

Meeting Notes

Evaluation of the MUN beneficial use in Agriculturally Dominated Water Bodies

November 13, 2015

10:00 AM

Location: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Office, 11020 Sun Center Drive, Suite 200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670: Delta Room

Attendees:

California Rice Commission – Roberta Firoved, Tim Johnson

Central Valley Water Board –Anne Littlejohn, Jeanne Chilcott, True Khang

Sacramento River Joint Source Water Protection Program – Bonny Starr, Elissa Callman, Sheryl Hunn

Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District –Mike Nordstrom (*by phone*)

Turlock Irrigation District – Debbie Liebersbach (*by phone*)

Meeting Summary

Goal of Meeting: Discuss the process for evaluating controlled recirculating systems, as part of the proposed Basin Plan Amendment to establish a region-wide MUN evaluation process in Ag dominated surface water bodies.

Background and review of controlled recirculating systems

- Year-round closed recirculating system
 - Example – Tulare Lake Basin History
 - Kern River intertide connects Kern River to CA aqueduct and is main diversion for Kern River system to divert flood release water into CA aqueduct prior to getting into closed system
 - Kaweah/Tule flood water is pumped into Friant-Kern Canal & goes into Kern River

- Water will enter into Tulare Lake floor if flood waters are great enough (1969 & 1982-83 floods)
 - Even in floods, water does not naturally leave Tulare Lake Basin
 - 2000-2025 ft elevation to leave basin (~600,000 acre ft of water), which could be double of the 1982-83 flood (500-1000 year event)
 - Other possible year-round closed systems- Buena Vista (located west of Bakersfield and may possibly be their own coalition) & Grasslands in the San Joaquin River Basin
- Seasonally-closed recirculating system
 - Historic Use – Sacramento Rice Production
 - Seasonally closed systems were used to manage pesticides in the past. The closed system treated like a very large rice field. Typically closed during April through June when herbicides are applied to the rice plants.
 - At that time, reclamation or irrigation districts determined when seasonally closed systems opened and closed. Growers did not make these decisions.
 - Due to fear of regulation in the form of discharge permits, industry stopped using closed systems
 - Past Emergency Notification protocol – Sacramento Rice Production
 - Example of most recent and possibly only documented emergency release from closed system= Reclamation District 1000 in Natomas (lower Sacramento River Basin)
 - Significant flow attributed to the boom in construction which caused too much water in the system.
 - There were robust emergency release plans
 - Related entities (Cal Rice, cities, DPR, Water Board, County Ag Commission) notified via phone
 - CRC had emergency sampling plan
 - CRC had protocol in place for storm events
 - A storm event workgroup increased communication between agencies

- Came out as a result of 2002 flooding where there was not sufficient coordination among other agencies

Review Application Templates – criteria and outline

- Overall feedback
 - General support for seasonally-closed recirculation systems, but concern as to how to manage potential impacts to downstream water purveyors.
 - Concern that an onerous application process will prevent Ag districts from progressing through the MUN evaluation process. A closed recirculating systems could be an important “tool” for water managers to facilitate much needed water recycling within their system and may potentially provide overall better water quality downstream.
- Comments on Section 2, Overview of Controlled Recirculating System
 - Request information on distance between seasonally closed system and intakes
 - Identify potential downstream areas that could be impacted by potential emergency overflows
 - Request information on land use in the area (e.g. some agricultural areas still may be heavily influenced by urban runoff)
 - Provide public access to information regarding the growers applying/listed as seasonally closed system – website or Lyris email updates?
- Comments on Section 3a, Summary of Water Use Management
 - Request more information on who the Watermaster reports to. Is there an overseeing entity?
 - Is there an enforcing entity that regulates when systems are closed/open (especially in cases where there is a seasonal closure plan)? Request more information on this.
- Comments on Section 4a, Description of system’s flood control/emergency plan
 - More information is needed regarding the system control and mechanics
- Comments on Section 4b1, Potential water quality concerns due to an emergency
 - Potential water quality/constituent of concern should be relevant to crops being grown
 - Monitoring requirements during an emergency release should only include relevant constituents to crops being grown
 - Operations plan needs to include crops/pesticides used & timeline of use

- Coalitions should only have to monitor for constituents of concern during that period of time
 - Suggestion made to provide language in WDR/permit that states the application of pesticide/herbicide cannot be applied if the degradation holding period is not met prior to discharging from seasonally closed system
 - Comments on Section 4b4, Notification requirements and protocols for an emergency release
 - The process of notification should be efficient & simple
 - California Rice Commission representative expressed that notification should be the responsibility of the reclamation districts and growers.
 - Coalitions serve in the role of overall water management
 - Reclamation districts or water agencies are better suited for monitoring/surveillance due to jurisdiction over water management
 - Should be responsible for monitoring during releases
 - Should coordinate with WDR holder (coalition)
 - Representatives for Sacramento water purveyors expressed the need for the notification system to reach all water purveyors downstream of the spill.
 - How far would we need to go?
 - There is a currently a voluntary call system in place for water purveyors (real-time) in the Sacramento River Basin
 - Could this process plug right into system infrastructure of voluntary call system?
 - Those interested in water quality impacts could sign up to be part of the system
 - Concern that a phone tree system could be inefficient and too much work
 - What type of notification is needed - real time vs. email notification
 - Part of the application process should determine how far downstream the notification goes and what entities to call
 - What type of process is needed to identify the right parties for notification?
- Comments on Section 5, Water Quality
 - California Rice Commission representatives expressed current coverage should be identified in terms of the relevant WDR or program

- Monitoring currently provided under WDR should be sufficient to capture impacts from closed systems
- Water quality coming out of a seasonally closed system when it opens should not be any different than what would come off of the field in a non-closed system
- Coalitions should not be required to monitor when season opens since discharger will be regulated under WDR
- Coalitions should monitor during emergency releases
- Water purveyors expressed concern that there are Title 22 data gaps in NPDES/ILRP programs
- Support to the idea of a regional program like SWAMP providing supplemental monitoring to close the Title 22 data gaps.

Action Items:

- *Central Valley Water Board staff will use comments and feedback to further refine the application documents for the two closed recirculation system documents and as input into the draft Staff Report.*