



Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

20 November 2023

Via: Electronic Mail

Parry Klassen
East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition
klassenparry@gmail.com

J.P. Cativiela
Dairy Cares
jcativiela@cogentcc.com

General Valley Water Collaborative email
contact@valleywaterc.org

Subject: Findings of Completeness for the Modesto Management Zone Implementation Plan

Dear Parry Klassen and J.P. Cativiela:

On 5 September 2023, the Valley Water Collaborative (VWC) submitted a Management Zone Implementation Plan (MZIP) for the Modesto Management Zone to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board or Board). The submittal was prepared to meet requirements identified in the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins and the Water Quality Control Plan for the Tulare Lake Basin (Basin Plans), and the Nitrate Control Program Notices to Comply (NTCs) issued by the Board on 29 May 2020. The NTCs require permittees that discharge nitrate to comply with the Nitrate Control Program (NCP) for the Central Valley, which includes the selection of a preferred permitting approach. The permittees who selected the Management Zone Permitting Approach opted to participate in the VWC. On 23 February 2023, the Central Valley Water Board accepted the Final Management Zone Proposal (FMZP), which officially established the VWC to govern the NCP implementation.

After a review of the MZIP, the Board's Executive Officer has determined that the MZIP is complete. In this context, a determination of completeness means that the MZIP provides information, actions, and timelines that address the key elements identified in the Basin Plan. The MZIP, however, is still subject to additional technical and public review to determine if the plans contained therein are adequate to meet the needs of

MARK BRADFORD, CHAIR | PATRICK PULUPA, ESQ., EXECUTIVE OFFICER

communities and individuals dependent on nitrate-impacted drinking water sources and are consistent with the Board's long-term policy goals. Comments resulting from additional review, the public comment period, and community feedback may initiate further revisions to the implementation plan. At this time, the Board offers the following comments:

1. Well Test and Water Deliveries Figure

Figure 4-6 in the MZIP shows domestic well testing and bottled water deliveries within each Initial Focus Area for the Turlock Management Zone, instead of the Modesto Management Zone. The Central Valley Water Board requires that Valley Water Collaborative provide the correct map for Figure 4-6 that presents well test and water delivery data for the Modesto Management Zone by 20 December 2023.

2. Drinking Water Solutions for Public Water Systems

The Modesto MZIP must address the future impact that proposed drinking water solutions for public water systems may have on operation and maintenance costs. Disadvantaged Communities/Severely Disadvantaged Communities (DAC/SDAC) are not only disproportionately impacted by nitrate contamination, but they are also incredibly sensitive to operation and maintenance cost increases. It is important that consideration is provided for DAC/SDAC to ensure potential drinking water solutions for public water systems are feasible and practicable.

3. Coordination with Path A Facilities

The Central Valley Water Board appreciates that the VWC plans to work with Path A facilities to establish coordination agreements that will define roles and responsibilities for well testing and replacement drinking water obligations. Although there are no Path A facilities currently within the Modesto Management Zone Boundary, future Path A facilities must also be taken into consideration – whether an existing facility is switching from Path B to Path A or a new facility is selecting Path A. As the VWC works with future Path A facilities towards a coordination agreement, progress updates need to be provided to the Central Valley Water Board. The coordination agreement must ensure that all areas within the Modesto Subbasin boundaries are accounted for and that all impacted residents will be provided with the opportunity of well testing and replacement drinking water.

4. ILRP Drinking Water Well Testing Data

The MZIP discusses, in general, coordination between the Management Zone's Residential Well Testing Program and the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) Drinking Water Well Monitoring Program to address nitrate impacted residents and to potentially provide monitoring well candidates for the MZIP Surveillance and Monitoring Program. However, the MZIP does not include a plan for reconciling the Management Zone's well testing data with ILRP well testing data and a description of how replacement drinking water will be provided, either by the Management Zone itself, by

the irrigated lands coalition(s), or by a third party. The MZIP needs to include a plan for well testing data reconciliation that includes Management Zone outreach, based on the ILRP dataset, directed to residents that have groundwater exceeding the nitrate drinking water standard.

This letter hereby initiates the next step of implementation for the NCP. Within the next six months, the Central Valley Water Board will provide a notice of opportunity for public comment and schedule a public hearing on the MZIP. The Central Valley Water Board appreciates the implementation of the VWC compliance plans and will continue to regularly engage with you to address issues and concerns as they arise. If you have any questions, please contact Bethany Soto at 559-445-6077 or by email at bethany.soto@waterboards.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Pulupa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Pulupa
Executive Officer