

Heidi Whitman

August 3, 2026

Mayor Dane White and Members of the City Council
City of Escondido
201 North Broadway
Escondido, CA 92025

**Re: Supplemental Submission — The Last Groundwater Data Ever Collected Beneath
This Property
Appeal of PL24-0067 — Agenda Item 9, August 5, 2026 — Resolution No. 2026-90**

Dear Mayor White and Council Members:

I located the enclosed document after filing my rebuttal and am submitting it now because it establishes something I could not previously document: what the last direct measurement of groundwater beneath this property actually showed.

Nothing here changes the central point of my appeal or of Mr. Snyder's letter. No one knows what is in the ground beneath this parcel today. That remains true, and this document does not alter it. What follows is simply the most recent data that exists — the last groundwater sample ever collected from beneath these lots. It is from March 2008. It is eighteen years old.

I am not offering it as a description of current conditions, and I would have no basis to. Concentrations across the Chatham plume have declined substantially since 2008 — in many wells, dramatically — and I have never argued otherwise, in this appeal or anywhere else.

But the decline has not been uniform, and it has not been uninterrupted. Mr. Snyder's letter documents rebounds in wells on both sides of this project. MW-67, located immediately upgradient of the project site, “had a decreasing trend from 2020 to 2024, but concentrations from samples collected in 2025 has shown an increase in concentrations.” MW-69, downgradient to the southeast, “has also shown some increases over the past five years and the trend is not stable.” P-11 “initially showed variably decreasing trends but now shows increasing trends since 2023” in six separate contaminants. His conclusion is that “the contaminant plume is not stable.” A long decline punctuated by rebounds upgradient and downgradient of an unmonitored parcel is not a basis for assuming that parcel is clean.

Source: Snyder Geologic, Inc., letter to Mayor of Escondido and City Council Members, July 24, 2026, p. 3.

These 2008 numbers matter for a different reason than what they say about today. They are the last groundwater measurements on the project site, and the well that measured them was destroyed

to make room for houses ten months later and never replaced. That is precisely why the question cannot be answered now.

Monitoring well MW-57 stood on this parcel and was sampled quarterly for years. The last full annual monitoring report before its destruction — the *Annual Monitoring Submittal, March 2008*, prepared by Hargis + Associates, Inc. for the Chatham Site PRP Group and dated May 28, 2008 — records the final results.

1. The last groundwater data available from beneath this property

On March 4, 2008, the sample collected from MW-57 on this property returned the following concentrations, shown against California's drinking water Maximum Contaminant Levels:

Contaminant	MW-57, March 4, 2008 (µg/L)	California state standard MCL (µg/L)	Multiple of MCL
Trichloroethylene (TCE)	460	5	92×
Tetrachloroethylene (PCE)	370	5	74×
cis-1,2-Dichloroethylene	110	6	18×
1,2-Dichloroethane	79	0.5	158×
1,1-Dichloroethylene	77	6	13×
Total VOCs	1,096	—	—

Source: Annual Monitoring Submittal, March 2008, Chatham Site, Hargis + Associates, Inc., May 28, 2008, Table 3 (MW-57, sample IRC0221-06, collected 3/4/2008) and Table 2. MCLs are California primary drinking water standards. Multiples are rounded.

The duplicate sample collected the same day (MW-5700) returned 470 µg/L TCE and 380 µg/L PCE, confirming the result.

2. MW-57 was the most contaminated deep well in the entire Chatham monitoring network

This is the finding I most want the Council to register. The report states that in March 2008, of nineteen deep wells sampled across the entire Chatham site and surrounding area, MW-57 — the well on this property — registered the highest concentration of every principal contaminant:

“The highest concentration of TVOCs detected in samples from the deep wells in March 2008 was 1,096 ug/l in monitor well MW-57.”

“The highest concentration of TCE detected was 460 ug/l in monitor well MW-57, which is located just south of Hamilton Lane.”

“The highest concentration of PCE detected was 370 ug/l in monitor well MW-57.”

“The highest concentration was 110 ug/l, detected in monitor well MW-57” (cis-1,2-DCE).

Source: Annual Monitoring Submittal, March 2008, Chatham Site, pp. 14–15.

The same report records that concentrations at MW-57 were themselves declining — from 2,710 µg/L total VOCs in March 2005 to 1,096 µg/L in March 2008 — and I want that on the record alongside everything else. But note what it means. Even at the low end of an eighteen-year decline, after the plume had already been under active remediation for a quarter century, the well on this parcel was still the most contaminated deep well in the network. Its historical range was 727 to 2,772 µg/L, with a historical high of 1,100 µg/L of TCE alone.

3. Ten months later, the monitoring network's most contaminated deep well was destroyed to make room for houses

The chronology now available to the Council is this:

November 16, 2006 — DTSC's Geological Services Unit writes that “MW-57 is a critical deep well and should not be decommissioned to accommodate new residential housing,” and objects that the proposed replacement location is too far away to yield comparable data.

February 19, 2007 — The responsible parties report that “DTSC, the Group and the property owner are in the process of negotiating an access/license agreement,” and that “[t]he well will be decommissioned in accordance with the requirements of the access/license agreement.” The replacement well is withdrawn.

March 14, 2007 — The Site Access License Agreement is executed. Paragraph 4 permits the landowner, “in their sole and absolute discretion,” to revoke the license on sixty days' notice, whereupon the well must be destroyed.

