

IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE

September 2009

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) monthly report will provide an update on activities of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) ILRP, as reported in the Central Valley Water Board's August 13, 2009 Executive Officer's report. English and Spanish translations of current and past ILRP program monthly reports can be found on the [State Water Boards Agriculture Program](#) website.

General

On 19 May, staff conducted an advisory workgroup meeting to discuss proposed long-term irrigated lands program alternatives. The workgroup is composed of over 40 participants representing federal, State, and local government agencies; agricultural, environmental and environmental justice groups. The alternatives were developed by staff and various workgroup participants. The workgroup recognized that some of the alternatives were viable components of a programmatic alternative but did not represent a complete alternative. The workgroup instructed staff to develop complete program alternatives and work with those participants who had made proposals to ensure their concepts were incorporated.

Following the workgroup direction, staff developed five programmatic alternatives based on the staff and workgroup participant proposals. In late June and early July, staff met separately with each of the agricultural water quality coalition and environmental justice representatives who had made proposals to discuss how their concepts were incorporated into a programmatic alternative. These stakeholders generally agreed with the approach taken by staff and provided further recommendations for refinement.

The proposed alternatives will be circulated to the whole workgroup during the first week of August. The goal of the August 20, 2009 workgroup meeting will be to get workgroup consensus that the proposed alternatives should be considered in the EIR analysis that will be conducted. Central Valley Water Board staff then intends to discuss the programmatic alternatives as part of an information item at the October Board meeting.

On 28 May, staff met with the Glenn and Butte County Agricultural Commissioners to discuss potential commissioner roles in the long-term program. On 4 June staff met with the National Resource Conservation Service and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts to discuss potential ways of coordinating the long-term program with conservation service programs aimed at providing support for agriculture.

Outreach Postcards

In May and June 2009, Central Valley Water Board staff issued a total of 343 outreach postcards to potential owners of irrigated lands in the East San Joaquin, Sacramento Valley, and San Joaquin County & Delta Water Quality Coalition areas. The postcard recipients were identified using county tax assessor rolls and a federal agricultural land use database. The postcards advise owners of irrigated lands to gain the proper regulatory coverage.

On 18 June, Central Valley Water Board staff issued 23 outreach postcards to owners or operators of irrigated agricultural land near Byrd Slough on the Kings River. The postcards provide owners or operators who do not have regulatory coverage with an opportunity to apply for Water Board approval to join a coalition group.

Enforcement

California Water Code section 13267 Orders:

In May and June 2009, the Executive Officer issued a total of 198 CWC §13267 Orders to potential owners of irrigated lands in the East San Joaquin, Sacramento Valley, and San Joaquin County & Delta Water Quality Coalition areas. Most of the recipients of these Orders first received an outreach postcard. Those who received a postcard and did not respond subsequently received 13267 Orders.

On 15 June, the Executive Officer issued 43 Notices of Violation (NOVs) to landowners and operators in Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Stanislaus and Yolo Counties for failure to respond to a CWC §13267 Order. The 13267 Orders required landowners to fill out a one-page form briefly describing why their parcel was not enrolled in the ILRP.

Laboratory Audit:

Central Valley Water Board staff worked with US EPA Region 9 staff to complete an audit of a laboratory conducting work for coalition groups, as well as a review of the ILRP requirements for toxicity testing. The findings of the audit were quite favorable and provided staff with confidence that high quality data is being produced for the ILRP. The laboratory provided responses to US EPA's Laboratory Audit Report on 26 June. Some of US EPA's findings were programmatic in nature and may require modifications to the Monitoring and Reporting Program Order. Staff sent the coalitions the US EPA programmatic findings on 16 July 2009 and will discuss the issues identified by US EPA at the next TIC meeting in September.

Technical Issues Committee

On 9 June the Technical Issues Committee (TIC) met to provide a status of the Management Plan Focus Group progress. Central Valley Water Board staff provided

an update on diuron criteria development and responded to some of the TIC members' questions and concerns regarding the development of a pesticide Basin Plan Amendment. Staff provided a status of the work done by the Laboratory Round Table Focus Group on the standardization of algae toxicity methods. Other items discussed at the meeting included sample collection for low flow or no flow conditions and field quality control requirements. Central Valley Water Board staff is following up on these items with the appropriate guidance and clarifications. A variety of interested parties attended the TIC meeting, including coalition and irrigation district representatives, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, commercial analytical laboratories, private consultants, universities, and Board Chair Longley. The next TIC meeting is scheduled for September.

