



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

April 27, 2000

AGENDA: May 9, 2000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Implementation of Environmental Health Task Force Report

Dear Board Members:

The Board of Supervisors formed an Environmental Health Task Force in February 1999 to review the County's sewage disposal program and make recommendations for administrative and procedural changes and improvements. Your Board accepted the final report of the Task Force on May 4, 1999. The Health Service Agency Administrator and Environmental Health Director believe that it is appropriate to update your Board on implementation of the adopted recommendations, and therefore are submitting this report for your review and acceptance.

Background

On February 22, 1999, upon the request of Supervisor Almquist, the Board authorized the County Administrative Officer to convene an Environmental Health Task Force that was directed to hold a series of public meetings, and report back to the Board with recommendations to improve the County's sewage disposal program as administered by Environmental Health Services (EHS). The 17 member Task Force held three public meetings and took testimony from the public and interested contractors concerning a number of issues associated with the administration of the County's program. A set of twelve recommendations relative to EHS were approved by the Task Force on April 15, 1999, and forwarded to the Board. The recommendations were intended to improve the administration of the sewage disposal program and address the concerns raised by the public and contractors at the public meetings, while preserving the State, federal and locally mandated water quality goals which are the basis for the requirements contained in the County Sewage Disposal Ordinance. Following is a report on the status of implementation of each of the twelve recommendations.

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Applicant Bill of Rights

Development of an Applicant Bill of Rights was recommended by the Task Force. In response to this recommendation, EHS has adopted and posted at the public reception counter a set of Customer Assurances for the Environmental Health Services organization overall and the On Site Sewage Disposal Program in specific. Copies of both sets of Customer Assurances are attached to this report (Attachments 1 and 2). Staff references these documents in working with new applicants.

Single Employee Responsible for Application

Environmental Health endorsed the recommendation of the Task Force that each applicant should have one designated EHS employee be responsible for the outcome of the sewage disposal application. This concept is affirmed in the Customer Assurances.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Implementation of an applicant satisfaction survey to monitor outcomes and provide feedback on the permitting process was recommended. A customer satisfaction survey process was enacted on July 1, 1999. Comment cards and survey forms (attachments 3 and 4) that can be used for all EHS programs are available at the EHS office. A drop-off box is installed outside the EHS main doors for deposit of cards (or drop-off of other materials for EHS). In order to obtain comments specifically on the sewage disposal permit process, a pre-stamped survey form (attachment 5) is sent to each applicant upon issuance of their permit and a second pre-stamped form sent upon final inspection and sign-off of construction. All forms can be submitted by the applicant anonymously or with self-identification, at their option. A quarterly report of survey comments is prepared for review and follow up by administration. The most recent quarterly report is attached (attachment 6).

Results of three quarters of survey returns have been largely very positive. Twenty-seven general comments cards have been submitted, all of which gave very positive responses about the services received with particular praise for EHS clerical staff. Twenty-three rated services as "Great" and three commentators rated services as "very helpful." One card had no score. Approximately 400 survey forms specifically for the sewage disposal permit process have been sent to permit applicants; 104 completed survey forms have been returned. The overall average score for services received is 4.65 on a scale of 5 (5= excellent; 4=good). Written comments included 40 complimentary remarks, 19 concern/complaints, and 9 suggestions. The amount of fees was the most frequent complaint (5 responses). Individual complaints were assessed to identify possible methods for improving service and system issues which could hamper a timely completion of the process.

Expanded Counter Hours

The Task Force recommended that the hours that inspectors were available for office contact be expanded, while recognizing that time spent in the office reduced the time available for

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inspections requested by the public and contractors. With this recognition, it was recommended that consideration be given to increasing the number of inspectors. By the time the Task Force report was adopted by the Board in May 1999, EHS had opened its counter during the noon hour and had expanded by 1/2 hour the time that field staff conducted telephone business with contractors. A new inspector position was authorized in the 1999-2000 budget; that position was filled this January. However, one of EHS's most experienced staff has recently retired, leaving the Land Use program with 4 district inspectors until such time as the vacancy can be filled.

An experienced inspector is assigned to be available at the counter in the EHS office until noon each work day. In addition, an inspector is available at the Felton Permit Center two afternoons per week. Initially, EHS staff were at the Felton Center three afternoons, but time utilization data indicated that the level of activity was such that it would be a more effective use of resources to have a presence two afternoons weekly. EHS continues to study the activity level in the Permit Center quarterly and may continue to adjust the staff allocation in the future. If a mid-county Permit Center is established, EHS is prepared to make some level of staff available to the center. The most recent quarterly report on time utilization and staffing at the Felton Permit Center is attached (attachment 7).

