

IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE

May 2015

This month's ILRP report provides an update on the activities of the North Coast, San Francisco, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Lahontan, Colorado River Basin, Santa Ana, and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board ILRPs through May 2015. Future monthly reports will alternately present status of the Central Valley Regional Water Board ILRP one month, and the other Regional Water Board ILRPs the alternate month. Current and past ILRP program monthly reports can be found on the [State Water Board Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program](#) website.

STATE WATER BOARD

On May 6, 2015, Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) staff participated in a meeting with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) staff regarding the Healthy Soils Initiative regarding "compost credits" as part of the ILRP. CDFA is taking the lead in the Healthy Soils Initiative under its existing authority provided by the Environmental Farming Act, in coordination, with Governor's Office, Water Boards, Air Resources Board, CalRecycle, Department of Conservation, Department of Pesticide Regulation, and Department of Water Resources.

On May 6, 2015, ILRP staff attended a California Association of Pest Control Advisers (CAPCA)/California Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) meeting to welcome the new CAPCA CEO Gary Schultz and bid farewell to the outgoing CEO Terry Stark. Also discussed was enhancing the partnership between the Water Boards and CAPCA/CCA.

On May 7, 2015, ILRP staff participated the quarterly meeting hosted by the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE). Issues discussed included drought Impact on various water use sectors and developing a collaborative approach to finding drought solutions.

On May 8, 2015, ILRP staff participated in the Hartnell Western Food Safety Summit. Discussions and presentations focused on water quality and food safety co-management.

On May 11, 2015 ILRP staff participated in a meeting with CDFA to discuss the direction and options for dairy digester policy and potential incentives. Also discussed were the dairy industries potential concerns and suggestions to help make dairy digesters more viable.

On May 12, 2015, ILRP staff participated in a meeting with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff to discuss formalizing our agencies partnership to assist growers meet regulatory requirements and to initiate discussions on developing joint farm water quality demonstration projects in targeted sub-

watersheds.

On May 12 and 13, 2015, ILRP staff participated in a California Association of Sanitary Agency (CASA) biosolids technology seminar/workshop. The seminar/workshop was held at the Hyperion Wastewater Treatment Plant in Los Angeles. The focus of the seminars was on innovative biosolids treatment technology and renewable energy production and utilization, with the intent of introducing attendees to a host of cutting-edge innovative technology for further evaluation. Speakers provided information on new technologies, operating experience and performance data, and the status of ongoing research if not yet at full scale. Speakers included both private technology providers and public agencies employing or researching them. USEPA National Biosolids Coordinator from Washington DC provided a national regulatory and policy update. ILRP staff provided an update on the State Water Boards Biosolids Program and General Order.

On May 14, 2015, ILRP staff participated in the quarterly Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) Board of Directors meeting. An area of discussion was how to best use the CCA to assist growers in meeting regulatory requirements related to nitrogen mass-balancing as required by the ILRP. Also discussed was adding a regulatory element to the CCA NMP training criteria. Other CCA BOD business was discussed.

On May 19, 2015, ILRP staff participated in a Dairy/Confined Animal Feeding roundtable. Topics discussed included potential money and incentives from the California Air Board for dairies to reduce ammonia emissions as part of the Short-Lived Climate Pollutant project.

On May 21, 2015, ILRP staff participated in a meeting with CalRecycle Organics Work Group. Topics of discussion included Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds, Organics Grants Updates, Healthy Soils Science Panel Discussion, AB 1826 Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling, SB 1122 Renewable Bioenergy Projects Implementation, Compost Regulation Update, and other organics/solid waste legislation.

NORTH COAST REGION

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) staff continue to develop the Agricultural Lands Discharge Program, focusing on a series of targeted permits specific to agricultural commodities or geographic areas. An update on several efforts follows.

Agricultural Lands Discharges in the Tule Lake Basin:

Regional Water Board staff continue to write a working draft permit to share with the Advisory Group in July of 2015. Regional Water Board staff will then incorporate input from stakeholders and develop documents to satisfy the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The draft permit and CEQA documentation will be distributed for

public review and comment in the fall of 2015. The Regional Water Board hearing to consider adopting the permit is planned for mid-2016. Regional Water Board staff met with representatives of the growers, technical agencies, and the irrigation district in the Tule Lake area in April 2015. The meeting was at the request of growers to understand progress in developing the discharge permit.

Easter Lily Bulb Cultivation:

Regional Water Board staff are sampling tributaries in the Smith River Plain to screen for the presence of agricultural pollutants and toxicity. Regional Water Board staff recently completed two wet weather sampling rounds and hope to conduct a final round of wet weather sampling by June 2015. Regional Water Board staff also plan to conduct water quality testing on groundwater, starting in 2015. A fact sheet was released in March to provide an update on permitting and monitoring efforts. Regional Water Board staff intend to bring the lily bulb cultivation discharge permit for Board consideration in 2017, after adoption of the Tule Lake agricultural lands discharge permit.

