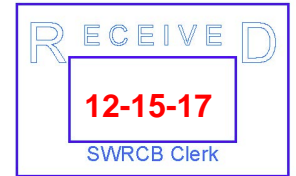


From: Broc Zoller
To: [commentletters](#)
Subject: Comments to A-2239(a)-(c)
Date: Friday, December 15, 2017 11:40:04 AM



Dear Clerk to the Board Townsend,

I have been following the State Water Resources Control Board's Draft Order revising the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's General Waste Discharge Requirements. As a farmer in California, I am concerned that my small operation (10 acres of walnuts and 42 acres of wine grapes) will be negatively burdened by the Draft Order.

I am particularly concerned about the following:

The Draft Order includes requirements that will disrupt the existing successful irrigated lands regulatory program (ILP) which has been effective in addressing surface water quality concerns and protecting water quality for years.

In looking at the results of tests conducted through ILP, there have not been issues in our small agricultural county (Lake) that justify the expense of time and money you are proposing for us.

The cost of compliance for administration and reporting as well as the public access to our personal information will significantly increase if the Draft Order is adopted. Under the new Order, reporting requirements will uniformly apply to all growers, whereas currently, reporting requirements vary due to vulnerability designations. In addition to higher costs for individual growers, coalition/third-party costs as well as regional water board costs, will increase due to the new requirements to collect and compile all raw data.

Different areas of the state have different issues. The State Water Board is proposing solutions for all of us to water problems that have been reported 4 of the top 5 agricultural counties of the United States in the San Joaquin Valley and Salinas area. Agriculture is very intensive in these areas, and the farming methods and populations differ in many respects from ours (for example, there are twice as many people in the city of Visalia as there are in my whole county).

In addition, the UC reports linking agricultural fertilization to nitrate contamination of water in these areas are estimates, based on amounts of N fertilizer applied and estimates of their contribution through movement directly to groundwater. But nitrate movement through the subsoil without being stripped of oxygen is difficult under anaerobic deep soil conditions.

It is assumed that all N added is either used and removed by the crop or ends up leaching to the groundwater. Not much mention is given to losses of gaseous N compounds to the atmosphere in these mathematical considerations. A range of N utilization efficiencies from 40-70% in this regard are frequently seen in the literature, and none are given for some crops. All the commotion about restriction of N use to that removed plus an unknown factor to account for inefficiency means that a lot of time is going to be spent recording our activities to comply with your Order, with no real change in what we are doing now, as far as real amounts. We are economically driven and do not routinely apply N when we get up in the morning. Shouldn't your efforts be spent in improving our efficiency, rather than simply restricting amounts because you are pretty sure we may be using too much N?

It is possible the estimates given of direct movement of nitrate through substandard wells to groundwater is more important than the estimates indicate. It is also possible the estimates of contribution of nitrate through septic systems to groundwater is underestimated, since these systems predominate in rural areas where the most contamination has been found.

There has been no study where identifiable chemical isotopes of N in nitrate molecules have been introduced at the soil surface as in fertilization and traced to groundwater. Shouldn't this type of study precede all this change that will cost us dearly? We would like to help solve a problem that we are responsible for, but the studies so far are correlations, only. These types of studies do not survive editors' peer reviews for publication in the best scientific journals, but are being used to extract our time and money in this case.

Another concern is that we do not elect the members of the State Water Board, but are being dictated by them. This order should come from our legislators, not the Water Board.

The Draft Order requires each farm to annually monitor all drinking water supply wells on the property. This is problematic, especially because growers may not have legal authority to access landowner or tenant wells.

I also have concerns with the amount of raw data, including field-specific farm evaluation and management practice data and all nitrogen application data by field, that will be submitted to the regional water boards. Not only is the amount of data reported unnecessary, the data, although tied to anonymous identifiers, will now also become publicly available. Currently, third-parties submit data aggregated at the township level and maintain the raw data which is accessible to the regional water board if needed. This system works and doesn't expose my farming practices to competitors or potentially cause privacy concerns.

The result of these requirements will inevitably lead to increased coalition/third-party costs and state regulatory fees, and the Draft Order does not contain any meaningful cost analysis to justify these new requirements.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Broc Zoller, Ph.D., CCA, PCA
6570 Kelsey Creek Dr
Kelseyville, CA 95451
peardoc@pacific.net