

IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE

May 2016

STATE WATER BOARD:

In May 2016, Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program staff participated in various meetings with outside groups such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Advisory Committee, California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment, California Association of Pest Advisers/Certified Crop Advisers, the California Agricultural Partnership Forum, and the USEPA State and Regional Biosolids Coordinating Team.

On May 17, 2016, program staff participated in a State Water Board workshop regarding the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General Order Petitions held at the Fresno Convention Center. The State Water Board is soliciting written comments on the proposed order. Written comments must be received by 12 noon on June 1, 2016. Additional information regarding the petitions (SWRCB/OCC Files A-2239(a)–(c)) can be found here: http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality/a2239_sanjoaquin_ag.shtm

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS:

As of May 12, the North Coast Water Board had a total of 370 entities enrolled in the conditional waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for discharges from marijuana cultivation and associated activities. About half of these enrollees were enrolled through two approved third-party programs. There are an additional 121 entities that have submitted a notice of intent, but have not completed the enrollment process.

The San Francisco Bay Water Board anticipates public release of draft WDRs and a draft environmental impact report for the Vineyard Program in early summer. The proposed WDRs will implement the Napa River and Sonoma Creek sediment total maximum daily loads. Third-party technical assistance providers are expected to provide an important function by assisting producers in complying with the requirements of the proposed WDRs. Therefore, in parallel with the environmental impact report and permit efforts, staff are working with groups that have expressed an interest in filling this important function.

On May 16, 2016, the Central Coast Water Board issued Notice of Violations to the operators and landowners of 73 farms/ranches for failing to comply with individual groundwater monitoring and reporting requirements of the Ag Order. Water Board staff are following up with these operators and landowners to assist them in achieving compliance. On May 10, 2016, staff sent 13267 orders for operators to submit total nitrogen applied reports. Water Board staff are following up with these and other growers who enroll their ranches after the October 1st, 2016 deadline in order to avoid total nitrogen reporting for an entire year.

On April 14, 2016, the Los Angeles Water Board adopted a Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Dischargers from Irrigated Lands (Order No. R4-2016-0143) along with a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the waiver. Water Board staff are working with the discharger groups regarding enrollment and re-enrollment of growers in the newly adopted Conditional Waiver. Los Angeles Regional Board staff is also working on enforcement cases.

Lahontan Water Board staff spent significant time working on contaminated groundwater issues associated with irrigated agricultural areas and irrigated land areas associated with dairies.

In April 2016, the Colorado River Basin Water Board staff developed draft General Waste Discharge Requirements to replace a Conditional Waiver for the Palo Verde Valley. The General Order is currently under USEPA review for addressing 303(d) listed impairments. Water Board staff sent letters to Coachella Valley water account holders in March 2016, which increased the amount of enrolled acreage in our Coachella Valley Waiver by 15-20%. Water Board staff are working with the Office of Public Affairs and plan to do outreach to non-English speaking farmers in the Coachella Valley. In April and May 2016, Water Board staff reviewed the draft water quality monitoring and reporting plans sent in by the Imperial Irrigation District-Imperial County Farm Bureau Coalition, and continues to review Annual Monitoring Reports sent in by other coalition groups.

Santa Ana River Water Board staff anticipates that the Board will consider the Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Agricultural Operations in the San Jacinto River Watershed (Tentative Order No. R8-2016-0003) and the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the waiver this summer. Water Board staff determined it would be beneficial to hold an informational workshop at the June 10, 2016 Santa Ana Regional Water Board meeting so that agricultural representatives can present to the Regional Water Board members and the public regarding the work the agricultural community is already participating in to address water quality. There are approximately 59,000 acres of agriculturally zoned land and up to 185 potentially eligible enrollees in the San Jacinto Watershed that will be covered under the Conditional Waiver.

The San Diego Water Board will hold a public workshop on June 22, 2016 regarding 1) Tentative Order No. R9-2016-0004, General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Commercial Agricultural Operations for Dischargers that are Members of a Third-Party Group; 2) Tentative Order No. R9-2016-0005, General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Commercial Agricultural Operations for Dischargers Not Participating in a Third-Party Group; and 3) Tentative Resolution No. R9-2016-0136, Adoption of a Negative Declaration and Initial Study for General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Agricultural Operations in the San Diego Region.