Vineyards & Orchards:

Regional Water Board staff are coordinating with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 2) on their development of a discharge permit for vineyards in the Sonoma Creek and Napa River watersheds, with the intent of being as consistent as possible between the regions. Regional Water Board staff from Regions 1 and 2 met in April 2015 to continue coordination as Region 2 nears completion of their vineyard permit. Regional Water Board staff are also working with third party certification programs to incorporate water quality requirements that are consistent with likely future permit requirements. Regional Water Board met with representatives of the Code of Sustainable Wine Growing in April 2015 to tour vineyards and look at certifiable management practices. Region 1 staff will begin drafting a permit for discharges from vineyards and orchards after the adoption of the other two Agricultural Lands Discharge Program permits.

Discharges from Marijuana Cultivation

Regional Water Board staff released the public review draft of the Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements and General Water Quality Certification for Discharges of Waste Resulting from Marijuana Cultivation and Associated Activities or Operations with Similar Environmental Effects in the North Coast Region. The Regional Water Board hearing scheduled for August 2015.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

Tentative Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Existing Dairies:

Regional Water Board staff publicly noticed a Tentative Waiver that would renew a 2003 Conditional Waiver that expired in 2008. Regional Water Board staff expects to bring the revised Tentative Order before our Board for consideration of adoption at their June 10, 2015 hearing.

The Tentative Waiver expands upon the 2003 Waiver and incorporates Basin Plan Total Maximum Daily Loads Implementation Plans. Significant revisions include requirements for a) management of grazing lands to protect water quality for dairies that maintain pasture-based grazing; b) management of manure and liquid waste applications to land through the preparation and implementation of site-specific nutrient management plans; c) sampling and analysis of groundwater wells and near-facility surface waters, and d) management of waste water generated from on-site food processing (such as cheese).

Vineyard WDRs Program Development:

Regional Water Board staff continue to prepare an environmental impact report that evaluates potential environmental impacts from implementing the Vineyard WDRs and continue to work on the draft general WDRs.

In April 2015, staff from the North Coast and San Francisco Bay Regional Boards met with Board members to brief them on the status of our respective vineyard permitting efforts. At the meeting, Regional Water Board staff described how our respective efforts would be coordinated, outlined the significant differences between the two programs, and talked about timelines for completion of a public release draft of the WDRs and EIR.

In late April 2015, Regional Water Board staff attended a field trip hosted by a potential third-party program to review their farm planning templates in field setting. Regional Water Board staff goal is to foster the development of several third-party programs to assist farmers with farm planning assessments, best management practice implementation, and annual reporting.

Grazing Waiver Program:

In April 2015, Regional Water Board staff began implementing an inspection program to assess enrollee compliance with conditional waivers of WDRs for rangeland grazing operations. Regional Water Board staff inspected 8 ranches in the Tomales Bay watershed over this reporting period.

CENTRAL COAST REGION

ILRP Activities at a Glance:

Growers are required to update their Annual Compliance Form by October 1st of each year. The annual compliance form includes a section where growers can report on the management practices they are implementing, assessment of those practices, and measured outcomes of implemented practices. The reporting includes areas of nutrient management, irrigation management, sediment management and pesticide management. Regional Water Board staff has completed an assessment of the reporting and will present results to the Central Coast Water Board on May 28, 2015.

Many growers are reporting implementation of best management practices, but of those

reporting, fewer report assessment of the practices implemented, and fewer yet report measuring the outcome of the implemented practice. Growers are in the beginning phases of reporting and tracking and we anticipate increased participation in implementation, assessment, and outcome tracking in the future. The 2015 reporting will serve as a baseline for the future.

ILRP Groundwater Activities at a Glance:

As of April 15, 2015, approximately 3476 groundwater wells have been sampled in compliance with the Agricultural Order and associated Monitoring and Reporting Programs (MRPs). Of the 3476 total groundwater wells sampled, 1463 are domestic wells and 2013 are irrigation wells.

Approximately 25% of the groundwater wells sampled in the Central Coast Region for the ILRP exceed the drinking water standard for nitrate, including both domestic drinking water wells and irrigation wells (approximately 884 total wells). Of these, approximately 350 domestic drinking water wells sampled indicated an exceedance of the drinking water standard (approximately 24% of domestic drinking water wells sampled).

In cases where a domestic drinking water well exceeds the drinking water standard, the Water Board or the Central Coast Groundwater Coalition (CCGC) issues a drinking water notification letter to growers and landowners to ensure well users are aware of the public health risks associated with nitrate impacts to drinking water.

Currently, the Central Coast Water Board is evaluating compliance with the individual and cooperative groundwater monitoring requirements. In cases where growers have not complied with groundwater monitoring, the Central Coast Water Board is in the process of sending out notices of violation.

