

**ATTACHMENT D**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS  
GENERAL ORDER FOR DISCHARGES FROM IRRIGATED LANDS  
WITHIN THE CENTRAL VALLEY REGION FOR DISCHARGERS  
NOT PARTICIPATING IN A THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND STATEMENT OF  
OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**

**ORDER R5-2013-XXXX**

**July 2013**

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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2008 Farm Bill	Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008
CACs	county agricultural commissioners
CCR	California Code of Regulations
Central Valley Water Board	California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CRHR	California Register of Historic Resources
CV-SALTS	Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability
DO	dissolved oxygen
DPH	California Department of Public Health
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DPR	California Department of Pesticide Regulation
EIR	environmental impact report
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
ESA	federal Endangered Species Act
PEIR	Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Final Program EIR (incorporates Draft)
FWQP	Farm Water Quality Plan
GHGs	greenhouse gasses
HAPs	hazardous air pollutants
ILRP	Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program
MLD	most likely descendant
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOA	naturally occurring asbestos
NPS	nonpoint source
NPS Policy	State Water Board's Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PAMs	polyacrylamides
PRC	California Public Resources Code
SB	Senate Bill
State Water Board	State Water Resources Control Board
TACs	toxic air contaminants
TMDLs	total maximum daily loads
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WDRs	waste discharge requirements

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# Introduction

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code [PRC] sections 21002, 21002.1, 21081, 21081.5, 21100) and State CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a) provide that no public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an environmental impact report (EIR) has been certified when one or more significant environmental effects of the project have been identified, unless the public agency makes one or more written findings for each of those significant effects, accompanied by a brief explanation of the rationale for each finding. These findings explain the disposition of each of the significant effects, including those that will be less than significant with mitigation. The findings must be supported by substantial evidence in the record.

There are three possible findings under section 15091(a). The public agency must make one or more of these findings for each significant effect. The section 15091(a) findings are:

1. Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) Final Program EIR (PEIR) (ICF International 2011). Pub. Resources Code section 15091(a)(1).
2. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency. Pub. Resources Code section 15091(a)(2).
3. Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the PEIR. Pub. Resources Code section 15091(a)(3).

# Findings

The following findings discuss the significant direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the program to be adopted, which is referred to throughout as Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Discharges from Irrigated Lands within the Central Valley Region for Dischargers not participating in a Third-Party Group, Order R5-2012-XXXX (Order). The Order is described in California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region Order R5-2012-XXXX and supporting attachments, and is being approved consistent with the requirements of CEQA.

The requirements of this Order have been developed from the alternatives presented in the PEIR, and include regulatory requirements contained within those alternatives. As described below (see Applicability of the Program EIR), there are no new effects that could occur or no new mitigation measures that would be required as a result of the Order that were not already identified and described in the PEIR. None of the conditions that would trigger the need to prepare a subsequent EIR under State CEQA Guidelines section 15162 exist with respect to the Order.

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The findings adopted by the Central Valley Water Board address each of the Order’s significant effects in their order of appearance in the PEIR certified for the Long-term ILRP. The findings also address the alternatives analyzed in the PEIR that were not selected as a basis for the Order.

For the purposes of section 15091, the documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings upon which the Central Valley Water Board based its decision are held by the Central Valley Water Board.

For findings made under section 15091(a)(1), required mitigation measures have been adopted for the Order. These mitigation measures are included in Attachment C of the Order. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for these measures has been included in the Order’s Monitoring and Reporting Program R5-2012-XXXX (MRP).

Where mitigation measures are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency, the finding in section 15091(a)(2) should be made by the lead agency. In order to make the finding, the lead agency must find that the mitigation measures have been adopted by the other public agency or can and should be adopted by the other public agency.

Where the finding is made under section 15091(a)(3) regarding the infeasibility of mitigation measures or alternatives, the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations are described in a subsequent section.

Each of these findings must be supported by substantial evidence in the record.

This Order implements the long-term ILRP for Dischargers not participating in a third-party group. The Order is intended to serve as a single implementing order in a series of orders that will implement the Long-Term ILRP for the entire Central Valley. The Order is not the primary mechanism for establishing regulations applicable to irrigated lands waste discharges. The Order will be utilized:

- In the unlikely event that third-party coverage is unavailable;
- Voluntarily for Dischargers that do not wish to participate in a third-party group; and
- To regulate Dischargers that cannot maintain enrollment in a third-party due to non-compliance or refuse to join a third-party.

Unless there is a loss of third-party coverage, most, if not all operations will have the option to enroll under third-party implemented waste discharge requirements instead of the Order. It must be noted, however, that a loss of third-party coverage is not likely to occur, as the water quality coalition third-party groups implementing the program have been successfully in place since 2003. In considering the potential enrollment under the Order, the board considered the previous individual waiver for growers not participating in a coalition group (Order R5-2006-0054). Enrollment under the individual waiver prior to its expiration was minimal. Approximately six operations enrolled under the individual waiver as compared with over 20,000 enrolled under the coalition group conditional waiver. Based on this information, enrollment under the Order is expected to be minimal.

## History of the Project

In 2003 the Central Valley Water Board adopted a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for discharges from irrigated agricultural lands. As part of the 2003 waiver program

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the Central Valley Water Board directed staff to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a long-term irrigated lands regulatory program (ILRP).

On 5 and 6 March 2003, CEQA scoping meetings were held in Fresno and Sacramento to solicit and receive public comment on the scope of the EIR as described in the Notice of Preparation (released on 14 February 2003). Following the scoping meetings, the Central Valley Water Board began preparation of the draft *Existing Conditions Report* (ECR) in 2004 to assist in defining the baseline condition for the EIR's environmental analyses. The draft ECR was circulated in 2006, public comment on the document was received and incorporated the final ECR was released in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

In March and April 2008, the Central Valley Water Board conducted another series of CEQA scoping meetings to generate recommendations on the scope and goals of the long-term ILRP. Information was also gathered as to how stakeholders would like to be involved in development of the long-term program. Stakeholders indicated in these scoping meetings that they would like to be actively involved in developing the program. To address this interest, the Central Valley Water Board initiated the Long-term ILRP Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup. The Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup assisted in the development of long-term program goals and objectives and a range of alternatives to be considered in the PEIR.