Management Plan Focus Group

The Management Plan Focus Group chose diuron as the trigger limit to evaluate first; the September meeting will include an analysis of diuron references and proposed potential trigger values. This selected pesticide was based on the analysis of the coalitions' exceedance summary information. Coalitions will also provide a status of management plan implementation and challenges being faced at the September meeting.

Coalition Groups

California Rice Commission (CRC):

On 29 May, Central Valley Water Board staff and the CRC participated in a conference call to discuss monitoring of propanil as part of the CRC's program. Propanil monitoring is required at core sites by the Algae Toxicity Management Plan, but not under the MRP. After discussion, the CRC decided to monitor in June and July for propanil at assessment sites as well as the core sites. The monitoring is being conducted to assess propanil levels and determine whether a correlation exists in concentration levels between the upstream (assessment) and downstream (core) sites.

On 3 June, Central Valley Water Board staff attended a CRC rice tour that visited CRC monitoring sites and two rice growers. The tour included information on growing rice, pesticide application, and different planting methods.

On 4 June, the CRC held a workshop on rice pesticides and management practices at the Central Valley Water Board office. Members of the Management Practices Focus Group and Central Valley Water Board staff were invited to listen to presentations from DPR and DF&G staff.

On 5 June, the Executive Officer approved modifications to CRC's MRP Order R5-2009-0809 that would allow the use of alternative analytical methods for several herbicides. Quality control data to support the alternative methods have been

received and meet criteria specified by the US EPA. The complete validation packages for the two methods were submitted on 1 July and are being reviewed by the Central Valley Water Board's QA Officer.

East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (ESJWQC):

On 5 June, the ESJWQC submitted a request to extend the completion dates for key tasks in its management plan.

On 16 June, Central Valley Water Board staff met via conference call with ESJWQC representatives to discuss the ESJWQC's request and plans to meet their commitment to contact all targeted growers in the priority watersheds. The ESJWQC believes the most effective means of ensuring growers implement practices to protect water quality is to meet with growers individually; however, that process has proven more time consuming than initially estimated. Staff expressed concern that the growers would not be contacted before they begin applying pesticides this irrigation season. The ESJWQC described the steps they have taken to inform their growers of chlorpyrifos water quality issues and the ESJWQC and Water Board staff agreed on additional steps that would be taken to contact growers and ensure that necessary practices are in place this year.

On 5 July, Water Board staff provided a response to the ESJWQC's request. The staff response approved the steps proposed by the ESJWQC during the 16 June teleconference, and provided a date of 15 July for expected completion of the individual contact strategy for management plan implementation.

On 10 July, the ESJWQC provided an update on the status of the individual contact strategy for the three high priority areas. The ESJWQC also provided the names of two growers that did not respond to the Coalition's second mailing to encourage growers to schedule an appointment for the individual contact interview. The Executive Officer will require the necessary information from these two growers via 13267 Order.

On 4 August, Water Board staff is meeting with the ESJWQC as part of the quarterly management plan meetings scheduled at the beginning of the year. The purpose of the meeting is for the Coalition to provide a status report on the performance goals and measures outlined in the approved management plan.

Goose Lake Coalition:

On 23 June, Central Valley Water Board staff met with the Goose Lake Coalition Board to discuss monitoring results from the 2009 irrigation season. Other items that were discussed relevant to the ILRP included: federal dollars for development of conservation planning on individual ranches and farms; development of a set of coalition-specific best management practices and the scheduling of outreach/education activities to distribute this information; first rainfall sampling events; and potential dates for future coalition member meetings.

Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (SVWQC):

On 18 May, staff participated in an El Dorado Subwatershed field tour provided for Central Valley Water Board and NCWA staff. The tour group included representatives and members of the El Dorado County Agricultural Water Quality Management Corporation. El Dorado Subwatershed President provided an overview of their administrative structure and committee organization. El Dorado Agricultural Commissioner described agricultural crops and operations. El Dorado Irrigation District discussed water supply, irrigation practices, and his work as Irrigation Management Service Coordinator for EID. El Dorado RCD described watershed characteristics and the selection of monitoring sites. TAC described their toxicity source evaluation and the County's requirements for agricultural grading permits. Farm Bureau provided an overview of the Sub-watershed Group's history, education and outreach program. Member and Treasurer discussed membership, acres enrolled, costs, and concerns with declining membership. Participants were then provided a field tour of the major agricultural districts and operations, monitoring stations, and on-farm visits to observe practices first-hand. Doug Leisz (Vice President) summarized the group's issues and concerns at the end of the day.

