

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: Status of Proposed General Order for Poultry Operations

BOARD ACTION: Information Item Only

BACKGROUND: Poultry operations include all commercial operations that raise chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, pheasants, pigeons, ostriches, or other types of fowl. Manure and wastewater generated by these operations have the potential to cause significant impacts to surface and groundwater quality if not managed carefully. The number of these operations within the Central Valley Region is not known, but Board staff estimate that at least 200 facilities are currently operational. In the past, Central Valley Water Board staff, working with wardens from the Department of Fish and Wildlife and county District Attorneys, have taken enforcement actions against poultry operations which have discharged to surface water, and have developed individual Waste Discharge Requirements. However, poultry operations as a whole have not been regulated under a General Order.

In the draft currently being developed, the proposed General Order would apply to commercial poultry operations having 2 or more Animal Units on site, where an Animal Unit (AU) is defined as 1,000 pounds of live animal weight. For instance, an average weight for a meat chicken at slaughter is 5 pounds, so 2 AU would be equivalent to 400 chickens.

Staff is considering a tiered approach for the proposed General Order. The Low Threat Tier would include operations that pose little threat to surface or groundwater because of their manure-handling practices. The Full General Order Coverage Tier would include operations that pose a threat to water quality because they store manure on site, have wastewater ponds, have outdoor animal housing, conduct on-site composting, or apply manure, litter or wastewater to their own cropland. It is intended that the proposed Order apply to both existing operations and also to operations that commence in the future, or which expand their operations, provided that the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act have been satisfied for the new or expanding operation(s). Noncommercial poultry operations having less than 2 AUs of birds, including backyard poultry operations growing birds for domestic use, and birds grown as

projects for FFA, 4H and other similar organizations, would not be regulated under the proposed General Order.

The proposed General Order would impose conditions to protect water quality. Some of these conditions could include requiring operators regulated under the Full General Order Coverage Tier to prepare a Waste Management Plan that will address the Production Area and a Nutrient Management Plan that will address the Land Application Area. It is planned that the proposed General Order require the monitoring of groundwater and of discharges to surface water, either by the individual operation or by a joint program or coalition.

Board staff plans to release a tentative General Order for public review in May 2016.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff will prepare a tentative General Order for public review incorporating Board member comments.

Mgmt. Review _____
Legal Review _____

21 April 2016
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