On 28 July 2010, the Central Valley Water Board, serving as the lead agency under CEQA, released the Draft PEIR for the long-term ILRP. The PEIR provides programmatic analysis of impacts resulting from the implementation of six regulatory alternatives. Five of the alternatives were developed with the Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup. The sixth alternative was developed by staff in an effort to fulfill program goals and objectives, meet applicable state policy and law, and minimize potentially adverse environmental impacts and economic effects. The PEIR does not analyze a preferred program alternative, but rather equally analyzes the environmental impacts of each alternative. Further discussion regarding the PEIR alternatives is included below in the section titled "Feasibility of Alternatives Considered in the EIR."

The Central Valley Water Board provided a 60-day period for submitting written comments on the Draft PEIR. In September 2010, Central Valley Water Board staff held public workshops in Chico, Modesto, Rancho Cordova, and Tulare to receive input. The Central Valley Water Board provided substantive responses to all written comments received on the Draft PEIR. The Central Valley Water Board provided public notice of the availability of the Final PEIR on 8 March 2011. The Central Valley Water Board certified the PEIR on 7 April 2011 (Central Valley Water Board Resolution R5-2011-0017). The requirements of the Order have been developed from the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR.

## Applicability of the Program EIR

Pursuant to Guidelines Section 15168(c)(2), the Central Valley Water Board finds that the Order is within the scope of the project covered by the PEIR, and no new environmental document is required. There are no new effects that could occur or no new mitigation measures that would be required as a result of the Order that were not already identified and described in the PEIR. None of the conditions that would trigger the need to prepare a subsequent EIR under State CEQA Guidelines section 15162 exist with respect to the Order.

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<sup>1</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes. 2008. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*. December. (ICF J&S 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for the State Water Resources Control Board and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Rancho Cordova, CA.

This Order represents one order in a series of orders that will be developed, based on the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR, for all irrigated agriculture within the Central Valley. The PEIR describes that potential environmental impacts of all six alternatives are associated with implementation of water quality management practices, construction of monitoring wells, and impacts to agriculture resources (e.g., loss of production of prime farmland) due to increased regulatory costs.

The PEIR describes and evaluates potential impacts of practices likely to be implemented to meet water quality and other management goals on irrigated lands. The representative water quality management practices analyzed include:

- Nutrient management
- Improved water management
- Tailwater recovery system
- Pressurized irrigation
- Sediment trap, hedgerow, or buffer
- Cover cropping or conservation tillage
- Wellhead protection

As discussed in Attachment A, the requirements of the Order have been developed from the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR. Specifically, project-level review of the requirements in the Order has revealed that the requirements of the Order most closely resemble those described for Alternative 5 of the PEIR. The Order contains the individual Central Valley Water Board administration, individual farm planning, individual surface and groundwater quality monitoring, and installation of groundwater monitoring wells similar to Alternative 5. Therefore, actions taken by Dischargers to protect water quality in response to the Order's requirements are expected to be similar to those described for Alternative 5 of the PEIR; essentially leading to implementation of the above practices within Central Valley to a similar degree as is described for Alternative 5.

## Impact Findings

Environmental impacts in the PEIR are largely described on a regional basis, as the locations of resulting management practice implementation are unknown. As discussed above, the board is uncertain what the actual enrollment under the Order will be and where the operations would be located within the Central Valley, although the enrollment is expected to be low. Accordingly, the environmental impacts that result from the operations that actually enroll under the Order may be significantly lower than the potential impacts estimated in the PEIR because those impacts were estimated assuming widespread enrollment under the Order.

## Cultural Resources

### **Impact CUL-1. Physical destruction, alteration, or damage of cultural resources from implementation of management practices (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

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### Rationale for Finding

Upon implementation of the Order, growers enrolled in the Order (hereafter referred to as “growers” or “Dischargers”) may implement a variety of management practices that include physical and operational changes to agricultural land in the Order’s regulated area. Such management practices may occur near cultural resources that are historically significant and eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR) or the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Implementation of these practices may lead to physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of cultural resources.

The location, timing, and specific suite of management practices to be chosen by growers to improve water quality are not known at this time. This impact is considered significant. **Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### Impact CUL-2. Potential Damage to Cultural Resources from Construction Activities and Installation of Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes, including, installation of groundwater monitoring wells. The location of monitoring wells, as well as the location, timing, and specific suite of management practices to be selected by growers are not known at this time, and will not be defined until the need for additional management practices and monitoring wells is established and Dischargers develop monitoring well installation workplans, where necessary, under the provisions of the Order. This impact is considered significant. **Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Noise

### Impact NOI-1. Exposure of Sensitive Land Uses to Noise from Construction Activities in Excess of Applicable Standards (Responsibility of Other Agencies)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

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**Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction noise impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require the use of heavy-duty construction equipment. Because management practices are a function of crop type and economics, it cannot be determined whether the management practices selected under this alternative would change relative to existing conditions. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine construction-related effects based on a quantitative analysis.

Noise levels from anticipated heavy-duty construction equipment are expected to range from approximately 55 to 88 A-weighted decibels (dBA) at 50 feet. These levels would be short term and would attenuate as a function of distance from the source. Noise from construction equipment operated within several hundred feet of noise-sensitive land uses has the potential to exceed local noise standards. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-1: Implement Noise-Reducing Construction Practices**, which is described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-1 is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies, who can and should implement these measures.

**Impact NOI-2. Exposure of Sensitive Land Uses to Noise from Operational Activities in Excess of Applicable Standards (Responsibility of Other Agencies)**

**Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

**Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, operational noise impacts would result from any pump motors associated with the groundwater or tailwater recovery system wells. In addition, trips made by operators to transport water samples to the laboratory for analysis may generate additional noise from vehicle use. As described in the Program EIR, increases in noise from vehicle travel are expected to be relatively minor. Similarly, noise generated from individual well pumps would be temporary and sporadic.

Operation of new well pumps as part of tailwater recovery systems may result in increased noise levels relative to existing conditions. Noise generated from individual well pumps would be temporary and sporadic. Information on the types and number of pumps, as well as the number and distances of related vehicle trips, is currently unavailable.

Depending on the type of management practice selected, the Order also may result in noise benefits relative to existing conditions. For example, improved irrigation management may reduce the amount of time that pressurized pump generators are used. Enhanced nutrient application may minimize the number of tractors required to fertilize or plow a field. Removing these sources of noise may mediate any increases related to the operation of new pumps. However, in the absence of data, a quantitative analysis of noise impacts related to operations of the Order is not possible. Potential noise from unenclosed pumps located close to noise-sensitive land uses could exceed local noise standards. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures NOI-MM-1: Implement Noise-Reducing Construction Practices** and **NOI-MM-2: Reduce Noise Generated by Individual Well Pumps**, which are described at the end of the *Impact*

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*Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures NOI-MM-1 and NOI-MM-2 are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies, who can and should implement these measures.

