

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS

ORDER WR-DWR-2024-0026

ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

In the Matter of Failure to File Annual Water Diversion and Use Report
for the 2022 through 2023 Reporting Year

Amerjit S Bhatti

Water Right A015518

Face Value of Diversion: 1824.8 Acre-Feet per Year
Valley-American Watershed, Sutter County

THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR¹ FINDS AS FOLLOWS:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This matter comes before the Deputy Director of the State Water Resources Control Board's ("State Water Board") Division of Water Rights ("Division") following settlement negotiations regarding the alleged violation of California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Chapter 2.7, Article 2, section 929 ("Water Diversion and Use Report Regulations"), as described in an Administrative Civil Liability Complaint ("Complaint") dated July 2, 2024. In accordance with the attached Acceptance of Settlement Offer and Waiver of Right to Hearing and Reconsideration ("Acceptance and Waiver"), the Division's Prosecution Team ("Prosecution Team") and Amerjit S Bhatti ("Respondent") have agreed to settle this matter in lieu of proceeding to a hearing. The Respondent has also waived their right to request reconsideration of an order by the State Water Board resolving the violations alleged in the Complaint.

¹ State Water Board Resolution 2012-0061 delegates authority to the Executive Director to "issue a decision or order by settlement of the Parties under Government Code section 11415.60." The Executive Director further delegated the authority to issue a decision or order by settlement of the parties under the Government Code when no hearing has been requested to the Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights by memorandum dated April 3, 2023.

The Prosecution Team and the Respondent are collectively referred to as the Parties. The issuance of a decision or order pursuant to a settlement agreement is authorized under Government Code section 11415.60.

2.0 BACKGROUND

1. Title 23, Chapter 2.7, Article 2, section 929 of the California Code of Regulations states that water right holders shall file reports with the State Water Resources Control Board annually, before February 1, detailing the amount of water diverted and used within the prior twelve-month reporting period (“Annual Water Diversion and Use Report”).²
2. Title 23, Chapter 2.7, Article 2, section 908 of the California Code of Regulations states, “Failure to meet the requirements of this chapter is a violation subject to civil liability of up to \$500 per day pursuant to Water Code section 1846.”
3. Water Right A015518 has a face value of 1824.8 acre-feet per year as declared in the license issued on June 5, 1967.
4. The Respondent failed to file their Annual Water Diversion and Use Report for the subject water right before the required deadline of February 1, 2024.
5. On July 2, 2024, the Division issued the Respondent an Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (ACLC). The ACLC alleged the Respondent failed to file the Annual Water Diversion and Use Report for the 2022-2023 water year (October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023).
6. At the time of settlement, respondent had not requested a hearing within 20 days of receipt of the ACLC, in accordance with Water Code section 1055, subdivision (b).

3.0 SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

7. Concurrent with issuing the ACLC to the Respondent, the Division also extended a settlement offer for a reduced fine of \$800 provided the Respondent submitted the past due report.
8. Respondent signed and accepted the settlement offer on July 23, 2024.
9. Respondent has submitted the one past due report.

² Recent regulatory changes amended Annual Water Diversion and Use Report deadlines. Effective January 31, 2023, the Office of Administrative Law approved regulatory changes adopted by the State Water Board that, among other things, updates reporting deadlines in sections 925 and 929 of title 23 of the California Code of Regulations.

10. Water Code section 1055.3 states that when determining the appropriate amount of civil liability to be imposed, the State Water Board shall take into consideration all relevant circumstances, including but not limited to the extent of the harm caused by the violation, the nature and persistence of the violation, the length of time over which the violation occurs, and the corrective actions, if any, taken by the violator.
11. In this case, the Respondent did engage in corrective action and ultimately submitted the outstanding report on July 17, 2024. The Prosecution Team and the Respondent agreed to settle the ACLC's allegations for an amount of \$800. In consideration of all relevant circumstances, the State Water Board, through the Deputy Director, has determined this an appropriate proposed penalty.

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The attached Complaint and Acceptance and Waiver are fully incorporated herein and made part of this Order.
2. In adopting this Order, the State Water Board, or its delegee, has considered all relevant circumstances, including those specifically identified in the Complaint pursuant to Water Code section 1055.3.
3. Respondent shall remit, within 30 days of the date of this Order, a check or money order payment of the full settlement amount of \$800 to:

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
Attn: Enforcement Section
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Or submit an online payment with a credit or debit card by the options provided on the State Water Board webpage, https://waterboards.ca.gov/make_a_payment/.

4. Fulfillment of the Respondent's obligations under this Order constitutes full and final satisfaction of liability for the alleged violation(s) specifically identified in this Order. The State Water Board reserves the right to take further enforcement action for any future violations.
5. Should Respondent fail to remit the full settlement amount of \$800 within 30 days of the date of this Order, the Respondent shall be considered in violation of the terms of this agreement. As such, the State Water Board is authorized by California Water Code section 1055.4 to recover the full liability amount proposed under the ACLC or refer this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for further enforcement action.

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD



*Erik Ekdahl, Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights*

Dated: August 23, 2024