



Media Release

CENTRAL COAST WATER BOARD SUPPORTS SALINAS VALLEY SAFE DRINKING WATER AGREEMENT; WATER DELIVERIES EXPECTED SOON

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 18, 2017**

**Contact: John Robertson
(805) 549-3140**

At its May meeting in San Luis Obispo, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board voiced support for a recent agreement that will soon provide safe drinking water to disadvantaged communities in the Salinas Valley that are dealing with nitrate-polluted groundwater.

The State Water Resources Control Board, Central Coast Water Board, and the Salinas Basin Agricultural Stewardship Group will make a presentation to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors on June 13, and will also participate in community meetings in the Salinas area this summer to provide additional information and answer questions about the agreement.

“This agreement is a significant collective step by growers and land owners towards ensuring those in need are provided safe drinking water in the Salinas Valley,” said Dr. Jean-Pierre Wolff, chairman of the Central Coast Water Board.

Working in cooperation with the State Water Board’s Office of Enforcement and the Central Coast Water Board, the Stewardship Group has agreed to supply replacement drinking water at no cost to communities in the Salinas Valley whose drinking water is contaminated with nitrate. Deliveries are expected to start within the month.

“We are working closely with the Stewardship Group to ensure that the promise and potential of this agreement are fulfilled for those lacking access to safe, affordable drinking water.” said John Robertson, the Central Coast Water Board’s Executive Officer. “Our hope is that through successful implementation, this agreement will serve as a model for other parts of the region and state that are affected by unsafe drinking water due to nitrate.”

The pilot program will be organized and funded by the members of the Stewardship Group, a coalition of local agricultural owners and operators. It will run for one year with an option for a second year based on meeting performance targets. While the pilot

program delivers safe drinking water to communities, the parties will work toward permanent solutions to fund replacement water in the Salinas groundwater basin. As part of this agreement, the State Water Board and Central Coast Water Board have agreed to suspend specific enforcement activities.

The State Water Board and Central Coast Water Board have also agreed to extend the window for joining the Stewardship group until June 1, 2017, to allow those still considering to join the agreement.

“Because some farmers said they hadn’t received information about the enforcement standstill, we’ve decided to extend the deadline to join the Stewardship Group to June 1. If you haven’t joined by then, expect to receive an investigation order,” advised Cris Carrigan, director of the State Water Board’s Office of Enforcement.

The initial phase of the pilot program covers small drinking water systems and domestic wells serving about 850 residents in rural Monterey County that depend on groundwater for household uses. The Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship (CURES), which is implementing the program, is contacting residents whose water sources have nitrate levels above the safe drinking water standard.

Over the last decade, the Central Coast Water Board has been at the forefront of identifying and working with communities at risk for nitrate contamination and working to ensure clean and affordable drinking water options are available. Nitrate contamination of groundwater is one of the most serious water quality challenges facing rural communities in the Central Coast and other parts of California.

The Central Coast Water Board is also working with agriculture and others to control the sources of nitrate pollution in groundwater through implementation of the recently adopted [agricultural order](#), among other actions directed at nitrate sources. Combined with the pilot program for providing safe drinking water, these efforts address both the immediate needs and the long-term goal of improving groundwater quality through controlling the pollution’s source.

“We have a responsibility both to protect those in need of safe drinking water now and to those who will rely on the Salinas Valley’s groundwater for generations to come,” said Robertson.

View the settlement agreement at the State Water Board’s Office of Enforcement [webpage](#).

###