## Air Quality

### Impact AQ-1. Generation of Construction Emissions in Excess of Local Air District Thresholds (Responsibility of Other Agencies)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from installation of individual groundwater monitoring wells and implementation of management practices that require physical changes or the use of heavy-duty construction equipment. It is difficult to determine how management practices selected under this Order would change relative to existing conditions. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine construction-related effects based on a quantitative analysis. However, under the Order there would be selection and implementation of additional management practices to meet surface and groundwater quality goals. Consequently, implementation of the Order may result in increased criteria pollutant emissions from construction activities relative to existing conditions.

Construction emissions associated with the Order would result in a significant impact if the incremental difference, or increase, relative to existing conditions exceeds the applicable air district thresholds shown in Table 5.5-2 of the PEIR. Management practices with the greatest potential for emissions include those that break ground or move earth matter, thus producing fugitive dust, and those that require the use of heavy-duty construction equipment (e.g., backhoes or bulldozers), thus producing criteria pollutants from exhaust. The management practices fitting this description include sediment trap, hedgerow, or buffer; pressurized irrigation; and tailwater recovery systems. Construction of individual groundwater wells most likely would require small earth-moving equipment, such as drills or bobcats.

While it is anticipated that any emissions resulting from construction activities would be minuscule on a per-farm basis, in the absence of a quantitative analysis, data are insufficient to determine whether emissions would exceed the applicable air district thresholds. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction Emissions below the District Thresholds**, which is described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-1 is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local air districts, who can and should implement these measures.

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## Impact AQ-2. Generation of Operational Emissions in Excess of Local Air District Thresholds (Responsibility of Other Agencies)

### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, operational emissions would result from vehicle trips made by the growers to transport well samples to the laboratory, as well as new stationary sources associated with the groundwater wells (e.g., pumps powered by motors). Because watershed monitoring is required under the previous conditional waiver program (adopted by Central Valley Water Board Resolution No. R5-2001-0032 ), implementation of the Order will reduce emissions from this activity relative to the previous conditional waiver program. In addition, emissions benefits may be achieved by management practices that reduce irrigation and cover crops (see Table 5.5-8 of the PEIR). However, in the absence of a quantitative analysis, data are insufficient to determine whether this reduction would offset any increases in operational emissions associated with the Order.

Any new operational emissions generated under the Order are not expected to be substantial or to exceed applicable air district thresholds. In addition, they may be moderated by emissions benefits related to management practices that reduce irrigation and cover crops (see Table 5.5-8 of the PEIR). However, the difference in operation emissions relative to existing conditions is not known at this time and therefore cannot be compared to the significance criteria. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-2: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Operational Emissions below the District Thresholds**, which is described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-2 is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local air districts, who can and should implement these measures.

## Impact AQ-3. Elevated Health Risks from Exposure of Nearby Sensitive Receptors to Toxic Air Contaminants/Hazardous Air Pollutants (TACS/HAPs) (Responsibility of Other Agencies)

### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

### Rationale for Finding

Toxic air contaminants (TACs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) resulting from the Order include diesel particulate matter (DPM) from diesel construction equipment and new pumps, pesticides/fertilizers, and asbestos. Sensitive receptors near growers could be affected by these sources.

As discussed in Chapter 3 of the PEIR, one of the goals of the nutrient management and conservation tillage management practices is to reduce the application of pesticides/fertilizers. Because the Order

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would result in greater likelihood of these management practices being implemented, it is reasonable to assume that pesticides/fertilizers—and thus the potential for exposure to these chemicals—would be reduced under the Order.

It is expected that construction emissions may increase relative to existing conditions, thus resulting in minor increases of DPM. Elevated levels of construction in areas where naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) is common may also increase the likelihood of exposure to asbestos. New diesel-powered pumps also would increase DPM emissions relative to existing conditions. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures AQ-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction Emissions below the District Thresholds, AQ-MM-2: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Operational Emissions below the District Thresholds, and AQ-MM-3: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce TAC/HAP Emissions**, which are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Mitigation Measures AQ-MM-1, AQ-MM-2, and AQ-MM-3 are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local air districts, who can and should implement these measures.

## Vegetation and Wildlife

### Impact BIO-1. Loss of Downstream Habitat from Reduced Field Runoff (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, management practices that reduce field runoff would result in beneficial impacts on water quality but may adversely affect downstream wildlife and vegetation that depend on agricultural surface runoff. These practices cause water to be recirculated or used at an agronomic rate, resulting in a minimal amount of agricultural runoff. This would result in a net loss of water entering waterways and potential habitat loss along runoff ditches and downstream water bodies.

Such habitat would be seasonally present, available only during times of irrigation, and unlikely to support sensitive communities or special-status plants. While reduced runoff leads to, or is the result of, reduced surface water diversions to fields, some regions rely largely on groundwater to irrigate. While it is anticipated that the loss of sensitive communities or special-status plants resulting from reduced runoff would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

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### Impact BIO-3. Potential Loss of Sensitive Natural Communities and Special-Status Plants from Construction Activities (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes, such as construction of water and sediment control basins, temporary water checks, tailwater return systems, vegetated drain systems, windbreaks, wellhead protection berms, and filter strips. It is difficult to determine to what extent management practices selected under the Order would change relative to existing conditions; thus, it is not possible to quantify any construction-related effects. However, it is logical to assume that implementation of the Order would result in selection of more management practices to meet water quality goals. Consequently, implementation of the Order may result in effects on vegetation from construction activities.

In general, management practices would be implemented on existing agricultural lands and managed wetlands, which are unlikely to support native vegetation or special-status plants. However, construction that directly or indirectly affects natural vegetation communities adjacent to existing irrigated lands, particularly annual grasslands with inclusions of seasonal wetlands or vernal pools and riparian vegetation, could result in loss of sensitive wetland communities or special-status plants growing in the uncultivated or unmanaged areas. While it is anticipated that the loss of sensitive communities or special-status plants resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### Impact BIO-4. Potential Loss of Wetland Communities due to Loss of Existing Sedimentation Ponds (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, the assumed decrease in the use of surface water management practices that may be harmful to groundwater could result in abandonment or fill of tailwater sedimentation ponds in areas that currently percolate water to groundwater basins. Although they are not natural features, sedimentation ponds can develop vegetation communities that support wetland species, depending on the specific hydrologic regime of individual ponds. Ponds that hold water intermittently or seasonally may support plant species adapted to seasonal wetland conditions, and ponds that are continually flooded may support emergent vegetation adapted to permanent wetland conditions.

