

ITEM: 24

SUBJECT: Workshop on Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Sacramento Valley Rice Growers

BOARD ACTION: *No board action. Information item.*

BACKGROUND: On 13 August 2013, staff circulated draft waste discharge requirements for discharges from rice lands for rice growers in the Sacramento Valley (draft order). Interested person comments were due by 13 September 2013¹. A tentative general order is scheduled to be circulated for public comment in December 2013/January 2014. At a March 2014 hearing, staff intends to propose board adoption of the tentative general order. The draft order and attachments are included in this agenda package.

This draft order is the only commodity-specific order under the long-term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP). The draft order addresses discharges to both surface water and groundwater, requires surface water monitoring, requires trend groundwater monitoring representative of discharges from rice lands, and requires evaluation of management practice effectiveness, when necessary. The draft order requires rice growers in the Sacramento Valley to perform farm evaluations and prepare nitrogen management plans. The California Rice Commission is recognized as a third-party entity representing rice growers in the Sacramento Valley.

On 2 August 2013, the California Rice Commission submitted a final Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) that assesses and evaluates the contribution of rice discharges to groundwater quality beneath rice lands. The evaluation uses readily available monitoring data. The GAR is posted at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/long_term_program_development/rice_growers_sacvalley_wdrs/index.shtml. The GAR indicates there are no groundwater quality problems associated with discharges from rice lands. Therefore, a number of requirements typically initiated after adoption of other ILRP Orders (e.g., a management practice evaluation program) are contingent, and will only be triggered if water quality problems are identified in the future.

RECOMMENDATION There is no staff recommendation for this workshop item. The board may provide direction to staff based on the staff presentation and comments received from the public.

Mgmt. Review __JK____
Legal Review __APM____
December 6, 2013
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¹ All comments received are included in the board members' agenda package except for a large spreadsheet of pesticide data (attachment 2d.iv.a of the comments from the Sacramento River Source Water Protection Program). The spreadsheet is available to board members and the public to download from the board's website and can be found by following the links to the board's agenda for December 2013.