/662-6520.