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Thus, the loss of these ponds could result in drying of artificially created wetlands and an indirect loss of wetland habitat. The loss of wetland communities resulting from abandonment or fill of retention ponds would be small but cannot be quantified. It is also important to note that implementation of one of the potential management practices under the Order—installation of tailwater return systems—would result in creation of tailwater ponds that could develop the same wetland characteristics as the abandoned or filled sedimentation ponds. Creation of new tailwater ponds could result in no net loss or potentially an increase in these wetland communities. However, the final extent of the tailwater ponds that could be created under the Order cannot be quantified. Consequently, the loss of existing sedimentation ponds is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact BIO-5. Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species due to Loss of Existing Sedimentation Ponds (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, the assumed decrease in the use of surface water management practices that may be harmful to groundwater could result in abandonment or fill of tailwater sedimentation ponds in areas that currently percolate water to groundwater basins. Although they are not natural features, sedimentation ponds can provide habitat for special-status wildlife species. The banks of these ponds could support habitat for special-status burrowing wildlife species, including San Joaquin kit fox and western burrowing owl. Ponds that hold water intermittently or seasonally may support special-status wildlife species adapted to seasonal wetland conditions, such as vernal pool fairy shrimp and vernal pool tadpole shrimp, California red-legged frog, and California tiger salamander, depending on the proximity of these ponds to natural habitats. The ponds also provide foraging habitat for many bird species. Ponds that hold water intermittently provide foraging habitat for wading birds, and ponds that are continually flooded may support foraging and nesting habitat for waterfowl. The abandonment or fill of retention ponds would be small and cannot be quantified but could affect wildlife species that are dependent on them. However, the creation of new tailwater ponds could mitigate part or all of this impact. Because the extent of new tailwater ponds cannot be quantified, the loss of existing sedimentation ponds is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

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## Impact BIO-6. Loss of Sensitive Natural Communities and Special-Status Plants from Construction Activities and Installation of Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from installation of groundwater monitoring wells. The placement of monitoring wells cannot be predetermined; consequently, the potential impacts on sensitive natural communities and special-status plants cannot be quantified.

In general, management practices would be implemented on existing agricultural lands and managed wetlands, resulting in a less-than-significant impact. It was assumed that groundwater monitoring well placement also could be primarily limited to agricultural land and non-sensitive habitat. However, if construction related to installation of groundwater monitoring wells required changes to managed wetlands or to natural vegetation communities that are adjacent to existing irrigated lands, there would be a potential for loss of vegetation in sensitive wetland communities or loss of special-status plants growing in the uncultivated or unmanaged areas. While it is anticipated that the loss of sensitive communities or special-status plants resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Impact BIO-7. Loss of Special-Status Wildlife from Construction Activities and Installation of Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from installation of groundwater monitoring wells. The placement of monitoring wells cannot be predetermined; consequently, the potential impacts on special-status wildlife species and their habitat cannot be quantified.

In general, management practices would be implemented on existing agricultural lands and managed wetlands, resulting in a less-than-significant impact. It was assumed that placement of groundwater monitoring wells also could be limited primarily to agricultural land and non-sensitive habitat. However, construction of groundwater monitoring wells that requires changes to managed wetlands or to natural vegetation communities adjacent to existing irrigated lands could result in a

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loss of special-status wildlife species occurring in the uncultivated or unmanaged areas. While it is anticipated that the loss of special-status wildlife species resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Fisheries

### **Impact FISH-2. Temporary Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes to lands in the Central Valley. These physical changes primarily include erosion and sediment controls with features such as construction of water and sediment control basins, temporary water checks, tailwater return systems, vegetated drain systems, windbreaks, wellhead protection berms, and filter strips. Physical changes may be associated with implementation of other management practices, such as construction of filter ditches for pesticide management. Installation of facilities for management practices such as pressurized irrigation and sediment traps is unlikely to significantly exceed the baseline disturbance that occurs during routine field preparation. Construction of features associated with management practices may temporarily reduce the amount or quality of existing fish habitat in certain limited circumstances (e.g., by encroachment onto adjacent water bodies, removal of riparian vegetation, or reduction in water quality—such as increases in sediment runoff during construction). It is difficult to determine whether the management practices selected under the Order would change relative to existing conditions, and it is not possible to quantify any construction-related effects. Implementation of the Order may result in effects on fish habitat from construction activities related to management practices.

While it is anticipated that the loss of fish habitat resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

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### **Impact FISH-3. Permanent Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

In some cases, permanent loss of fish habitat may occur as a result of construction required for implementation of management practices under the Order. Some of the impact may be due to loss of structural habitat (e.g., vegetation) whereas loss of dynamic habitat (e.g., wetted habitat) could be an issue where tailwater augments natural flows or makes seasonal streams into perennial systems. This may be of concern in areas where tailwater return flows are composed mostly of pumped groundwater. Because the extent of the loss is not known, the impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact FISH-4. Toxicity to Fish or Fish Prey from Particle-Coagulant Water Additives (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, polyacrylamides (PAMs) may be applied to reduce erosion and sediment runoff and thereby improve water quality (Sojka et al. 2000). Anionic PAMs are safe to aquatic life when used at prescribed rates (Sojka et al. 2000). Because neutral and cationic PAMs may be toxic to fish and their prey (Sojka et al. 2000; Mason et al. 2005), application of anionic PAMs is recommended in areas with sensitive fish species (Mason et al. 2005). This impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-2: Educate Growers on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact FISH-6. Temporary Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices and Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

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**Rationale for Finding**

This impact is essentially the same as Impact FISH-2 except that, in addition to the temporary loss or alteration of habitat due to construction of management practices, further loss or alteration of fish habitat may occur from construction of groundwater monitoring wells under the Order. Accordingly, the impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

**Impact FISH-7. Permanent Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices and Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

**Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

**Rationale for Finding**

This impact is essentially the same as Impact FISH-3 except that, in addition to the temporary loss or alteration of habitat due to construction of features associated with management practices, permanent loss or alteration of fish habitat may occur from construction of groundwater monitoring wells under the Order. Accordingly, the impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

**Agriculture Resources**

**Impact AG-1. Conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to Nonagricultural Use (Significant and Unavoidable)**

**Finding**

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

**Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, irrigated lands operations would be required to achieve surface and groundwater quality goals, and to conduct monitoring and reporting to verify such achievement. It is anticipated many or most operations will implement new management practices to achieve these surface and groundwater quality goals. Consequently, operations under the Order will experience increased operational costs due to increased monitoring and reporting activities, as well as increased

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management practices, if such practices are needed to meet goals. Where such increased costs make agricultural operations unlikely or unable to continue, agriculture lands may be at risk of conversion to nonagricultural use, resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact to prime and/or unique farmland, as well as farmland of statewide importance (Important Farmland).