All ILRP groundwater data for the Central Coast Region is managed in the Water Board's GeoTracker data management system, consistent with other regulatory programs. All ILRP groundwater monitoring data is displayed to the public in GeoTracker GAMA, except for a small subset of groundwater wells sampled by the CCGC that is not yet displayed in order to comply with the approved work plans for CCGC. CCGC data will be displayed to the public using GeoTracker GAMA on March 15, 2016. Currently, the public can get a copy of CCGC data by submitting a Public Records Act Request to the Water Board. If interested parties wish to evaluate the specific characteristics of a CCGC monitoring result or relate the CCGC data to an individual farm or ranch, they must also use the relational key provided to the Water Board by CCGC.

On March 23, 2015, CCGC petitioned the State Water Board to review the Central Coast Water Board Executive Officer's decision not to approve the use of groundwater nitrate concentration contour maps in lieu of displaying the actual data on GeoTracker.

LOS ANGELES REGION

No report submitted for this month.

LAHONTAN REGION

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) staff allocated staff efforts during the April/May reporting period on administrative tasks supporting the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

Water Board Staff prepared and submitted to State Water Board staff a BCP concept paper for FY 2016/2017.

Water Board Staff attended the April ILRP Round Table meeting in San Luis Obispo.

Water Board Staff developed a Lahontan Water Board Executive Officer Report item for the Water Board's May 13-14, 2015 Board Meeting Agenda packages. The item discussed the extent of irrigated agriculture in the Lahontan Region, regulatory options available to the Water Board and being used by other Water Boards, and the activities involved with developing an Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program for the Lahontan Region.

Water Board staff also spent significant time working on contaminated groundwater issues associated with irrigated agricultural areas and irrigated land areas associated with dairies.

Finalized Hinkley Area residential well sampling. In process of finalizing a data summary report.

Met with Newberry Springs Area residents along with other agencies regarding groundwater impact concerns from dairies and irrigated agriculture.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION

Colorado River Basin Water Board staff continues to implement four Conditional Waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements for agricultural discharges. Most agricultural areas (99.7%) in the region are regulated by Conditional Waivers.

The Colorado River Basin Water Board adopted a Conditional Waiver of WDRs for agricultural wastewater discharges within the Palo Verde Valley in Riverside and Imperial Counties (Board Order R7-2012-0047) on September 20, 2012. This Conditional Waiver affects over 130,000 acres in eastern Riverside County and northeastern Imperial County. The responsible parties include individual farmers, and the Palo Verde Irrigation District (PVID). Implementation has begun with PVID forming

the Palo Verde Outfall Coalition (PVOC), a group that represents landowners and farmers regulated by the Conditional Waiver. According to the PVOC group, membership is at over 99%. The PVOC group's water quality monitoring program began in November 2013, and they submitted their first Annual Monitoring Report in March 2014. PVOC submitted their second Annual Monitoring Report in March 2015 to the Colorado River Basin Water Board. The PVOC group will continue with the Group Compliance Program, and to submit quarterly reports of water quality sample results.

In February 2015 Colorado River Basin Water Board staff met with PVOC staff to meet the new PVID management team and discuss implementation of the Conditional Waiver. Jose Angel suggested that Water Board staff and PVOC staff meet quarterly to discuss the problems that the district is experiencing in implementing PVOC, and what problems the coalition staff are hearing from members (i.e., to discuss what works and what is not working as envisioned). The date for the first meeting is planned for May-June. PVOC staff and Regional Water Board staff are also planning to invite the Public (coalition members) to attend a yearly forum to express their concerns with or suggestions about the Conditional Waiver and the Coalition Program. This will be in June; no specific date was decided.

The Colorado River Basin Water Board adopted a Conditional Waiver of WDRs for agricultural wastewater discharges originating within the Bard Unit of Reservation Division (Board Order R7- 2013-0002) on January 17, 2013. This Conditional Waiver affects approximately 6,688 acres of farmland along the Colorado River near Yuma, Arizona. The responsible parties include individual farmers, and the Bard Water District (BWD). Implementation has begun with BWD forming the Bard Unit Coalition Group (BUCG), a nonprofit organization that represents landowners and farmers regulated by the Conditional Waiver. Their Compliance Program and Monitoring and Report Program Plan were approved by our Executive Officer in November 2014. The BUCG sent notice that they began implementing their Compliance Program in December 2014. They are currently accepting membership into their Compliance Program. According to the BUCG group, membership is at over 99%. The next step will be for the BUCG to submit coalition member information.

In January 2015 a draft Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) was submitted by BUCG to Colorado River Basin Water Board staff. The draft QAPP was later revised and resubmitted on May 8, 2015. It was approved by our Executive Officer on May 11, 2015. The next step will be for the BUCG to begin monitoring.