Layperson's Guide to the Septic Regulatory Process

It was recommended that EHS work with a Technical Advisory Committee (see later section of report) to identify internal conflicts within the Sewage Disposal Ordinance and then develop a guide in layperson's terms to explain how the regulatory process works and how septic systems are intended to work. EHS has developed a number of handouts and guidelines, including:

- "The History & Regulation of Septic Systems"
- "Service Charges for County Service Area #12, *Septic System Maintenance and Management*"
- "Frequently Asked Questions About Septic Systems & Permits"
- "Requirements for Building Permit Applications for Residential & Commercial/Institutional Structures"
- "Homeowners Guide to Septic Systems"
- "Septic Systems - How They Work & How They Don't Work"
- "Homeowner's Guide to Repairing a Septic System"
- "Homeowner's Guide to Greywater Sumps"
- "San Lorenzo Watershed Septic System Loan Program"
- "Alternative On-Site Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems"
- "Manure Management Plan Requirements"
- "Homeowner's Guide to Manure Management"

In addition, EHS has greatly expanded the information available about environmental health programs on the Environmental Health website (www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/eh/ehhome.htm). It is the intention of Environmental Health to continue to expand resources for the public on the website and to maintain up-to-date information for public use.

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Decentralized Decision Making/Protocols for Field Changes for Repairs and Upgrades

The Task Force recommended that the decision making process be decentralized so as to allow field inspectors, within the constraints of the Wastewater Management Plan and the law, to modify septic system design and installation for repairs and upgrades based on conditions encountered in the field while the system was being installed. Decentralized decision making for such situations has been instituted, using the advice and input of field inspectors (who participate in weekly **team** meetings to discuss field practices and procedures) and the Technical Advisory Committee. In addition, amendments to the Sewage Disposal Ordinance have been drafted that, if enacted, would allow some additional flexibility within the Code itself to deal with site conditions on repairs and upgrades.

Public Service Training Program

Health Services Agency was recommended to design a training program to provide all staff with a public service orientation to develop them as experts whose role is to help train and educate the public as to the proper function of septic systems, as well as to protect the public health and environment. HSA contracted with Management Action Program (MAP) to provide a set of workshops on customer service and leadership. All EHS staff, and some staff of the Public Health Division of HSA have attended the workshops, conducted in November 1999 and February 2000.

Training Program for New Field Inspectors

A number of suggestions for providing an in-depth training program for orientation for new staff were given by the Task Force, including working with a mentor in the field for a period of time during which they work and do plan checks and design reviews with an experienced employee, and gain an understanding of the sewage program rules and regulations. These suggestions were largely already the practice for new staff assigned to the sewage disposal programs. However, EHS is strengthening and reinforcing the orientation and mentoring process to ensure new staff have a thorough grounding in the program and the knowledge needed to exercise sound decision making in the field.

Technical Advisory Committee

Based on recommendation of the Task Force, the Board authorized Environmental Health to establish a Technical Advisory Committee for the purposes of providing advice on the sewage disposal program in a number of specific areas identified by the Task Force and on the sewage disposal program in general. The Onsite Sewage Disposal Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held its first meeting on June 10, 1999 and has met 12 times since then. The meeting frequency is monthly. The TAC has discussed and given advice on a wide variety of matters, including clarifications of repair standards and procedures, revisions of the sewage disposal ordinance, permit application procedures and fees, septic pumping procedures, and various options for disclosing septic system characteristics at time of property transfers. The makeup and membership of the TAC is attached (attachment 8).

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“Strike Team”

A process for working with property owners and contractors on complex problems was recommended to be implemented through a “strike team” of experienced County staff. The process that EHS observes for particularly difficult properties and situations is for the field inspector to obtain the assistance of both the Senior Alternative Sewage Systems Specialist and the Land Use Program Manager (and if especially significant interpretations of Code are necessary, the Environmental Health Director and/or County Counsel) to work on possible options for the particular problem site. Although there remains some sites that are not suitable for onsite sewage disposal under any circumstances, solutions are usually found for the large majority of difficult sites through this consultative, problem-solving team.

Strategies for Financial Risk Sharing

The costs of repairing or replacing a failing septic system in areas where conventional solutions will not work can be extra-ordinary. The Task Force recommended that ways of mitigating the cost be explored by EHS in conjunction with the State Regional Water Quality Control Board. A report on Financial Risk Sharing is being given to your Board under a separate agenda item.