The potential loss of Important Farmland resulting from the Order may be estimated using the analysis of Alternative 5 in the PEIR. However, the analysis of Alternative 5 was conducted assuming that Alternative 5 would be implemented Central Valley-wide. This is not the case for the Order, as it is not intended to be the primary mechanism for establishing regulations applicable to irrigated lands waste discharges. Unless there is a loss of third-party coverage, most, if not all operations will have the option to enroll under third-party administered waste discharge requirements instead of the Order. Therefore, the Central Valley-wide estimated costs and associated potential conversion of farmland estimated for Alternative 5, should be considered a worst-case scenario should the third-party implemented orders fail throughout the entire Central Valley.

The PEIR provides that under Alternative 5, hundreds of thousands of acres of Important Farmland within the Central Valley region potentially would be removed from production because of the increased costs. It is unlikely that all or even most of this acreage would be converted to a nonagricultural use, but it is reasonable to assume that the quantity estimated in the PEIR represents the upper bound of potential impacts, and that the actual quantity that would be impacted is significantly lower. It should also be noted that because the third-party irrigated lands program model has successfully been in place since 2003, it is not likely that the third-party model will fail throughout the Central Valley.

Because implementation of the Order, in the unlikely case that it would be utilized broadly, potentially would result in conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use, this impact is considered significant. **Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1: Assist the Agricultural Community in Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance that would Allow Growers to Keep Important Farmland in Production** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce the magnitude of the impact, but no feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Impacts

### Cumulative Cultural Resource Impacts (Less than Cumulatively Considerable with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant cumulative environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Use of ground-disturbing management practices under the Order could result in cumulatively considerable effects to cultural resources in concert with other, non-program-related agricultural enterprises and nonagricultural development in the program area. **Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce the

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Order's contribution to this impact to a level that is not cumulatively considerable. The mitigation measure calls for identification of cultural resources and minimization of impacts to identified resources. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Climate Change Impacts (Significant and Unavoidable)

### Finding

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions** for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should enforce the implementation of these measures. Further, as specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

### Rationale for Finding

Unlike criteria pollutant impacts, which are local and regional, climate change impacts occur at a global level. The relatively long lifespan and persistence of GHGs (as shown in Table 5.6-1 of the PEIR) require that climate change be considered a cumulative and global impact. As discussed in the PEIR, it is unlikely that any increase in global temperature or sea level could be attributed to the emissions resulting from a single project. Rather, it is more appropriate to conclude that, under the Order, GHG emissions would combine with emissions across California, the United States, and the globe to cumulatively contribute to global climate change.

Given the magnitude of state, national, and international GHG emissions (see Tables 5.6-2 through 5.6-4 of the PEIR), climate change impacts from implementation of the Order likely would be negligible. However, scientific consensus concludes that, given the seriousness of climate change, small contributions of GHGs may be cumulatively considerable. Because it is unknown to what extent, if any, climate change would be affected by the incremental GHG emissions produced by the Order, the impact to climate change is considered cumulatively considerable. **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions** is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies, who can and should implement these measures. **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-2: Apply Applicable California Attorney General Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions** has been incorporated into the Order; these measures will result in lower GHG emissions levels than had they not been incorporated, but they will not completely eliminate GHG emissions that could result from the Order. No feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

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## Cumulative Vegetation and Wildlife Impacts (Significant and Unavoidable)

### Finding

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

### Rationale for Finding

The Central Valley of California has been subjected to extensive human impacts from land conversion, water development, population growth, and recreation. These impacts have altered the physical and biological integrity of the Central Valley, causing loss of native riparian vegetation along river systems, loss of wetlands, and loss of native habitat for plant and wildlife species.

**Mitigation Measures BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** and **BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands** have been incorporated into the Order to reduce the severity of these effects. The measures are sufficient to mitigate any program-related impacts to rare or endangered plant or wildlife species, and to habitat for these species; however, the cumulative impact of the reduction in quality habitat and the take of individual listed plants or wildlife species is potentially cumulatively considerable. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Fish Impacts (Less than Cumulatively Considerable with Mitigation)

### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant cumulative environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### Rationale for Finding

The ongoing impacts of impaired water quality from irrigated lands are likely to cumulatively affect fish, in combination with contaminants that remain in the Order's coverage area from past activities. Such activities include mining and past use of pesticides such as DDT that remain within sediments. Because many of the existing effects discussed in the section "Existing Effects of Impaired Water Quality on Fish" are cumulative, it is difficult to determine the relative contribution of irrigated lands and other sources. For example, low dissolved oxygen (DO) in the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel is a result of contamination from upstream nonpoint sources (possibly including agricultural runoff) and discharges from the Stockton sewage treatment plant (Lehman et al. 2004; Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board 2005). Application of pesticides to nonagricultural lands such as urban parks and the resultant contaminant runoff also cumulatively contribute to impacts of inputs from irrigated lands.

Given the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) ongoing federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation process for pesticides as a result of recent court orders, it is reasonably foreseeable that further reasonable and prudent measures would be required by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that would improve

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water quality within the Central Valley. Revision of water quality control plans and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) also can be expected to improve water quality. These and other measures, in combination with the likely beneficial effects of the Order, suggest that the cumulative effects of the Order are not cumulatively considerable with implementation of mitigation measures. **Mitigation Measures FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** and **FISH-MM-2: Educate Growers on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control** have been incorporated into the Order to reduce these impacts to a less than cumulatively considerable level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Agriculture Resources Impacts (Significant and Unavoidable)

### Finding

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

### Rationale for Finding

Since 1984, the average biennial net conversion of prime and unique farmland, and farmlands of statewide importance in California has been 28,344 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2008). However, conversion has increased substantially since 2000, with an average biennial net conversion of 114,003 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2008). During the 2002–2004 period, prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide importance was reduced by 133,024 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2006). The trend continued during the 2004–2006 period, with a net reduction of 125,495 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2008).

