

## **IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **October 2012**

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) report covers the October 2012 period and will provide an update on the activities of the North Coast, San Francisco, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Colorado River Basin, Santa Ana, and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board ILRPs.

Future monthly reports will alternate between the status of the ILRP from the Central Valley Water Board for one month, and the status of other Regional Water Board ILRPs for the alternate month.

### **NORTH COAST REGION**

Staff of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board are developing a region-wide water quality compliance program to address water quality impacts associated with discharges from agricultural lands. Staff are developing the program to include a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements (WDRs), options for individual WDRs, and an outreach and education component.

To help develop an effective and viable program, staff are working with a Stakeholder Advisory Group composed of representatives from various interests related to agriculture in the North Coast Region. The group's purpose is to provide input to Regional Water Board staff on the different elements of the program. The Advisory Group meets as a full group and also as subgroups representing four different geographic areas in the North Coast Region.

Staff recently developed draft conditional waiver language and a draft outline of a farm water quality plan for review by the Advisory Group. Staff held a series of meetings with the subgroups in October to discuss the draft language and receive input from the subgroups. Staff will make revisions based on oral comments received at the meeting and written comments, which are due November 7.

### **SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION**

#### **Grazing Waiver for Tomales Bay Watershed:**

Regional Board staff has been invited to speak at the Tomales Bay Watershed Conference on October 26. Staff's presentation will focus on total maximum daily load (TMDL) development and implementation efforts in the Tomales Bay watershed. The status of implementation of the Tomales Bay Grazing Waiver will be one of the topics discussed. To date, 102 individual grazing operations, covering 64,083 acres, are enrolled under the permit.

### **Grazing Waiver for Napa River and Sonoma Creek Watersheds:**

No update this period.

### **Vineyard Waiver for Napa River and Sonoma Creek Watersheds:**

Regional Board staff is developing a conditional waiver of WDRs for vineyards (Vineyard Waiver) in the Napa River and Sonoma Creek watersheds. The Vineyard Waiver will require that effective management practices be implemented to control discharges of pollutants from vineyard facilities and it will apply to existing vineyards, vineyard replants, and new vineyards.

The next step is completion of the CEQA analysis and preparation of a public review draft of the Vineyard Waiver for public comment in early November.

## **CENTRAL COAST REGION**

The Central Coast Water Board continues to expand outreach and communication efforts during implementation of the 2012 Agricultural Order. Our goal is to ensure that the Board and the regulated community have opportunities to understand how to implement and comply with the 2012 Agricultural Order and improve water quality.

Central Coast Water Board staff is currently engaged in the following outreach activities:

- providing status information and compliance assistance on our webpages;
- holding grower workshops throughout the region to provide education and compliance assistance;
- providing specific assistance to the Spanish speaking community with little or no access to computers;
- providing individual and phone assistance to growers and technical assistance providers about the requirements;
- coordinating with laboratories and consultants regarding monitoring and reporting requirements;
- allocating grant funds to assist small and/or limited resource growers; and
- engaging with technical assistance providers, industry and agency representatives, commodity groups, and the academic community at conferences and meetings.

As a specific example, the Central Coast Water Board is partnering with Monterey County's TechMobile and local colleges to assist growers in submitting required information to the Water Board. The TechMobile is a converted semi-trailer equipped with computer workstations to bring technology to rural communities (see photos below). Upcoming grower assistance events include:

- October 26 in Santa Maria; and
- October 30 in Greenfield.

As an additional example, the Central Coast Water Board has allocated \$10,000 in

grant funding to assist small and/or limited resource growers in obtaining free groundwater sampling and laboratory services to comply with the 2012 Agricultural Order. Growers are encouraged to contact Monterey Bay Analytical Services (MBAS) at (831) 375-6227 to decide for the free services.

Also, in the next the coming months, staff is planning to conduct site visits and inspections to learn how growers are implementing requirements and to answer questions in the field. They will also be seeking collaboration with growers and technical assistance providers to develop tools to implement requirements such as nutrient budgeting and other ways to evaluate effectiveness of management practices. We are also considering presenting staff's assessment of implementation periodically at informal meetings with growers and inviting growers to report to staff and the Board on their own perspectives about how implementation is progressing.



