

ITEM: 9

SUBJECT: Recycling of Oil Field Produced Water

BOARD ACTION: *Informational Item Only*

BACKGROUND: “Produced water” is water that is brought up from oil-bearing geological formations when oil and gas are extracted from the ground. While produced water can be very high quality, it can also contain chemicals that may pose a risk to human health. While the Central Valley Water Board and other State agencies have not found any information indicating any potential health risks due to past or current irrigation practices, additional investigation is warranted because up to 95,000 acres of cropland may be irrigated with produced water in the Tulare Lake Basin. This cropland is within four water districts in Kern and Tulare Counties (i.e., Cawelo Water District, North Kern Water Storage District, Kern-Tulare Water District, and Jasmine Water District).

As part of the Central Valley Water Board’s effort to answer questions related to the potential human health effects of irrigating food crops with produced water, the Board is convening a Crop Safety Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a larger Crop Safety Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

The TAC will include scientists and experts from State agencies responsible for ensuring food safety or who can provide relevant technical input, as well as experts from local agencies and the scientific community. These scientists and experts will augment the Board’s knowledge base, since the Board does not have the expertise to answer the full range of questions related to potential human health effects from the practice of irrigating crops with produced water. State agency participants will include representatives from the State Water Board, the California Department of Public Health – Food Safety Section (CDPH-FSS), the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. The Kern County Agricultural Commissioner will also be involved. Furthermore, outside experts from industry, environmental organizations, and environmental justice organizations, as well as academics, have expressed an interest in being on the TAC.

The larger TAG will not only include the TAC members, but will also include stakeholder representatives that will be able to provide credible information about produced water generation and how it is recycled for irrigation. Participants in the TAG will include representatives of the oil producers, water districts, and agricultural interests.

One of the goals of this effort will be to develop appropriate regulatory limits for petroleum-based compounds that may be found in produced water used for crop irrigation. Recently, CDPH has conducted a preliminary scientific literature review and “was unable to find any studies or documentation that could be used to make a determination of the safe use of irrigation waters that may contain low levels of petroleum-based compounds.” The TAG and TAC will assist in bridging the current data and literature gap.

Clay Rodgers Assistant Executive Officer of the Fresno Office will present an informational item on the formation of the TAC. Staff is looking to the Board

for guidance on a process to review and approve potential members of the TAC, particularly those that are not associated with governmental agencies.

Board members may be provided additional information for review prior to the Board meeting. Any such information will be available to the public upon request.

RECOMMENDATION: This is an information only item.

Mgmt. Review \_\_\_\_\_  
Legal Review PEP

1-2 October 2015  
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