While conversion of important farmland may not continue at the accelerated rate of the past 10 years due to decreased demand for new housing, it is reasonably foreseeable that it will continue at a rate comparable to that seen since 1984. Given the potential magnitude of important farmland conversion from implementation of the Order, the Order could result in cumulatively considerable impacts to agriculture resources. **Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce the severity of these effects. While implementation of AG-MM-1 could reduce these impacts to a level that is not a cumulatively considerable contribution to this statewide impact, such a reduction cannot be quantified. As such, the Order’s contribution to this impact is potentially cumulatively considerable. No feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

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# Mitigation Measures

## Cultural Resources

### Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources

The measure described below will reduce the severity of impacts on significant cultural resources, as defined and described in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.3 of the PEIR. Avoidance of such impacts also can be achieved when growers choose the least impactful management practices that will meet the Order’s water quality improvement goals and objectives. Note that these mitigation measures may not be necessary in cases where no ground-disturbing activities would be undertaken as a result of implementation of the Order.

Although cultural resource inventories and evaluations typically are conducted prior to preparation of a CEQA document, the size of the Order’s coverage area and the lack of specificity regarding the location and type of management practices that would be implemented following adoption of the Order rendered conducting inventories prior to release of the draft Order untenable. Therefore, where the Order’s water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without modifying or disturbing an area of land or existing structure to a greater degree than through previously employed farming practices, individual growers will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels.

- Where construction within areas that may contain cultural resources cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of the potential for damage to cultural resources prior to construction; this may include the hiring of a qualified cultural resources specialist to determine the presence of significant cultural resources.
- Where the assessment indicates that damage may occur, submit a non-confidential records search request to the appropriate CHRIS information center(s).
- Implement the recommendations provided by the CHRIS information center(s) in response to the records search request.
- Where adverse effects to cultural resources cannot be avoided, the grower’s coverage under this Order is not authorized. The grower must then apply for its own individual waste discharge requirements. Issuance of individual waste discharge requirements would constitute a future discretionary action by the Board subject to additional CEQA review.

In addition, California state law provides for the protection of interred human remains from vandalism and destruction. According to the California Health and Safety Code, six or more human burials at one location constitute a cemetery (section 8100), and the disturbance of Native American cemeteries is a felony (section 7052). Section 7050.5 requires that construction or excavation be stopped in the vicinity of the discovered human remains until the County Coroner has been notified, according to PRC section 5097.98, and can determine whether the remains are those of Native American origin. If the coroner determines that the remains are of Native American origin, the coroner must contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours (Health and Safety Code section 7050[c]). The NAHC will identify and notify the most likely descendant (MLD) of the interred individual(s), who will then make a recommendation for means of treating or removing, with appropriate dignity, the human remains and any associated grave goods as provided in PRC section 5097.98.

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PRC section 5097.9 identifies the responsibilities of the project proponent upon notification of a discovery of Native American burial remains. The project proponent will work with the MLD (determined by the NAHC) and a professional archaeologist with specialized human osteological experience to develop and implement an appropriate treatment plan for avoidance and preservation of, or recovery and removal of, the remains.

Growers implementing management practices should be aware of the following protocols for identifying cultural resources.

- If built environment resources or archaeological resources, including chipped stone (often obsidian, basalt, or chert), ground stone (often in the form of a bowl mortar or pestle), stone tools such as projectile points or scrapers, unusual amounts of shell or bone, historic debris (such as concentrations of cans or bottles), building foundations, or structures are inadvertently discovered during ground-disturbing activities, the land owner should stop work in the vicinity of the find and retain a qualified cultural resources specialist to assess the significance of the resources. If necessary, the cultural resource specialist also will develop appropriate treatment measures for the find.
- If human bone is found as a result of ground disturbance, the land owner should notify the County Coroner in accordance with the instructions described above. If Native American remains are identified and descendants are found, the descendants may—with the permission of the owner of the land or his or her authorized representative—inspect the site of the discovery of the Native American remains. The descendants may recommend to the owner or the person responsible for the excavation work means for treating or disposing of the human remains and any associated grave goods, with appropriate dignity. The descendants will make their recommendation within 48 hours of inspection of the remains. If the NAHC is unable to identify a descendant, if the descendants identified fail to make a recommendation, or if the landowner rejects the recommendation of the descendants, the landowner will inter the human remains and associated grave goods with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further and future subsurface disturbance.

## Noise

### **Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-1: Implement Noise-Reducing Construction Practices**

Growers should implement noise-reducing construction practices that comply with applicable local noise standards or limits specified in the applicable county ordinances and general plan noise elements.

### **Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-2: Reduce Noise Generated by Individual Well Pumps**

If well pumps are installed, growers should enclose or locate them behind barriers such that noise does not exceed applicable local noise standards or limits specified in the applicable county ordinances and general plan noise elements.

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## Air Quality

### **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction Emissions below the District Thresholds**

Growers should apply appropriate construction mitigation measures from the applicable air district to reduce construction emissions. These measures will be applied on a project-level basis and may be tailored in consultation with the appropriate air district, depending on the severity of anticipated construction emissions.

### **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-2: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Operational Emissions below the District Thresholds**

Growers should apply appropriate mitigation measures from the applicable air district to reduce operational emissions. These measures were suggested by the district or are documented in official rules and guidance reports; however, not all districts make recommendations for operational mitigation measures. Where applicable, measures will be applied on a project-level basis and may be tailored in consultation with the appropriate air district, depending on the severity of anticipated operational emissions.

### **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-3: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce TAC/HAP Emissions**

Growers should apply appropriate TAC and HAP mitigation measures from the applicable air district to reduce public exposure to DPM, pesticides, and asbestos. These measures were suggested by the district or are documented in official rules and guidance reports; however, not all districts make recommendations for mitigation measures for TAC/HAP emissions. These measures will be applied on a project-level basis and may be tailored in consultation with the appropriate air district, depending on the severity of anticipated TAC/HAP emissions.

## Vegetation and Wildlife

### **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources**

Implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures would ensure that the construction activities related to implementation of management practices and installation of monitoring wells on irrigated lands would minimize effects on sensitive vegetation communities (such as riparian habitat and wetlands adjacent to the construction area) and special-status plants and wildlife species as defined and listed in section 5.7.3 of the PEIR. In each instance where particular management practices could result in impacts on the biological resources listed above, growers should use the least impactful effective management practice to avoid such impacts. Where the Order's water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without incurring potential impacts, growers will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels.

- Where detention basins are to be abandoned, retain the basin in its existing condition or ensure that sensitive biological resources are not present before modification.