Uniform Septic Disclosure Document

Upon the recommendation of the Task Force, the Board authorized EHS, in conjunction with the advice of a local advisory group, to develop a report for the Board on the current process of providing notice of septic characteristics and limitations via recordation on the land document and the advisability of enacting a “Uniform Septic Disclosure Document” included at the time of sale of any property utilizing a septic system. A report on Septic Disclosure is being given to your Board under a separate agenda item.

In summary, the recommendations of the Environmental Health Task Force, as adopted by your Board one year ago, have largely been implemented. Implementation of a small number of recommendations (such as ordinance amendments and action on the related reports being considered today) remains in process. In addition, your Board will be acting on a follow up contract with Management Action Program on its May 23 agenda for an organizational audit of Environmental Health Services to assist EHS in identifying alternatives anticipated to improve the overall performance of all components of EHS and support the continuing dedication of EHS to providing excellent customer service to the community. Recommendations from that audit will be forthcoming in the Fall and any recommendations requiring the authorization of your Board will be brought to your Board following this comprehensive analysis.

The Environmental Health Director and HSA Administrator wish to express their appreciation for the assistance provided to EHS for improvements in its sewage disposal program from EHS staff, contractors, the Technical Advisory Committee, and interested public, as well as for the support of your Board in helping Environmental Health meet its commitment to excellent customer service.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report.

Sincerely,



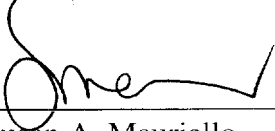
Rama Khalsa, Ph.D.
HSA Administrator



Diane Evans, REHS
Environmental Health Director

Attachments

RECOMMENDED



Susan A. Mauriello
County Administrative Officer

cc: CAO
HSA Administrator
Environmental Health

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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CUSTOMER ASSURANCES

As a Customer of County Environmental Health Services, you can expect:

- To be treated with courtesy and respect.
- To have Environmental Health Services regulations, policies, ordinances, and appeals and complaint procedures explained to you.
 - a To have access to files pertaining to your project or property.
- To work with one individual staff person assigned to and responsible for your project.
- To have services rendered in a timely manner.
- To have phone calls: returned within one business day.
- A prompt response to appeals of application or permit decisions.
- A prompt response to customer service complaints.

To provide prompt, courteous service, Environmental Health Services expects:

- Its staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Customers and Contractors to be on time for appointments and inspections.
- Customers and Contractors to submit timely, complete and accurate applications, permits and paperwork.

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

On Site Sewage Disposal Program

Customer Assurances

As a Customer of the On Site Sewage Disposal Program of County Environmental Health Services, you can expect:

- To be treated with courtesy and respect.
- To have Environmental Health Services regulations, policies, ordinances, and appeals and complaint procedures explained to you.
- To have access to files pertaining to your project or property.
- To work with one individual staff person assigned to and responsible for your project.
- To have services rendered in a timely manner. Our Goals:
 - Phone calls: returned within one business day.
 - Application Review/Comment/Approval: within five business days.
 - Permit Issuance: within fifteen days after submission of complete permit application.
 - Construction Inspection: within one business day.
 - Service Requests: within ten business days.
 - Complaints of Septic System Malfunctioning: within three business days.
- A prompt response to appeals of application or permit decisions.
- A prompt response to customer service complaints.

To provide prompt, courteous service, Environmental Health Services expects:

- Its staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Customers and Contractors to be on time for appointments and inspections.
- Customers and Contractors to submit timely, complete and accurate applications, permits and paperwork.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMENTCARD

We are interested in your comments and suggestions. Although we cannot respond to each of you individually, please be assured that the Department's Management will give careful consideration to constructive comments and suggestions.

Date you visited the Environmental Health Services: _____

Person(s) you spoke with: _____

Reason for your visit: _____

Please tell how your visit went today: (circle one)

Great Very Helpful O.K. Poor

Comments/Suggestions: _____

Your name (optional): _____

Phone: _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this form.



Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. If you have additional comments or suggestions, please write them in the comments section or call us at (831) 454-2022.

Your comments about how we're doing are important to us. We are committed to providing you with excellent service. You can let us know how we're doing and what we can do to improve.

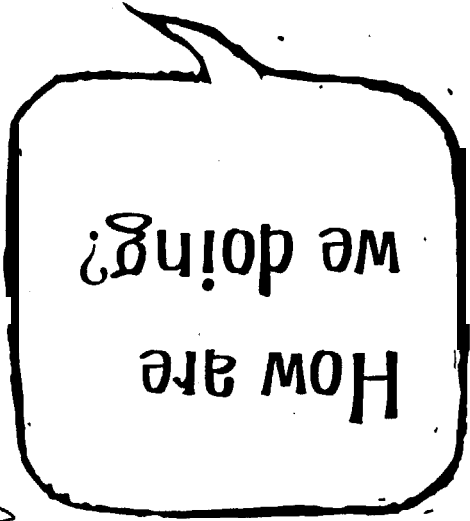
How did we do today?



