

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

STAFF REPORT FOR WORKSHOP OF FEBRUARY 5, 2004

Prepared on January 15, 2004

ITEM: 3

SUBJECT: Workshop for Proposed Conditional Waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands in the Central Coast Region (Region 3)

SUMMARY

In 1999 California Water Code section 13269 was amended, causing all waivers of waste discharge requirements (WDRs) that existed on January 1, 2000, to expire on January 1, 2003. Two Region 3 waivers applicable to irrigated agriculture, one for irrigation return water and the other for non-NPDES stormwater discharges, have now expired and are being replaced.

The proposed replacement is a tiered regulatory structure of conditional waivers. Farm operations that have already undertaken water quality protection activities may qualify for five year waivers (Tier 1) with fewer reporting requirements than those who have not begun to actively address water quality issues. The program is structured to require all farm operations to attend water quality training, complete farm water quality management plans and implement management practices as soon as possible. The goal of the program is to ensure that all farm operations are actively protecting water quality, that water quality standards are being met, and that beneficial uses of water are protected or restored. Water quality monitoring will be an integral component of the waiver program.

The Regional Board held workshops to receive public input on the proposed conditional waivers in Santa Barbara on October 23, 2003 and in Salinas on January 9, 2004. Because of the high level of interest in the proposed action, the Board is holding a third workshop in San Luis Obispo to allow additional comment prior to Board action. Response to comments from the public and questions from the Board at the Salinas workshop will be provided as supplemental material prior to

the February 5 workshop. A detailed staff report and attachments from the January workshop are currently available for review on Region 3's website at www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb3/workshops/index.htm. Hard copies are available upon request by contacting **Alison Jones at (805) 542-4646**. Supplemental materials will be available and posted on the website by February 3.

Staff proposes to finalize draft conditional waivers and a mitigated negative declaration under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for Regional Board consideration on March 18, 2004.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information and discussion only, to allow the Board and the public opportunity to review the proposed program and provide input and comment to staff prior to proposed Board action on March 18, 2004.

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