The Colorado River Basin Water Board adopted a Conditional Waiver of WDRs for agricultural dischargers in the Coachella Valley (Order No. R7-2014-0046) on June 26, 2014. A Monitoring and Reporting Program Plan was adopted with the Conditional Waiver. This Conditional Waiver affects about 60,000 acres of farmland in central Riverside County. The responsible parties include individual farmers, the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) and the Coachella Valley Irrigated Lands Coalition (CVILC). Implementation has begun. The CVILC, a nonprofit organization, has partnered with CVWD to represent landowners and farmers regulated by the

Conditional Waiver. The CVILC group will be responsible for collecting/reporting coalition membership information, fee collection, and the monitoring/reporting program. Our Executive Officer approved their Compliance Program Plan in April 2015.

On April 30, 2015 the CVILC sent notice that they began implementing their Compliance Program. They are currently accepting membership into their Compliance Program and submitted a list of coalition member information to date.

Also, on April 30, 2015 the CVILC submitted a draft Quality Assurance Project Plan. Colorado River Basin staff are reviewing the draft QAPP. Once the QAPP is approved by our Executive Officer, the next step will be for the CVILC to begin monitoring.

The Colorado River Basin Water Board adopted a Conditional Waiver of WDRs for agricultural dischargers in the Imperial Valley (Order No. R7-2015-0008) on January 15, 2015. This Conditional Waiver affects over 450,000 acres of irrigated lands in the Imperial Valley near the International Boundary with Mexico. The interested parties include individual farmers, the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Imperial County Farm Bureau (ICFB). The ICFB currently manages a Voluntary TMDL Compliance Program and plan to transition this into a Coalition Group Compliance Program. The IID and ICFB have agreed to work together to form a joint Coalition Group Compliance Program.

In March 2015 the IID Board of Directors voted unanimously in favor of its staff's recommendation to co-chair with the Imperial County Farm Bureau the proposed IID-ICFB Coalition Group to implement the Conditional Waiver. The IID-ICFB sent Colorado River Basin Water Board a joint Notice of Intent to implement a Coalition Group Compliance Program. The next steps are for IID-ICFB to prepare a Group Compliance Program Plan and form a Technical Management Committee.

Also, in March 2015 IID sent Colorado River Basin Water Board their proposed Selenium Study work plan for review and approval. The work plan was approved by our Executive Officer on March 30, 2015. The next step is for the IID to prepare a Quality Assurance Project Plan for the study.

On May 19-21, 2015, the ICFB held their annual TMDL drain-shed meetings. Colorado River Basin Water Board staff participated in the five meetings and discussed elements of the Conditional Waiver.

SANTA ANA REGION

Latest drafts of CWAD documents have been revised to call for mitigation and offset measures for total dissolved solids (TDS) and Nitrogen impacts to groundwater, and to address concerns regarding land application of mulch or untreated green waste on dry, non-irrigated farmland as "soil amendment." The Draft Staff Report and Order have been revised to include recommendations from the CWAD Advisory Group and

have been posted on the program webpage for public review.

Draft CEQA Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for the CWAD has now been completed and mailed to the State Clearinghouse for distribution and for public commenting. On June 19, 2015, the Santa Ana Regional Board will hold a public hearing to consider adoption of Mitigated Negative Declaration for implementation of the proposed conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for discharges from agriculture operations in the San Jacinto watershed to receiving waters.

The [Initial Study proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, draft order, and staff report](#) have been posted on the Regional Board's website.

Initial implementation will be characterized by enrolling at least 50 percent (40-50 operations) of known agricultural operations who meet enrollment criteria in the conditional waiver. The objective for FY 2015-2016 is to adopt and begin implementing the conditional waiver by focusing on agricultural operations in the Upper San Jacinto River watershed.

The desired outcome of the conditional waiver is to measurably reduce NPS pollution, principally Nitrogen and TDS loadings to surface and ground waters from agricultural operations in San Jacinto River Watershed. Based on an estimate of 100 potentially eligible enrollees, the program will seek to attain at least 20 percent enrollment by September 2015.

SAN DIEGO REGION

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board) is developing general waste discharge requirements (WDRs), referred to as the 'Ag Order', and the associated California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation for consideration for adoption by the San Diego Water Board in late 2015.

San Diego Water Board's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) Team:

A multi-branch team has been assembled to benefit from the collective knowledge, skills, and experience needed to draft the Ag Order. Weekly meetings are conducted to discuss the various issues and to ensure that the schedule for Ag Order development is met.

Status of Ag Order Development:

The San Diego Water Board continues working on a draft of the Ag Order with plans to release an administrative draft of the Ag Order in summer 2015.

Stakeholder/Public Outreach:

Stakeholder meetings were conducted in January and February 2014. Another series

of stakeholder meetings are scheduled for the summer of 2015.