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- Where construction in areas that may contain sensitive biological resources cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of habitat conditions and the potential for presence of sensitive vegetation communities or special-status plant and animal species prior to construction. This may include the hiring of a qualified biologist to identify riparian and other sensitive vegetation communities and/or habitat for special-status plant and animal species.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance of riparian and other sensitive vegetation communities.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance to areas containing special-status plant or animal species.
- Where adverse effects on sensitive biological resources cannot be avoided, the grower's coverage under this Order is not authorized. The grower must then apply for its own individual waste discharge requirements. Issuance of individual waste discharge requirements would constitute a future discretionary action by the Board subject to additional CEQA review.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands**

Prior to implementing any management practice that will result in the permanent loss of wetlands, conduct a delineation of affected wetland areas to determine the acreage of loss in accordance with current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) methods. For compliance with the federal Clean Water Act section 404 permit and WDRs protecting State waters from unauthorized fill, compensate for the permanent loss (fill) of wetlands and ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. Compensation ratios will be determined through coordination with the Central Valley Water Board and USACE as part of the permitting process. Such process will include additional compliance with CEQA, to the extent that a further discretionary approval by the Board would require additional CEQA review. Compensation may be a combination of mitigation bank credits and restoration/creation of habitat, as described below:

- Purchase credits for the affected wetland type (e.g., perennial marsh, seasonal wetland) at a locally approved mitigation bank and provide written evidence to the resource agencies, as needed, that compensation has been established through the purchase of mitigation credits.
- Develop and ensure implementation of a wetland restoration plan that involves creating or enhancing the affected wetland type.

**Fisheries**

**Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat**

This mitigation measure incorporates all measures identified in Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources. In each instance where particular management practices could result in impacts to special-status fish species (see "Regulatory Classification of Special-Status Species" in section 5.8.2 of the PEIR), Growers should use the least impactful effective management practice to avoid such impacts. Where the Order's water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without incurring potential impacts, growers will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels. Note that these measures may not be necessary in many cases and are dependent on the location of construction in relation to water bodies containing special-status fish.

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- Where construction in areas that may contain special-status fish species cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of habitat conditions and the potential for presence of special-status fish species prior to construction; this may include the hiring of a qualified fisheries biologist to determine the presence of special status fish species.
- Based on the species present in adjacent water bodies and the likely extent of construction work that may affect fish, limit construction to periods that avoid or minimize impacts to special-status fish species.
- Where construction periods cannot be altered to minimize or avoid effects on special-status fish, the grower's coverage under this Order is not authorized. The grower must then apply for its own individual waste discharge requirements. Issuance of individual waste discharge requirements would constitute a future discretionary action by the Board subject to additional CEQA review.

**Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-2: Educate Growers on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control**

The Central Valley Water Board will make information available to growers on the potential risks to aquatic life, including special-status fish, that may result from the use of cationic or neutral PAMs during water management activities. Information in the form of leaflets or website information will be provided to growers, encouraging the use of anionic PAMs. Application of anionic PAMs at prescribed rates will be emphasized in the information provided to growers. Adoption of the United States Department of Agriculture National Conservation Practice Standard 450 also will be recommended in the information.

**Agriculture Resources**

**Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1: Assist the Agricultural Community in Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance that would Allow Growers to Keep Important Farmland in Production**

The Central Valley Water Board will assist the agricultural community in identifying sources of financial assistance from existing federal, state, or local programs that promote water conservation and water quality through increased management practices. Funding received from grants, cost-sharing, or low-interest loans would offset some of the local grower expenditures for compliance and implementation of the Order, and likely would reduce the estimated losses in irrigated acreage. Potential funding sources for this mitigation measure are discussed below. The programs described below are illustrative and are not intended to constitute a comprehensive list of funding sources.

**Federal Farm Bill**

Title II of the 2012 Farm Bill (the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2012, in effect through September 2013) authorizes funding for conservation programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program. Both of these programs provide financial and technical assistance for activities that improve water quality on agricultural lands.

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### **State Water Resources Control Board**

The Division of Financial Assistance administers water quality improvement programs for the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board). The programs provide grant and loan funding to reduce non-point-source pollution discharge to surface waters.

The Division of Financial Assistance currently administers two programs that improve water quality associated with agriculture—the Agricultural Drainage Management Loan Program and the Agricultural Drainage Loan Program. Both of these programs were implemented to address the management of agricultural drainage into surface water. The Agricultural Water Quality Grant Program provides funding to reduce or eliminate the discharge of non-point-source pollution from agricultural lands into surface water and groundwater. It is currently funded through bonds authorized by Proposition 84.

The State Water Board’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund also has funding authorized through Proposition 84. It provides loan funds to a wide variety of point-source and non-point-source water quality control activities.

### **Potential Funding Provided by the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act**

This act was placed on the ballot by the Legislature as SBX 7-2 and was originally scheduled for voter approval in November 2010. In August of 2010, the Legislature removed this issue from the 2010 ballot with the intent to re-introduce it in November of 2012. In July 2012, the Legislature approved a bill to take the measure off the 2012 ballot and put it on the 2014 ballot. If approved by the public, the new water bond would provide grant and loan funding for a wide range of water-related activities, including improving agricultural water quality, conservation and watershed protection, and groundwater protection and water quality. The majority of public funds allocated by the bond would go through a rigorous competitive process to ensure dollars would go to a public benefit. Additionally, this water bond is expected to leverage more than \$30 billion in additional investments in local, regional, and statewide infrastructure for water supply, water quality, and environmental restoration enhancements. The actual amount and timing of funding availability will depend on its passage, on the issuance of bonds and the release of funds, and on the kinds of programs and projects proposed and approved for funding.

### **Other Funding Programs**

Other state and federal funding programs have been available in recent years to address agricultural water quality improvements. Integrated Regional Water Management grants were authorized and funded by Proposition 50 and now by Proposition 84. These are administered jointly by the State Water Board and the California Department of Water Resources. Proposals can include agricultural water quality improvement projects. The Bureau of Reclamation also can provide assistance and cost-sharing for water conservation projects that help reduce discharges.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

### **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions**

Several of the standard mitigation measures provided by Central Valley local air districts to reduce criteria pollutant emissions would also help to minimize GHG emissions (please see section 5.6.5 of the PEIR). Measures to reduce vehicle trips and promote use of alternative fuels, as well as clean

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diesel technology and construction equipment retrofits, should be considered by the program applicants.

### **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-2: Apply Applicable California Attorney General Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions**

A 2008 report by the California Attorney General’s office entitled *The California Environmental Quality Act: Addressing Global Warming at the Local Agency Level* identifies various example measures to reduce GHG emissions at the project level (California Department of Justice 2008). The following mitigation measures and project design features were compiled from the California Attorney General’s Office report. They are not meant to be exhaustive but to provide a sample list of measures that could be incorporated into future project design. Only those measures applicable to the Order are described.