Above: Central Coast Water Board works with Monterey County to bring the TechMobile to Chualar to provide access to computers and assistance to local growers on October 16, 2012

## LOS ANGELES REGION

### **Compliance with the Renewed Conditional Waiver:**

The Nursery Growers Association Los Angeles County Irrigated Lands Group (NGA-ILG) and the Ventura County Agriculture Irrigated Lands Group (VCAILG) are the two discharger groups in the Los Angeles Region that have formed to comply with the Conditional Waiver. To comply with the 2010 waiver, water quality monitoring must be performed at representative sites twice during the dry season and twice during the wet season. Preliminary data must be sent to the Regional Board within 90 days of a monitoring event. Both groups completed their dry season sampling for 2012 and have submitted their preliminary data. NGA-ILG reported no dry weather runoff during their site visits. The discharger groups are currently complying with water quality management plans (WQMPs) that were developed in accordance with the previous waiver.

### **Enrollment:**

VCAILG recently updated their list of members for Regional Board staff. Staff is in the process of sending Notices of Violation (NOVs) to growers who have never enrolled in the Conditional Waiver program but have received several notices from the Regional Board to do so.

Staff has conducted meetings with NGA-ILG representatives to determine the best way to improve enrollment in Los Angeles County. A list of growers who should be regulated under the Waiver is currently being updated by Regional Board staff with the assistance of NGA-ILG. Growers who have received several notices to comply from the Water Board will be targeted for enforcement action during the fall of 2012.

Staff is currently in talks with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) to enroll the nursery growers leasing their property. Staff at DWP are planning on sending a letter out to growers to gather information on the nature of their operations to determine whether they should be enrolled in the Conditional Waiver program.

### **Education Workshops and Outreach:**

VCAILG held 5 classes for members during September and October and plans on having two more classes in November. These classes were given last year with great success and cover diverse topics like irrigation use efficiency and the timing of fertilizer applications to avoid leaching nutrients, and also included tours and vendor fairs. Staff attended one of the classes in October to answer questions from growers. NGA-ILG also organized a meeting at the South Coast Research and Extension Center in Irvine to cover irrigation use efficiency and funding opportunities for growers. Staff gave a presentation at this meeting to review requirements of the Conditional Waiver for both members and non-members of NGA-ILG. The meeting encouraged some growers who attended to contact NGA-ILG staff to enroll in the Conditional Waiver program. Since renewal of the waiver, both VCAILG and NGA-ILG have provided numerous opportunities for their members to receive all eight hours of education credit required by the Conditional Waiver.

**Grant Management:**

Staff continues to manage a Clean Water Act section 319(h) grant for grower education and outreach to implement BMPs in the Calleguas Creek and Santa Clara River Watersheds. Staff is working with the grantee to ensure that the grant effectively implements the renewed Los Angeles Region Conditional Waiver for Irrigated Lands, and specifically implements BMPs according to VCAILG's WQMP.

Staff is overseeing a Proposition 84 grant for a mobile irrigation laboratory to improve irrigation efficiency on farms in Ventura County (Grant Agreement No. 10-417-554). The grantee is the Ventura County Resource Conservation District (RCD). Under the grant, RCD staff travels to farms, evaluates irrigation efficiency, recommends improvements, and provides cost share funding to implement the recommended improvements. The goal of the grant is to reduce dry-weather loading of agriculture-related pollutants.

Staff continues to manage a Clean Water Act section 319(h) grant was executed for the purpose of identifying the contribution of and reducing metal loadings from nurseries and other irrigated agricultural lands in the San Gabriel River Watershed (Grant Agreement No. 11-098-554). The grantee is the Council for Watershed Health (CWH). The CWH has reported the status of their project in bi-monthly meetings with Regional Board staff and other stakeholders and has recently identified priority locations for BMP implementation along the San Gabriel River. They also recently developed a draft Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), currently being reviewed by staff. Following outreach to the priority locations, the CWH will implement procedural BMPs at these locations, evaluate BMP effectiveness, and submit an Implementation Recommendation Report to Regional Board staff.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION**

