

Long Term Program Alternative – Potential Impacts to Surface Water

<p>Author(s)</p>	<p>California Cattlemen’s Association California Citrus Mutual California Cotton Ginners & Growers Association California Farm Bureau Federation California Grape & Tree Fruit League California Rice Commission East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition San Joaquin County/Delta Water Quality Coalition Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition Western Growers Association Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition</p>
<p>Supporting Interest Group(s)</p>	<p>Goose Lake Coalition Merced Irrigation District Modesto Irrigation District Northeast California Water Association Northern California Water Association Oakdale Irrigation District Turlock Irrigation District Upper Feather River Watershed Group Western Plant Health Association Western United Dairymen</p>
<p>Executive Summary</p>	<p>The agricultural coalition groups and supporting interest groups listed above propose that the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) maintain its existing program for irrigated agriculture for surface waters that are considered to be waters of the state. However, the organizations suggest additional changes to the monitoring and reporting program to allow for greater flexibility and efficiencies in the coalition monitoring programs. Finally, the agricultural coalition groups, commodity organizations and supporting interest groups recommend that the implementation program include a Basin Plan amendment that appropriately de-designates agricultural drainage facilities that fall within the exceptions of State Water Board Resolution 88-63, and specifically identifies and adopts numeric water quality objectives pursuant to applicable Water Code provisions that appropriately apply to the various types of waterways covered by the Irrigated Lands Program.</p>

Statement of Purpose/Objectives	Protect surface water quality through improved existing programs.
Program Type	Surface Water
Application of Alternative	Irrigated Agriculture

Program Organization	
Element	Organization
Tailored	The current surface water program allows individuals the necessary flexibility to either enroll in a coalition program, or apply for coverage as an individual. The current program also allows flexibility with respect to geography, commodity and potential threat to water quality. Finally, the current program should remain flexible to further allow individual coalitions, commodity organizations or others the option of requesting development of a general WDR, if so desired.

Core Requirements	
Element	Description
Plan-based	<p>The existing surface water program for irrigated agriculture is a plan-based program that allows coalition groups, commodity organizations and others the ability to prepare management plans to work towards achieving water quality objectives. This process should remain in place and continue forward.</p> <p>Furthermore, the coalitions/commodity organizations/others have expended tremendous resources and energy developing management plans over the last several years. The discontinuation of this process for a more restrictive or landowner specific process would void these previous efforts and the investments made to date.</p>

Lead Entity	
Element	Description
3 rd Party	<p><u>Coalitions/Commodity/Other</u></p> <p>The current program allows for sufficient flexibility in the organizational structure for implementation of the Regional Water Board's program. It allows coalitions to be developed based on geography, commodity and/or threat to water quality. We recommend that the current flexibility with respect to 3rd party organizations remain as is.</p> <p>Moreover, it is important to recognize that the 3rd parties in this option are organizational entities for the sake of ease of administration, and implementation of monitoring programs. They are not legal entities with regulatory or enforcement authority. Under this structure, it is imperative that the Regional Water Board continues to be the legal authority for enforcement activities. As indicated, the coalitions/commodity organizations/others are there to assist in implementation of the Conditional Waiver, they are not authorized or interested in becoming enforcement arms of the Regional Water Board.</p>

Monitoring	
Element	Description
Coalitions Commodity Other	<p>For this program, we recommend that monitoring programs be developed by the coalitions, commodity organizations or others. It is not appropriate to develop one monitoring program that applies region-wide as there is tremendous variability between the water quality issues of concern for the various coalitions and commodity organizations.</p> <p>Furthermore, the coalitions, commodity organizations and others must be given greater discretion to develop monitoring programs that recognize local priorities. There is currently a sense of frustration amongst the coalitions and commodity organizations that monitoring for certain constituents is being required without proper justification or need. More specifically, the implementing coalitions and commodity organizations have collected sufficient monitoring data over the last five years to tailor monitoring programs that focus on local priorities. However, Regional Water Board staff continue to require broad-based monitoring for a number of constituents that are not of concern to agriculture in general, or specific coalitions and/or commodity organizations.</p>

To more efficiently use limited economic resources, we recommend that the Regional Water Board re-evaluate its approach to monitoring requirements and allow for greater flexibility in selecting the constituents of concern and the frequency of monitoring.

Implementation Mechanism	
Element	Description
Conditional Waiver/WDR	To implement the program described above, we recommend that the Regional Water Board continue the Conditional Waiver as adopted in 2006 (R5-2006-0053) pursuant to Water Code section 13269 for those coalitions, sub-coalitions and/or others that wish to be covered by this order. Also, the Regional Water Board should allow individual coalitions and others the option of requesting a different conditional waiver or, a General WDR that would be applicable to a specific geographic area, or commodity.
Basin Plan Amendment	The authors of this option believe it imperative that the Regional Water Board amend the Basin Plan to address current issues related to designation of beneficial uses and the interpretation of narrative water quality objectives. For example, under the current Basin Plan and the Regional Water Board's interpretation thereof, the municipal beneficial use is considered to apply to almost all waterways through the Regional Water Board's incorporation of Resolution 88-63 even if there is an applicable exception contained in Resolution 88-63. Also, there is no certainty with regard to what water quality objectives are applicable to the various waterways present in agricultural areas of the Central Valley. Instead, the Regional Water Board interprets narrative water quality objectives with other outside information that may or may not be relevant and applicable. As a result of these interpretations and practices, coalition groups and commodity organizations are being required to develop management plans to address constituents that may not in fact be impacting actual existing beneficial uses of the waterways in question. This results in an inefficient use of resources, and again, prevents the coalitions and commodity organizations from prioritizing activities to address real water quality problems.