March 4, 2008 — MW-57 sampled. Highest deep-well concentrations in the entire Chatham plume monitoring network.

May 28, 2008 — Those results are reported to DTSC in the annual monitoring submittal.

June 16, 2008 — The responsible parties decline DTSC's request for a workplan “fully delineating the vertical and lateral extent of groundwater contamination in the deep zone,” calling it “over-broad and unwarranted.”

October 17, 2008 — Technical memorandum recommending decommissioning of MW-57.

November 12, 2008 — DTSC concurs. In the same letter, DTSC refuses to allow decommissioning of shallow well MW-55 because it is “the only monitoring well which is upgradient of the groundwater contamination” and “should be kept for sampling to assure that no contaminants are in the groundwater at that location.”

January 16, 2009 — Destruction completed. No equivalent replacement well was ever installed on this property.

Read together, that sequence is difficult to explain in environmental terms. The most contaminated deep monitoring point in the Chatham monitoring network sat on this parcel. Its removal had already been opposed in writing by DTSC's own geologists, expressly on the ground that it should not be given up “to accommodate new residential housing.” Its continued existence depended entirely on the permission of a landowner who was free to withdraw that permission at will, and who was a party to the negotiation that determined the well's fate. Ten months after it produced the highest readings in the monitoring network, it was gone — and in the same letter that approved its destruction, DTSC was explaining that a sole well at a location must be preserved precisely so that someone can “assure that no contaminants are in the groundwater at that location.” No such assurance has been possible here since January 2009.

I do not know, and I do not assert, who served notice under paragraph 4 or what the October 17, 2008 memorandum said in support of removal. Those documents are not before this Council. They should be. Before the Council votes, I ask that staff obtain and place in the record the October 17, 2008 technical memorandum, the executed Site Access License Agreement, and any notice of revocation given under paragraph 4, so that the Council can see for itself why the only direct window into the groundwater beneath this property was closed.

4. What this does to the staff report's central factual claim

The staff report tells the Council that “the monitoring well nearest the Project site (33-G3) has no detectible Volatile Organic Compounds” (Agenda Packet, p. 110). That single sentence contains two errors, and the Council should have both.

First, 33-G3 is not a monitoring well. It is a regional supply well that is sampled as part of the Chatham program. The annual monitoring reports record its pump, its flow totalizer, and its production in gallons — none of which a monitoring well has, because a monitoring well exists to be measured, not to produce water. Presenting it to this Council as “the monitoring well nearest the Project site” misstates both what it is and what a non-detect from it can establish.

Second, the nearest monitoring well to this project is MW-67. Mr. Snyder — the only California Professional Geologist and Certified Hydrogeologist to have analyzed this project — places MW-67 “immediately upgradient of the project site,” notes that no monitoring wells were installed on the six-acre property, and records that the other wells used to contour the plume in the Five-Year Review figures are more than 1,000 feet away. Unlike 33-G3, MW-67 does contain contamination: it holds both TCE and PCE, and after declining from 2020 to 2024, its concentrations rose again in 2025.

Source: Snyder Geologic, Inc., letter to Mayor of Escondido and City Council Members, July 24, 2026, p. 3.

The difference matters. Staff's sentence invites the Council to conclude that the closest measuring point to this project is clean. The closest actual monitoring well is not clean, and is trending the wrong way. And had MW-57 remained, the nearest monitoring well would not have been off-site at all — it would have been the well on this property that recorded 460 µg/L of TCE, ninety-two times the drinking water standard, and the highest deep-zone concentrations in the entire monitoring network.

Similarly, the Regional Board geologist's statement that “the groundwater contamination is no longer underneath that property” (Agenda Packet, p. 1266) describes a property from which the measuring instrument was removed.

To be plain about the limits of this, because I do not want to be understood as overstating it: these numbers are from 2008, the plume has declined substantially since, and I am not telling this Council that 460 micrograms per liter of TCE sits beneath those lots today. I do not know what is there. Neither does the City, the applicant, the State, or my own hydrogeologist — that is the whole of my appeal. What this record establishes is why no one knows. This parcel is not an unknown because it was never contaminated. It is an unknown because the one instrument that measured serious contamination here was removed to make room for the very houses now before you, over the written objection of the State's own geologists, and never replaced. The absence of data at this location is not evidence of safety; it is the direct result of a decision made seventeen years ago by parties with an interest in developing this land. And with wells rebounding on both sides of this parcel, and the last direct measurement beneath it at ninety-two times the drinking water standard for TCE, an assumption of cleanliness is not a substitute for a sample.

5. Relief requested

This supplement changes nothing in the relief I requested. It reinforces the first item: that monitoring wells be installed on this parcel and sampled on the Chatham schedule, as W. Scott Snyder, PG 7356, CHG 748, recommends, so that the Council and the families who live here learn by measurement rather than by inference what is in the groundwater below. I respectfully ask the Council to continue this matter and direct that investigation before any approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Whitman
Appellant, PL24-0067

Enclosure: Annual Monitoring Submittal, March 2008, Chatham Site, Escondido, California, prepared by Hargis + Associates, Inc. for the Chatham Site PRP Group, May 28, 2008 (relevant excerpts: pp. 14–15; Table 2; Table 3; Appendix B, Figures B-8 and B-19), submitted herewith for entry into the administrative record.