#### **Solid Waste Measures**

- Reuse and recycle construction and demolition waste (including, but not limited to, soil, vegetation, concrete, lumber, metal, and cardboard).
- Provide interior and exterior storage areas for recyclables and green waste and adequate recycling containers.
- Recover by-product methane to generate electricity.

#### **Transportation and Motor Vehicles**

- Limit idling time for commercial vehicles, including delivery and construction vehicles.
- Use low- or zero-emission vehicles, including construction vehicles.

## **Feasibility of Alternatives Considered in the EIR**

The following text presents findings relative to the project alternatives. Findings about the feasibility of project alternatives must be made whenever the project within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the lead agency will have a significant environmental effect.

The requirements of the Order are based on Alternative 5 of the PEIR. Under the Order, the Central Valley Water Board will work directly with irrigated agricultural operations. Of the range of alternatives considered in the PEIR, only Alternatives 3 and 5 would be implemented directly by the Central Valley Water Board; as opposed to the third-party or joint powers association implementation entities described in Alternatives 1, 2, 4, and 6.

In the PEIR, Central Valley Water Board staff recommends the third-party lead entity structure instead of direct board implementation of the long-term program.<sup>2</sup> The Central Valley Water Board does not have the authority to require formation or mandate the continuation of a third-party or joint powers association implementing entity. Third-party lead entities are currently in place and are willing to implement the long-term program (e.g., water quality coalition groups). Therefore, the board intends to develop a series of third-party lead entity geographic and commodity-based orders (or “waste discharge requirements”) that will broadly implement the long-term ILRP

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A, PEIR.

throughout the Central Valley.<sup>3</sup> However, there are concerns that there may be some irrigated lands areas that may not be able to enroll under a third-party. This could be due to lack of third-party coverage, failure of the third-party group to fulfill program requirements, or inability of an individual grower to obtain enrollment in the third-party due to noncompliance. The Order will be applicable in rare occasions where operations cannot or choose not to enroll under third-party lead entity waste discharge requirements.

Implementation of the Order will ensure that the project's regulatory requirements are in place in the event that an individual cannot enroll under a third-party administered irrigated lands program order. Of the six alternatives evaluated in the PEIR, Alternatives 3 and 5 are the only alternatives that are intended to function without the support of a third-party lead entity. In consideration of significant adverse effects of the alternatives, both Alternatives 3 and 5 would have similar significant adverse effects (listed above). However, implementation of Alternative 3 would reduce the magnitude of the predicted significant adverse effect to agriculture resources (conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use) due to the substantially lower predicted overall cost when compared with Alternative 5.

While an order based on Alternative 3 would reduce the magnitude of the potential significant adverse effect to agriculture resources, it is not selected because the alternative is not fully consistent with required State policy and law given in the California Water Code, State Water Board Nonpoint Source Policy, and Resolution 68-16 –State Antidegradation Policy (see section IX, Appendix A, PEIR for a complete discussion and evaluation of program alternatives).

It must also be noted that Alternative 5 is not fully consistent with ILRP goals and objectives due to the substantial predicted cost and associated economic impacts to agriculture in the Central Valley (see section IX, Appendix A, PEIR). The analysis of Alternative 5 was conducted assuming that it would be implemented Central Valley-wide. This is not the case for the Order, as it is not intended to be the primary mechanism for establishing regulations applicable to irrigated lands waste discharges. Unless there is a loss of third-party coverage, most, if not all operations will have the option to enroll under third-party implemented waste discharge requirements instead of the Order.

Considering that the Order is intended to work in conjunction with third-party implemented waste discharge requirements, the board has selected Alternative 5 instead of Alternative 3 as the best alternative to meet State policy and law and ensure that there a regulations in place in case there are operations unable to enroll under third-party implemented waste discharge requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> On 7 December 2012, the Central Valley Water Board adopted Order R5-2012-0116, Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group.

# Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Discharges from Irrigated Lands within the Central Valley Region for Dischargers not participating in a Third-Party Group

Pursuant to the requirements of CEQA (PRC sections 21002, 21002.1, 21081) and State CEQA Guidelines (15 CCR 15093), the Central Valley Water Board finds that approval of the Order, whose potential environmental impacts have been evaluated in the PEIR, and as indicated in the above findings, will result in the occurrence of significant effects which are not avoided or substantially lessened, as described in the above findings. These significant effects include:

- Conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use.
- Cumulative climate change.
- Cumulative vegetation and wildlife impacts.
- Cumulative conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use.

Pursuant to PRC section 21081(b), specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects. The specific reasons to support this approval, given the potential for significant unavoidable adverse impacts, are based on the following.

## **Economic Benefits**

The water quality improvements expected to occur in both surface and groundwater throughout the Central Valley as a result of implementing the Order is expected to create broad economic benefits for residents of the State. Control of pollutants contained in agricultural discharges, as summarized in pages 18–21 of Appendix A in the PEIR and documented in detail in the *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*, should reduce water treatment costs for some communities in the Central Valley. Pages 5-3–5-5 of the *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program* (ICF International 2010) identifies the potential costs of upgrading wells or treating well water that is affected by nitrate contamination. The nitrate contamination is believed to be coming from a variety of sources, including fertilizers used on agricultural lands.

## **Consistency with NPS Policy and State Water Board Resolution 68-16 (Antidegradation Policy)**

Waste discharges from irrigated agricultural operations have the potential to affect surface and groundwater quality. As documented in the *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*, many state waters have been adversely affected due in part to waste discharges from irrigated agriculture. State policy and law requires that the Central Valley Water Board institute

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requirements that will implement Water Quality Control Plans (California Water Code sections 13260, 13269), the State Water Board’s Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program (NPS Policy) and applicable antidegradation requirements (State Water Board Resolution 68-16). The Order is a necessary component of the Central Valley Water Board’s efforts to be consistent with State policy and law through its regulation of discharges from irrigated agriculture. As documented in the PEIR Hydrology and Water Quality analysis, implementation of a long-term ILRP, of which the Order is an implementing mechanism, will improve water quality through development of farm management practices that reduce discharges of waste to state waters.

After balancing the above benefits of the Order against its unavoidable environmental risks, the specific economic, legal, and social benefits of the proposal outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, and these adverse environmental effects are considered acceptable, consistent with the Order, Central Valley Water Board Order R5-2013-XXXX.

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