On 27 May, staff held the first in a series of meetings with SVWQC representatives to discuss development of a coalition-specific MRP Order, including timeline, contents, and requirements.

On 28 May, staff participated in a Lake County Sub-watershed field tour provided for Water Board and NCWA staff. The tour group also included supervisors from Lake County District 2 and District 3, Lake County Water Resources Division, Lake County Health Department, Lake County Agricultural Commissioner, and Lake County Farm Bureau. Group Coordinator provided an overview of agricultural operations, commodities and acreage, irrigation practices, and membership and enrollment. Additionally, he described monitoring site selection, monitoring parameters, and monitoring results. During the field tour the participants observed agriculture in drainages throughout the watershed area and visited monitoring sites.

On 29 May, the SVWQC submitted a Draft Management Plan Addendum, which describes how the Coalition's program addresses TMDLs in the Sacramento River Watershed. On 10 June, staff held a meeting with the Coalition to provide comments on the Addendum. The submittal deadline for the Management Plan Addendum is 15 July.

On 10 June, staff held the second meeting with the SVWQC to discuss development of the MRP Order, including a potential Pilot Watershed Management Practices Plan and selection of monitoring parameters.

On 11 June, staff participated in an Upper Feather River Subwatershed field tour provided for Water Board and NCWA staff. The tour group included the subwatershed coordinator. Grower members provided visits to their ranch and farm operations and described irrigation methods, agricultural operations and management practices.

Participants observed monitoring site locations, water diversion and control structures, and NRCS projects. Several representatives from agencies providing technical and monetary support to the UFRW group were present (i.e. NRCS, CRM, Feather River Watershed Authority, Plumas County Flood Control & Water Conservation, and Sierra County Watershed Council).

On 15 June, staff participated in a Shasta-Tehama Subwatershed field tour provided for Water Board and NCWA staff. The tour group included the subwatershed coordinator, UC Cooperative Extension, Group leader, and Tehama Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Coalition representatives provided an overview of agricultural operations, management practices, and crop types and distribution. They also provided a description of monitoring sites selection and RCD/NRCS projects that benefit water quality. Participants observed the subwatersheds' monitoring sites during the field tour.

On 26 June, staff held the third meeting with the SVWQC to discuss development of the MRP Order, including monitoring parameters and the potential Pilot Watershed Management Practices Plan. A full draft of the Order (not including attachments) was provided by Central Valley Water Board staff. On 26 June, staff held a quarterly management plan meeting with the SVWQC to discuss Management Plan progress. Upcoming deadlines and deliverables were discussed. The Coalition provided an overview of the status of their current tasks, including legacy pesticide sampling, pesticide source identification, and toxicity source evaluation. Three years of pesticide use data has been compiled. The SVWQC is developing a management practices survey template that can be adapted to each subwatershed group and submitted electronically.

On 1 July, staff participated in the SVWQC quarterly coalition group meeting. An update was provided on the long-term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Many questions were answered about the process, schedule and alternatives in the EIR and program development. Staff provided an update on preparation of the SVWQC-specific MRP Order, including the objectives, timeline, process, and key differences from the current Order. The meeting agenda also included discussion of management plan requirements, BMP surveys, monitoring results and participant list updates.

On 2 July, staff participated in a Napa County Subwatershed field tour provided for Water Board and NCWA staff. The tour group included the subwatershed coordinator, Napa County Supervisor, NRCS representative, Napa RCD biologist, and Agricultural Commissioner. Grower members hosted visits at their vineyards and described management practices, irrigation methods, and erosion control projects. Participants also observed the Pope Valley monitoring site.

On July 8, staff attended the Shasta-Tehama Subwatershed Coalition board meeting in Red Bluff. The June 15 watershed tour, participant list progress, and alternatives for the long-term ILRP were discussed. There were questions regarding the process to identify non-participants by Central Valley Water Board staff. Additionally, there is

concern among the Shasta-Tehama Subwatershed board that a grower survey being developed by NCWA staff will be used by the Central Valley Water Board for enforcement purposes.

San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition (SJCDWQC):

On 20 May, Central Valley Water Board staff held the second quarterly meeting with the SJCDWQC to discuss the Coalition's management plan and its 1 April management plan update. Staff presented some of its Management Plan Update Report review findings and will formally present them later.

On 10 June, staff held a teleconference with Coalition representatives to discuss the impact of any Notices of Violation issued to the Coalition.

Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition (SSJWQC):

Central Valley Water Board staff continues to meet with representatives of the SSJWQC to address concerns regarding the Coalition's MRP Plan.