Santa Cruz County
Health Services Agency

Environmental Health Services
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
454-2022

You have a voice ● **in our business**
(831) 454-2022



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Santa Cruz County
Environmental Health
Services
Part of the Health Services Agency
of Santa Cruz County

We care about your opinion.

Please tell how your visit with Environmental Health went today.

Circle one.

PGreat Very Helpful O ok r

Please tell us about you.

- ___ Property Owner
- Contractor
- Consultant
- Restaurant Owner/Mgr
- ___ Other _____

Reason for visit

- Apply for a permit
- Permit information
- Meet with staffperson
- Other _____

How are we doing in these areas?

What do you think of our staff?

Circle yes or no.

1. Staff were polite to me. yes no
2. Staff gave me complete and accurate information. yes no

Comments

What do you think of our services?

Circle yes or no.

1. Are we available days and times which are convenient for you? yes no
2. Were your questions answered quickly? yes no

Did you see us about a permit?

What do you think of our permit process?

Circle yes or no.

1. Do the fees seem fair? yes no
2. Was the process for getting the permit completely explained? yes no


Comments

Other Comments

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**COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 3, 2000
TO: Diane Evans, R.E.H.S., Director of Environmental Health
FROM: Robert A. Smith, R.E.H.S., Environmental Health Program Manager 
SUBJECT: Customer Satisfaction Survey results

This summary covers those Comment Cards and On-Site Sewage Disposal Program Surveys received in EHS between January 1 and March 31, 2000, as well as a current (9 month) summary.

Customer Comment Cards:

Number returned: Nine in this quarter, twenty-seven to date.

Scores: Eight were marked Great (highest category), one contained no score.
To date twenty-three (84%) were marked Great, three (12%) were marked *Very Helpful*, and one (4%) had no score.

Recurring comments:
-- All of the comments were positive on all cards received to date.
-- Steve Schneider and Kathy Glynn were specifically praised in this quarter.
-- Overall, Leslie Scurfield and Kathy Glenn have been praised many times each.

On-Site Sewage Disposal System Surveys:

Fifteen surveys were returned of the approximately 100 sent out this quarter, approximately 400 have been sent out to date. Results were as follows:

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Categories*:	# returned	Clarity	Scheduling	Timeliness	Knowledge	Courtesy	Overall Average
1st Qtr FY 99-00	56	4.59	4.61	4.46	4.69	4.64	4.61
2nd Qtr FY 99-00	33	4.21	4.65	4.56	4.67	4.61	4.54
3 rd Qtr FY 99-00	15	4.68	4.88	4.88	4.95	5.00	4.88
(9 month) average	104	4.54	4.67	4.57	4.72	4.73	4.65
(9 month) adjusted %	26%	88%	92%	89%	93%	93%	91%

* Survey Categories:

1. Clarity of the information received from us regarding permit procedures.
2. Ease of *scheduling* inspections/appointments.
3. *Timeliness* of our response to a request for service.
4. Staffs *knowledge* and professionalism.
5. Staffs *courtesy*.

Customer Comments:

Seven of the surveys contained compliments, complaints, and suggestions as follows:

Complaints (1 for this period, 19 to date):

Lack of staff clarity at the start of the project regarding forms & copies needed.
Overall: Increased staff clarity, lower fees, and longer counter hours are wanted.

Compliments (5 for this period, 40 to date):

Fair, rapid & professional service.
Overall: "Best Department in the County", prompt & excellent service.

Suggestions (1 for this period, 9 to date):

Change the name of Environmental Planning - it is confused with EHS.
No trend(s) noted.

Analysis:

The return rate for the surveys continues to drop.

The percent shown is adjusted for the range of score options..

Courtesy is the highest rated trait, both in the surveys and on the Customer Comment cards. *Clarity of Information received from EHS* is rated lowest on the surveys, both numerically and in the comments section, but still in the *Very Good* range. Most of these comments come from first time customers, not from those who work with EHS on a regular basis.

RAS:rs

cc: John Ricker, Environmental Program Coordinator
Linda Valentine, Clerical Supervisor

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Santa Cruz County
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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ON-SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL PROGRAM SURVEY

Environmental Health Services wants to improve its customer services. We would greatly appreciate your assistance in completing this survey regarding your recent application for a sewage disposal permit. Survey results will be used by Environmental Health Services staff in order to continue to improve our program. Should you wish to remain anonymous, please feel free to do so.

