

## **IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **November 2019**

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) update provides a summary of significant activities of State Water Board from October 15, 2019 to November 15, 2019 and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board from September 15, 2019 to November 15, 2019. Next month's report will present activities of the North Coast, San Francisco Bay, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Lahontan, Colorado River Basin, Santa Ana, and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's Program and cover the period between from October 15, 2019 to December 15, 2019.

### **STATE WATER BOARD**

Staff traveled to the Yolo County Landfill on October 22, 2019 to attend the grand opening of their anaerobic composter. The anaerobic composter will use micro-organisms called anaerobic bacteria to decompose organic waste in a sealed environment to generate renewable biogas and produce finished compost from organic waste.

On October 23 and 24, 2019, staff traveled to University of California, Davis (UC Davis) to attend the annual California Aquatic Bioassessment Workgroup (CABW) meeting. Presentations included overviews of bioassessment studies used to determine the health of California surface waters, general water quality monitoring, and best management practices.

The quarterly ILRP roundtable meeting was held via conference call on October 25, 2019. Program staff from across the regions discussed general updates, the Nonpoint Source 5-Year Plan, the GeoTracker database, and new fee schedules. Staff from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) were also present to update the group on agriculture-related activities.

The CDFA held their annual Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP) conference in Fresno on October 28 to 30, 2019. State Water Board staff attended this conference, which included professionals from research, industry, and regulatory agencies presenting on topics related to agricultural practices. Topics included nutrient management, irrigation, biochar, salinity, and new technologies in the agriculture industry.

On November 6, 2019, staff participated in the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE). Members discussed ways to improve agriculture and the environment in California. Examples included a statewide land use planning framework, using data for decision making, and creating transitional climate communities.

Staff attended a training on November 12 to 14, 2019 for aquatic toxicity training and application presented by the US Environmental Protectional Agency. Staff learned the proper techniques for completing bioassessments, data interpretation, and permit writing.

Staff participated in the annual California Bioresources Alliance (CBA) Symposium held on November 14 and 15, 2019 in Sacramento. The symposium featured a special workshop designed to improve the permitting process for organics projects in California. There were also sessions addressing financial onramps, incentives for certain technologies and products, community composting, and the use of bioresources for energy and greenhouse gas reductions.

## **CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

Central Valley Water Board staff holds quarterly stakeholder meetings to provide an open forum for communication between staff, agricultural coalitions, environmental justice groups, and other interested parties in the Central Valley Region. The October 9, 2019 stakeholder meeting was held at the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, with focused discussions on the drinking water well monitoring requirements and the CV-SALTS Basin Plan Amendments.

State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ-2018-0002 directed the Central Valley Water Board to convene an external expert review of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's surface water monitoring framework. The expert review process is being facilitated by Steve Weisberg of SCCWRP. Five Panel members have agreed to perform the external review. The first public Panel Meeting is scheduled for January 7-9, 2020 at the Central Valley Water Board's Rancho Cordova office. Additional panel and meeting information is available on the [Southern California Coastal Water Research Project website](#).

State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ-2018-0002 also directs the Central Valley Water Board to develop an on-farm drinking water well monitoring program. This program was initiated in the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, and hundreds of groundwater sample results have been uploaded into GeoTracker, which is available for public review. Outreach of the program requirements in the Tulare Lake Basin coalition areas has begun, with monitoring required in 2020.

On August 2, 2019, staff presented an information item to the Central Valley Water Board regarding the need for revisions to Waste Discharge Requirements for San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority and the United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation Surface Water Discharges from the Grassland Bypass Project (Order R5-2015-0094) to permit discharges beyond December 31, 2019. Proposed revisions to the Order were released for public comment on October 7, 2019. Since release of the proposed revisions, staff has been meeting with various interested parties and agencies to discuss the elements of the Grassland Bypass Project and potential

water quality impacts. The proposed revisions will be brought to the Central Valley Water Board for consideration during the December 5-6, 2019 meeting.

On October 11, 2019, staff presented an information item to the Central Valley Water Board regarding the evaluation of an alternative ILRP framework for low-threat commodity types, with an initial focus on irrigated pasture in the upper watersheds. Staff continues to work with UC Rangelands to gather information to reevaluate how to make the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program more appropriate for irrigated pasture and low-threat crops in the upper watersheds. The information includes pesticide use data, nitrogen/fertilizer use data, management practice data, geographic data, and economic analysis results. Staff is also evaluating potential thresholds for irrigated pasture that might be used to support an exemption from the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

Central Valley Water Board staff continues to concentrate on compliance, outreach, and enforcement efforts in the following areas: agricultural parcel inspections; Water Code section 13260 Directives; Notices of Violation for failure to respond to a Water Code section 13260 Directive and failure to comply with Orders; and documentation for Administrative Civil Liability Complaints. From mid-August to September 2019, Central Valley Water Board staff conducted 19 on-farm inspections to assess compliances with the general orders, issued 401 directives to owners of potential commercial irrigated lands, and issued 248 Notices of Violation for failure to respond to directives and failure to submit order-mandated reports.

Additional information can be found on the [Central Valley Water Board website](#).