Westlands Stormwater Coalition:

On 26 March, the Executive Officer conditionally approved the Westlands Stormwater Coalition MRP Plan, pending minor revisions and approval of the QAPP. On 4 June, Westlands submitted a revised MRP Plan addressing the requested revisions. The revised MRP Plan and QAPP are currently under staff review.

On 24 June, Pleasant Valley Water District submitted a letter stating that the Westlands Board of Directors is scheduled to meet on 21 July for final review and approval of a Memorandum of Agreement, which would allow owners or operators of irrigated agricultural lands within Pleasant Valley Water District to enroll in Westlands Stormwater Coalition.

Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition (WSJWRC):

On 29 June, staff met with WSJWRC representatives in Patterson to discuss Monitoring and Reporting Program progress and implementation. After the meeting, staff toured a portion of the Coalition area and observed grower practices to improve water quality.

On 7 July, Staff attended the Open Session of the monthly WSJWRC Steering Committee meeting at the San Luis Delta Mendota Canal Water District offices in Los Banos. A summary of water quality from January to July 2009 of Coalition sites was presented.

Data Management

Staff continues to work closely with the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) in synch with the SWAMP work plan as it relates to the Region 5 SWAMP/CEDEN Data Node. Portions of the SWAMP workplan include the limited

continued support and tool development for ILRP SWAMP comparability. An ILRP specific web-based SWAMP format checking tool is currently in development and slated to be ready for use near the end of this summer. This tool will streamline data transfer from coalitions to Central Valley Water Board staff as well as provide feedback on the format and business rules of SWAMP compatibility for electronic data submittals. Both programs are reaching out to the Water Board Training Academy to potentially aid in the training of coalition groups for use of this tool once it is made available.

Staff will continue to work closely and coordinate efforts with the Region 5 SWAMP/CEDEN Node staff to ensure the future successful and timely upload and transfer of ILRP data to CEDEN.

The ILRP Participant Monitoring Data web site currently has data available up to 2007 for the large coalitions and up to 2008 for all Irrigation Districts and the CRC. The next major update is planned to occur in August and will add 2008 data for the large coalitions and data from the Irrigation Districts that submitted reports in March 2009. The posting of remaining Irrigation District reports will follow as soon as possible.

The schedule for the release of the Proposition 50 funds targeted for the SWAMP QA team remains unclear at this time. The intent of these funds was for the SWAMP QA team to meet with coalitions and assist with laboratory contracts and data quality assurance measures. The Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition made a request for this assistance and a tentative meeting was scheduled for 29 January 2009 and subsequently postponed when those funds were frozen by the Department of Finance. This meeting will be rescheduled as soon as those funds are made available.

Individual Dischargers

Turlock Irrigation District (Turlock ID):

On 29 May staff received the Turlock ID Management Plan. Staff will be reviewing and preparing a response letter.

Staff is reviewing and preparing comments to the 26 February Modesto ID Annual Monitoring Report.

Modesto Irrigation District (Modesto ID):

On 26 May Central Valley Water Board staff met with Mike Niemi from Modesto ID to discuss the status of Modesto ID Management Plan implementation. Modesto ID has implemented all management practices proposed in the Management Plan by the proposed time frames. Staff will follow up with Modesto ID on some guidance for the next steps on Management Plan implementation.

Staff is reviewing and preparing comments to the 23 February and 17 April Modesto ID

Annual irrigation and storm season monitoring reports.

Merced Irrigation District (Merced ID):

Staff is reviewing and preparing comments to the 26 February Merced ID Annual Monitoring Report. Staff will be reviewing and preparing a response letter.

South San Joaquin Irrigation District:

Staff is reviewing and preparing comments to the 27 February South San Joaquin Irrigation District 2008 Annual Monitoring Report.

Oakdale Irrigation District:

Staff is continuing review of the 27 February Oakdale Irrigation District 2008 Annual Monitoring Report.

Grant Management

San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District Prop 50 Grant:

On 17 June, the State Water Resources Control Board directed staff to mail the San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District Prop 50 Grant, Measuring the Effectiveness of Management Practices, to its office for grant management. This transfer was due to staffing changes and loss of funding to support Central Valley Water Board oversight. The grant continues to be suspended.

Proposition 84:

Funding is still suspended.

MOU Pilot Program:

The extension and amendment for the MOU contracts are awaiting approval by the Butte and Glenn County Agricultural Commissioners. The changes will extend the contract to 30 June 2010.