

Coordination between Coalition and Central Valley Water Board Increases Grower Enrollment and Averts Enforcement Actions in Delta Region

Growers who irrigate farmland for commercial purposes must belong to a water quality coalition or apply for an individual discharge permit from the Central Valley Water Board. Enforcement actions may be taken, including the pursuit of administrative civil liabilities, to ensure growers meet the requirements of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Fortunately, Central Valley Water Board and coalition actions have been successful in increasing enrollment of growers in the Delta Region through education and outreach.

Problem

Under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP), growers who irrigate farmland for commercial purposes must belong to a water quality coalition or apply for an individual discharge permit directly from the Central Valley Water Board (Board). The San Joaquin County & Delta Coalition (Coalition) operates in the Delta area and implements the ILRP as required by the Board.



Figure 1: Coalition-enrolled almond orchard near the town of Le Grand, CA.

Both ILRP staff and the Coalition outreach to growers to inform them of their obligation to obtain regulatory coverage. Both parties also inform growers that failure to obtain this coverage may lead to enforcement, including monetary fines.

Project Highlights

In November 2016, Board staff contacted the Coalition and requested membership information concerning ten Delta area growers who failed to respond to a Board directive to obtain regulatory coverage. The Coalition reported that five growers had enrolled with the Coalition. The Coalition then took the initiative to contact the remaining growers to arrange enrollment of their commercial irrigated lands.

In November and December 2016, Coalition staff worked diligently to contact growers on the Board's pending enforcement list. In addition to contacting the local farm bureau to gather grower contact information, Coalition staff attempted to contact the landowners' lessees and neighbors to reach the non-compliant growers.

Results

The Coalition's outreach efforts resulted in the enrollment of five growers and 84 irrigated acres. The Coalition's efforts also reduced the Board's enforcement case backlog and averted the time-consuming task of pursuing administrative civil liability against the formerly recalcitrant growers.

During 2016, Board outreach to growers and coordination with the coalitions resulted in 631 new growers with regulatory coverage and over 55,000 additional covered acres.