

## ***Riverdale Park Tract: A community on the edge***

**Contaminants of Concern: Solvents, Radionuclides**

**The Problem:** Riverdale Park Tract lies between the unlined (and recently closed) Bonzi Landfill and the Tuolumne River. Constant groundwater pumping and treatment at the landfill site are required to protect the community well from contamination. The well already has levels of gross alpha radiation above the legal limit and levels of nitrates, uranium and arsenic just below the legal limit. The limited capacity of the well also results in an occasional loss of pressure, which in turn allows bacterial contamination to enter the distribution system. At those times (most recently in August of 2009) Boil Water Alerts are issued to ratepayers. Finally, the community and its drinking water well are vulnerable to flooding; in 1997, the community was inundated and the well rendered unusable for several months.

**About the Community:** Riverdale Park Tract is an unincorporated community of about 300 people located just southwest of Modesto. Most residents are homeowners, but in recent years more renters have moved in. Renters don't pay their own water bills, and many have complained that they don't receive Boil Water notices until after the emergency has passed.



Community members rely almost exclusively on bottled water for drinking and cooking

The water system is run by the Riverdale Park Community Services District. It is governed by an elected five-member board. There are currently two vacancies; community members have been reluctant to run for the position.

**The Solution:** The Central Valley Regional Water Board monitors the groundwater quality coming from the Bonzi landfill, and is suing the landowner in court to obtain a more robust treatment system. The community has an emergency connection to the City of Modesto water system which was installed after the '97 floods. Making that connection permanent would require voter approval from the community as well as action from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). However, the community currently pays a flat fee of \$25 per month for water (although most pay the same amount again for the bottled water that they drink). Hooking up to the City of Modesto would require the installation of water meters and could increase water rates for some community members.

**Next Steps:** This community is threatened by multiple hazards, any one of which could shut down the community well; but until disaster actually strikes, little help is available