



San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

DRAFT NEGATIVE DECLARATION Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080(c)

The San Diego Water Board, acting as lead agency, has prepared this Negative Declaration/Initial Study in accordance with section 21080(c) of the Public Resources Code and sections 15070 and 15071 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

Project Title:

Adoption of General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Commercial Agricultural Operations in the San Diego Region

Tentative Order Numbers: R9-2016-0004 and R9 2016-0005

Lead Agency:

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region
2375 Northside Drive Suite 100 San Diego, California

Project Location:

The Project is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board). The San Diego Region is located in the southwest corner of California and occupies approximately 3,900 square miles. The western boundary of the San Diego Region is the 85 miles of the Pacific Ocean coastline from southern Orange County, California to the U.S. and Mexico international border. The northern boundary of the San Diego Region is formed by the hydrologic divide starting near Laguna Beach and extending inland through El Toro and easterly along the ridge of the Elsinore Mountains into the Cleveland National Forest. The eastern boundary of the San Diego Region is formed by the Laguna Mountains and other lesser known mountains located in the Cleveland National Forest. The southern boundary of the San Diego Region is formed by the U.S. and Mexico international border.

Project Description:

The project consists of the adoption and implementation of general waste discharge requirements for commercial agricultural operations. For the purposes of the General Orders, a commercial agricultural operation is any agricultural business or trade activity, including farms, nurseries, and orchards, that produces crops with the intent to make a profit (Agricultural Operation).

The San Diego Water Board proposes adoption of this project through two general orders (collectively referred to as General Orders):

1. 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 in the San Diego Region.* (General Third-Party Group Order)
2. Order No. R9-2016-0005, *General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Commercial Agricultural Operations for Dischargers Not Participating in a Third-Party Group in the San Diego Region.* (General Individual Order)

If adopted, the General Orders will regulate discharges of waste from Agricultural Operations that could affect waters of the State within the San Diego Region. Wastes associated with agricultural activities, include but are not limited to: irrigation runoff, storm water runoff, sediment, pesticides, and fertilizers.

The General Orders contain prohibitions, specifications, and water quality standards to protect surface water and groundwater quality from discharges associated with agricultural activity. To comply, owner and operators of Agricultural Operations, or their representative Third-Party Group, will be required to:

- Enroll under the General Orders by submitting a Notice of Intent.
- Develop and implement a Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP) to prevent or reduce the discharges of waste to the waters of the State through irrigation control, nutrient management, erosion control, and/or pesticide management.
- Conduct surface water monitoring or edge-of-field monitoring to determine if existing management practices are leading to compliance with water quality requirements.
- Conduct monitoring of any on-site drinking supply well to determine if agricultural activities are causing or contributing to nitrate contamination of drinking water.
- Conduct visual evaluations of management practices to ensure that selected management practices are appropriate and effective to achieve compliance with water quality standards.
- Develop and implement a Water Quality Restoration Plan (WQRP) if water quality data has shown that water quality standards are not being met.
- Complete annual agricultural water quality protection training.
- Prepare annual reports.
- Pay an annual fee.

The goal of the General Orders is to manage discharges from Agricultural Operations to ensure that these discharges do not cause or contribute to an exceedance of any regional, state, or federal water quality standard. The San Diego Water Board anticipates that implementation of the General Orders will result in a net-environmental gain. The General Orders may be reviewed at the San Diego Water Board's office (2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92108) or online at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_decisions/tentative_orders/.

Determination:

This Negative Declaration is comprised of this form and the attached Initial Study. The San Diego Water Board has reviewed and considered the information contained in this Negative Declaration, the General Orders, and the comments received during the public review period. On the basis of the whole record before the San Diego Water Board, the San Diego Water Board finds that there is not substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

TENTATIVE

David W. Gibson
Executive Officer