

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Central Valley Region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**CENTRAL VALLEY WATER BOARD RENEWS
IRRIGATED LANDS CONDITIONAL WAIVERS FOR SIX MONTHS**

SACRAMENTO - California's first-in-the-nation regulatory program to reduce water pollution from agricultural runoff was renewed for six months at Monday's Central valley Regional Water Board meeting.

By a vote of 4-to-3 (with two members recused) the Board renewed the Irrigated Lands Conditional waiver, set to expire in December 31, 2005, for six months. The Board will revisit the issue at its June 2006 Board meeting.

In 2002, the Regional Water Board required farmers throughout the Central Valley to monitor discharges to waterways and to change farming practices to prevent pollution and improve water quality. The irrigated land program was the result of changes in the California Water Code set by the Legislature in 1999.

During the last three years, growers in the Central Valley have been working to meet these water quality regulations.

The California Water Code allows the Water Boards to issue conditional waivers instead of permits known as "waste discharge requirements." The Conditional Waivers allow growers to be waived from the requirement of getting a discharge permit by fulfilling the monitoring, reporting requirements and carrying out management measures collectively as a coalition group or as an individual farmer.

"The waiver's success has come a long way and we still have a ways to go to balance water quality with stakeholder interests," said Robert Schneider, chair of the Central Valley Water Board. "We will continue to fine-tune the program," Schneider added.

Waiver requirements proposed by regional board staff continue to include submitting membership lists, water quality plans, and management plans that provide the steps growers will continue taking to improve the quality of the waters of the State.

The waiver's renewal is an intermediate step in the Water Board's development of a long-term program to regulated discharges from Irrigated Lands.

Growers and other interested parties can keep informed about the process on to the Web site at:

www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/programs/irrigated_lands or by emailing at: irrlands@waterboards.ca.gov

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