Month and year your permit was issued:

Project location (area of County):

Type of Permit: New Repair/Upgrade

PLEASE RATE THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVED THROUGHOUT THE APPLICATION AND INSPECTION PROCESS. (Circle the number in the appropriate box)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Clarity of the information you received from us regarding permit procedures.	5	4	3	2
2. Ease of scheduling your inspections/appointments.	5	4	3	2
3. Timeliness of our response to your request for service.	5	4	3	2
4. Staff's knowledge and professionalism.	5	4	3	2
5. Staff's courtesy.	5	4	3	2

Do you have any suggestions for improving our service or the permit process?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your opinion of the sewage disposal permit process is important to us. Your comments and ratings are taken seriously by us and we will use them in evaluating our processes and our customer service goals.

Optional:
Name _____ Telephone: _____

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**COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 10, 2000
TO: Diane Evans, R.E.H.S., Director of Environmental Health
FROM: Robert A. Smith, R.E.H.S., Environmental Health Program Manager *RS*
SUBJECT: Felton Permit Center: First quarter statistics for CY 2000.

This summary is based upon the tracking log sheets submitted by staff.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Days Manned</u>	<u>Customers Served</u>	<u>Average time per customer</u>	<u>Average per day</u>	<u>Total Time</u>	<u>Time Use Efficiency*</u>
January	8	20	17.3 min	2.9 clients	346 min	18.0%
February	9	4	16.3	1.3	65	3.0
March	9	25	17.9	2.8	447	20.7
Qtr. Total	26	49	17.5	2.6	858	13.8%

<u>Totals to date:</u> 80	242				3,670 min	
<u>Average to date</u>	24.2 per month	15.2 min	3.6 per day			"19.1%"

* based on a 4 hour day. With travel time Average Efficiency to Date is 15.3%

For reference:

December	9 days	16 clients	17.6 min/	1.8 clients/day	282 total min	13.1%
November	6	12	16.8	2.0	202	14.0
October	8	36	17.4	4.5	626	32.6
September	7	24	10.4	3.4	250	14.9
August	7	30	14.0	4.3	420	25
July	7	25	14.5	3.5	362	21.5
June	10	50	13.4	5	670	28

cc: John Ricker, Land Use Program Coordinator
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COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

ON-SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

<p>RAY ROHRBOUGH P. O. BOX 215 BOULDER CREEK, CA 95006 (B) 338-3852 (FAX) 338-3666</p>
<p>KEN MABIE P. O. BOX 1445 APTOS, CA 95001 (B) 684-1555 (FAX) 684-1842</p>
<p>JOHN CARVER (CENTURY 21) 13210 HIGHWAY 9 BOULDER CREEK, CA 95006 (B) 338-2125 (FAX) 335-4271</p>
<p>RICHARD LEE (S. C. CITY WATER TREATMENT PLANT) 715 GRAHAM HILL ROAD SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (B) 420-5485 (FAX) 420-548 1</p>
<p>GERRY WEBBER 129 JEWELL STREET SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (B) 469-7211 (FAX) 426-5340</p>
<p>JOHN RICKER WATER QUALITY PROGRAM MANAGER 701 Ocean Street, Room 3 12 Santa Cruz, CA 95060 454-2022 (FAX) 454-3 128</p>
<p>RAMA KHALSA, ADMINISTRATOR 1080 EMELINE STREET SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 454-4000 (FAX) 454-4770</p>

<p>HOWARD LIEBENBERG P.O. BOX 190 FELTON, CA 95018 (B) 338-4646 (FAX) 338-8980</p>
<p>PETER HAASE (FALL CREEK ENGINEERING) P. O. BOX 7894 SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061 (B) 426-9054 (FAX) 426-4932</p>
<p>AL HAYNES (SAN LORENZO VALLEY WATER DIST) 13060 HIGHWAY 9 BOULDER CREEK, CA 95006 (B) 338-2153 (FAX) 338-7986</p>
<p>HOWARD KOLB REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD 8 1 HIGUERA STREET, SUITE 200 SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401-5427 (805) 549-3332 (FAX) 805-543-3097</p>
<p>DIANE EVANS DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH 701 Ocean Street, Room 3 12 Santa Cruz, CA 95060 454-2022 (FAX) 454-3 128</p>
<p>RAFAEL SANCHEZ ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST 701 Ocean Street, Room 3 12 Santa Cruz, CA 95060 454-2022 (FAX) 454-3 128</p>

ATTACHMENT 8