

IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE

April 2017

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program update provides a summary of significant activities of State Water Board and North Coast, San Francisco Bay, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Colorado River, Santa Ana, and San Diego Water Boards' staff. Next month's report will present activities of the Central Valley Water Board's Program.

STATE WATER BOARD

On April 3, 2017, Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program staff (staff) participated in a Farm Food Safety Conservation Network quarterly steering committee conference call meeting. Topics of discussion included Food Safety and Water Quality Co-management Survey feedback, Farm Food Safety Conservation Network Charter modifications, regular updates, and the [Agriculture Water Quality Alliance website](#).

On April 5, 2017, staff participated in a biochar research steering committee meeting for the Governor's Office of Research and Planning. Several research papers were reviewed for consideration of future funding. Research papers are available upon request.

On April 6, 2017, staff participated in a California Agricultural Partnership Forum meeting with staff from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 9, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to discuss a "Team Concept" to promote and foster wide participation and use of Natural Resources Conservation Services conservation plans and practices. Through this concept, local Resource Conservation Districts and other third-party certification groups help growers/producers understand and implement management practices to help protect water quality in accordance with Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program discharge permit requirements.

On April 13, 2017, staff participated in a California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment meeting to discuss biomass issues and strategies to support biomass as a key renewable in California. Topics included the need to develop a cohesive statewide agenda for biomass energy production; research to properly value and account for ancillary benefits; options for incentivization; and sector-specific, regionally based analysis and support for biomass production and infrastructure.

On April 14, 2017, staff attended a Northern California Water Association meeting to discuss water quality protection on agricultural lands from the wide use of flood planes in the Central Valley.

On April 18-20, 2017, staff attended a Natural Resources Conservation Services

training on the potential to develop and use conservation plans as a tool to assist growers comply with Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program requirements and to enhance the partnership between our agencies.

On April 20, 2017, staff participated in a conference call with the California Bioresources Alliance to discuss composting of digestates. Topics focused on the addition of moisture and nutrients in specified amounts for the purpose of creating composts for different uses, developing quality standards for these different composts, tailoring composts to specific uses, and the logistics of collocating digesters and compost operations. Additional discussion focused on the need to determine optimum nitrogen application rates, the best models for land application of nutrients, and the stigma associated with biosolids compost by some growers.

On April 27, 2017, staff participated in the quarterly Certified Crop Adviser Board of Directors meeting held at the Farm Bureau office in Sacramento. Items of interest on the agenda included liability issues, nutrient management plan certification criteria, assessment of the last California Association of Pest Control Advisers and Certified Crop Adviser exam results.

NORTH COAST REGION

At the March 2017 North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board meeting, staff presented an update on the Agricultural Lands Discharge Program. The update included staff's proposed strategy and priorities for developing future agricultural discharge permits in the Region. The Regional Water Board agreed with the staff proposal to prioritize the development of a Regionwide vineyard and orchard discharge permit. Staff are currently developing an administrative draft permit internally and plan to get input from an existing Stakeholder Advisory Group once the draft is ready for review.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

On April 12, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board held an information workshop on proposed General Waste Discharge Requirements (General Permit) that would implement the vineyard sediment discharge category identified in the Board's sediment total maximum daily loads for the Napa River and Sonoma Creek watersheds. The workshop provided an opportunity for Board staff to present the requirements of, and recommended changes to, the General Permit, and for stakeholders to provide testimony on the General Permit directly to the Regional Water Board. A staff report was prepared for the workshop that summarizes the overarching comments received on the General Permit, and recommended changes to it. The [staff report, General Permit, and comment letters](#) can be found on the Regional Board website.

CENTRAL COAST REGION

On March 8, 2017, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board approved a new Agricultural Order, referred to as Ag Order 3.0. The new order is the third waiver regulating agricultural discharges in the Central Coast Region. Ag Order 3.0 is like its predecessor Ag Order 2.0; however, Ag Order 3.0 expanded the requirement for total nitrogen applied to include all ranches growing crops with a high risk of loading nitrogen to groundwater, such as lettuce, spinach, broccoli, etc. As a result, the requirement is now applicable to about 1,700 ranches, an increase from 600 ranches covered by Ag Order 2.0. Surface water monitoring was incorporated for the neonicotinoid class of pesticides along with toxicity monitoring using *Chironomus spp.*, which are sensitive to neonicotinoids. Neonicotinoid and pyrethroid use have dramatically increased over the past few years. The Executive Officer recently approved two coalitions fulfilling groundwater monitoring requirements on behalf of growers; growers also have an option of complying individually. A surface water monitoring coalition will continue to fulfill surface receiving water monitoring requirements on behalf of growers. Ag Order 3.0 is a waiver with a maximum term of three years, as such, staff are already working on Ag Order 4.0. Additionally, Ag Order 4.0 is anticipated to incorporate elements of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition petition order and rulings from a civil case filed by the Monterey Coastkeeper against the State Board's order that modified Ag Order 2.0; this case is in appeal.