Colorado River Basin Regional Water Board staff has prepared draft Board Order R7-2012-0047, a proposed Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for agricultural wastewater discharges and discharges of wastes from drain operation and maintenance activities within the Palo Verde Valley and Mesa areas in Riverside and Imperial Counties. The Regional Water Board adopted the Conditional Waiver during a public hearing on September 20, 2012 in Palm Desert. In a letter dated October 15, 2012, the Palo Verde Irrigation District General Manager notified the Regional Water Board Executive Officer that it intends "to develop and implement a complete Coalition Group Compliance Program and obtain coverage under this Conditional Waiver for its group's Agricultural Dischargers, their drain operation and maintenance (O&M) activities (if any), and PVID's drain O&M activities."

Regional Water Board staff has contacted the Bard Water District in Imperial County to initiate a Conditional Waiver of WDRs for this area across the Colorado River from Yuma, Arizona. A CEQA scoping meeting was held on September 25, 2012 in

Winterhaven, CA. A Board Order for the Bard Valley Conditional Waiver will be scheduled for consideration for adoption in early 2013. Staff will work with interested parties in Coachella Valley to develop a Conditional Waiver of WDRs for consideration for adoption in late 2013. A Conditional Waiver for the Imperial Valley is targeted for consideration for adoption in 2014.

## **SANTA ANA REGION**

Santa Ana Regional Water Board staff is proposing that all operators of irrigated and dry-farmed lands over 10 acres, subject to inundation by flooding, and of other agricultural operations not already regulated by the Regional Board, enroll in a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements. Regional Board staff is calling this the Conditional Waiver (of waste discharge requirements) for Agricultural Discharges (CWAD). Regional Board staff proposes that the CWAD program will be developed and implemented watershed-based phased approach. The first phase of this program is being developed for waste discharges from agricultural operations located in the San Jacinto, Salt Creek and Lake Elsinore Watersheds. The Regional Board adopted separate nutrient Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Canyon Lake and Lake Elsinore. The CWAD program is being designed to be part of the implementation program for these TMDLs.

On September 10, 2012, Regional Board staff conducted a comprehensive tour of the CWAD program watershed area (San Jacinto River Watershed) to the US- EPA and State Board Non-point source staff, in which different areas of various agricultural activities in the region were observed and inspected, followed by a meeting with the local stake-holders' coalition group (with Pat Boldt and Bruce Scott of Western Riverside County Agricultural Coalition-WRCAC), and a boat tour of the Canyon Lake (a drinking water Lake in the CWAD program watershed area).

Regional Board staff has developed a "CWAD Program Advisory Group" which consists of about 20 members including agricultural farmers, local growers, industry groups, and major stakeholders. The last CWAD advisory group meeting was held on August 16, 2012. The major topics of discussion were:

- CWAD Program updates and discussions on the revised CWAD Program schedule;
- General Enforcement Mechanism and the group members concerns on excessive and illegal manure application in the San Jacinto River Watershed area, and discharge of reclaimed water usage as crop irrigation in the project watershed areas were discussed;
- Some specific issues related to excessive manure dumping in view of the nutrient management and high TDS concentration in the project groundwater basin were discussed;
- Mr. Johnny Gonzales from State Water Resources Control Board, Sacramento gave a presentation on ag. related water quality projects under National Water Quality Initiative program, which drew much interest from the

group members;

- Internal draft of the agricultural conditional waiver and draft CEQA Neg. Dec. is currently circulating in-house for edits, comments and revisions. The first round of in-house comments has been completed;
- Staff is presently working on the Ag. Waiver staff report; and
- Regional board staff attends WRCAC (Western Riverside County Ag. Coalition) monthly technical committee meeting regularly. WRCAC is a major stakeholder in CWAD program.

Next scheduled CWAD advisory group meeting is scheduled on Thursday, November 15, 2012 at Riverside County Farm Bureau office. Board staff is currently in process of working on the agenda, presentations, and action items to be presented in the next meeting.

### **SAN DIEGO REGION**

No report was submitted for this time period.