

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION**

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT

May 10, 2023

ITEM NO. 5

SUBJECT

Agricultural workshop to hear from interested, concerned, and informed stakeholders regarding the agricultural community concerns raised at the September 2022 Board meeting (*Ben Neill, Cailynn Smith, Abigail Pashina*).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Informational item only; no staff recommendation.

KEY ISSUES

This item is an opportunity for the San Diego Water Board and members of the public to hear from agricultural stakeholders about public health, available resources for growers, Third-Party Groups benefits and costs, equity concerns, and the financial burdens affecting the agricultural community.

PRACTICAL VISION

Chapter 4 of the *San Diego Water Board Practical Vision*,¹ Implement Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Measures, is focused on working towards equity in environmental protection and providing enhanced engagement with underserved communities during the Board's decision-making process. This workshop gives growers and community members, who may be part of underrepresented groups, the opportunity to address the Board about equity issues.

Chapter 8 of the *San Diego Water Board Practical Vision*, Provide Effective Community Engagement and Communication, is focused on engaging in outreach to improve communication and transparency, creating information sharing opportunities to both listen to and share with our communities, collaborating on development of mutually beneficial solutions to water quality issues, and informing the public about the goals of the Practical Vision. This workshop provides the San Diego Water Board an opportunity to engage and communicate with growers, other government agencies, and non-government organizations about water quality and agriculture within the San Diego Region.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this informational item is to provide the San Diego Water Board and members of the public with an opportunity to hear feedback from growers, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations and participate in a discussion about

¹ Practical Vision:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/practical_vision/

questions raised by the Board during its September 2022 meeting. At the September 2022 Board meeting, staff presented an informational item to provide an update on the status of monitoring activities associated with General 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 (Ag Order)*.² The Board also heard from interested stakeholders and representatives from the San Diego and Upper Santa Margarita Irrigated Lands Groups. The Board requested additional information on the following agricultural community topics:

- What is the correlation between algae growth and total phosphorus concentrations in surface water bodies?
- What are the San Diego Water Board's responsibilities with regards to notifying growers with private drinking water wells about elevated nitrate concentrations in their drinking water and the associated health concerns?
- What actions are growers taking to test their groundwater wells for nitrates and other agricultural related pollutants of concern?
- What actions are other organizations taking to notify communities about elevated nitrate concentrations detected in or near their private drinking water wells and the associated health concerns?
- What funding sources are made available to people whose private groundwater wells have been impacted?
- How many farms are located within the San Diego Region?
- What are the costs and benefits to growers from enrolling as a member of a Third-Party monitoring group?
- What effect do growers not enrolled in the Ag Order have on enrolled growers? Is there an equity concern?
- How are underrepresented communities impacted by potential water quality concerns from agricultural operations?
- How is the increased cost of fuel, water, and other supplies affecting the local agricultural community?

Board staff prepared an Executive Officer's (EO) report³ on December 14, 2022, to address two of the questions above regarding 1) the potential correlations between algae growth and total phosphorus and 2) the San Diego Water Board's responsibility to notify the public about elevated nitrate concentrations in drinking water wells. The purpose of this workshop is to serve as a listening session for the Board to receive constructive feedback from agricultural stakeholders and members of the public on the questions not addressed in the December 2022 EO Report. Board staff invited a diverse

² Ag Order: [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 \(ca.gov\)](#).

³ December 14, 2022 EO Report: [Executive Officer's Report for December 14, 2022 \(ca.gov\)](#).

group of individuals and public and private organizations to attend the May Board meeting and share their knowledge and experience on issues affecting the agricultural community. Board staff will use the bulleted questions above to facilitate the Board's conversation with the meeting attendees.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None.