LOS ANGELES REGION

On March 8, 2017, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board staff sent to Ventura County growers 731 Notices of Violation letters for failure to enroll in Conditional Waiver, Order No. R4-2016-0143, adopted on April 14, 2016. The Los Angeles Regional Board staff are in the process of preparing notices to growers in Los Angeles County required to re-enroll in the Conditional Waiver. Currently Los Angeles Regional Board staff are responding to calls and emails regarding the Notice of Violation letters, scheduling inspections, and following up on exemption requests.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION

In March 2017, the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board staff received 2016 annual reports from coalition groups in the Palo Verde Valley, Bard Unit, Coachella Valley, and Imperial Valley. The annual reports include coalition membership information, group management practices, and water quality data. Staff are reviewing the reports.

On April 4, 2017, Colorado River Basin Water Board staff issued a Notice of Non-

Compliance to the Imperial Irrigation District for failure to submit a Quality Assurance Project Plan for a selenium study, a requirement of the Imperial Valley Agricultural Waiver. On April 5, 2017, staff held a Quarterly Technical Management Committee meeting with the Imperial Irrigation District- Imperial County Farm Bureau Coalition to discuss the implementation of the Imperial Valley Agricultural Waiver.

Colorado River Basin Water Board staff are continuing with the development of General Waste Discharge Requirements to replace the Conditional Waiver for the Palo Verde Valley. A draft of the proposed General Order and supporting environmental documents have been reviewed by the Regional Water Board's management team and are being revised to reflect comments.

SANTA ANA REGION

The Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board's Lake Elsinore and Canyon Lake nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (Order No. R8-2004-0037) allocates a portion of the nitrogen and phosphorus loads to agriculture, and the Regional Water Board's conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for San Jacinto River agricultural operations Order No. R8-2016- 0003 is the primary mechanism directing compliance of the San Jacinto River Watershed agricultural operations. The Total Maximum Daily Load is undergoing a technical evaluation to possibly establish revised or new allocations. Regional Water Board staff are working with agricultural coalition representatives as taskforce members. Several reports are being distributed to the Total Maximum Daily Load taskforce that require comment and response. During January and February 2017, Regional Water Board staff started to review information to gain better understanding of the technical components of the Conditional Waiver and become engaged in the Total Maximum Daily Load revision.

SAN DIEGO REGION

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board Commercial Agriculture Regulatory Program continues to conduct outreach activities to encourage enrollment in 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 (Third-Party General Order) or 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 (Individual General Order). The deadline for enrollment under either the Third-Party General Order or the Individual General Order (collectively referred to as the General Agricultural Orders) is August 7, 2017.

In order to leverage limited resources, the San Diego Water Board continues to work collaboratively with other interested entities to educate the operators and owners of Commercial Agricultural Operations in the San Diego Region.

Since the previous report, the San Diego Water Board and the State Water Board's Office of Public Participation developed a Notification of Enrollment Deadline (Notification) for distribution to commercial agricultural operations in the San Diego Region reminding them of the upcoming deadline to enroll under one of the General Agricultural Orders. The San Diego Water Board has posted the Notification on its webpage and distributed the Notification by email to those on the Commercial Agriculture email list.

Additionally, the San Diego Farm Bureau mailed letters to 368 current Farm Bureau members who are not members of San Diego Region Irrigated Lands Group (SDRILG), a designated Third-Party Group administrator under the Third-Party General Order, providing notice of the August 7, 2017 deadline to enroll under the General Agricultural Orders and information on how to comply.

The San Diego Farm Bureau included a multi-page article on the General Agricultural Orders in the winter 2017 edition of *San Diego Grown*. *San Diego Grown* is the quarterly newsletter of the San Diego Farm Bureau that has over 5,000 dues-paying members.

Since the previous update, the Eastern Municipal Water District added a link to the Notification on its webpage.

Additionally, the City of Escondido Utilities department mailed letters to its Agricultural Water Rate customers providing them with a copy of the Notification and information on how to comply with the General Agricultural Orders.

The Yuima Municipal Water District mailed a newsletter with information on the enrollment deadline to its customers, of which 97% are agricultural operations.

Finally, the San Diego County Department of Agriculture, Weights & Measures plans to provide notice of the enrollment deadline as part of their inspections of the 433-commercial nursery/greenhouse facilities located within the unincorporated areas of San Diego County.