

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
SEPTEMBER 23, 2014**

ITEM 12

SUBJECT

REPORT PRESENTATION – CONCLUSIONS OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXPERT PANEL:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE WATER BOARD

DISCUSSION

Water Code section 83002.5 required the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to develop pilot projects focusing on nitrate in groundwater in the Tulare Lake Basin and Salinas Valley, and to submit a report to the Legislature on the scope and findings of the pilot projects, including recommendations. The State Water Board made 15 recommendations in four key areas to address the issues associated with nitrate contaminated groundwater.

Recommendation 14 of the State Water Board's report to the Legislature was to convene a panel of experts to assess existing agricultural nitrate control programs and develop recommendations, as needed, to ensure that ongoing efforts are protective of groundwater supply quality. The State Water Board contracted with the Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC), a center established within the BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department of the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo to assemble the expert panel of eight persons. The expert panel consisted of persons possessing the following backgrounds: Irrigation Specialist/Agricultural Engineer, Soil Scientist, Hydrogeologist, Certified Crop Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor, Grower from the Central Coast Region, Grower from the Central Valley Region, and an Agronomist.

State Water Board staff prepared questions to be posed to the Expert Panel based on input from the contractor, public input via notice, Advisory Committee input, and Regional Water Boards. Thirteen questions were provided to the Expert Panel regarding vulnerability and risk assessment, application of management practices, verification measures, and reporting. The Expert Panel conducted a series of three Public Meetings held the week of May 5-9, 2014 with follow-up meetings for the Panel to collectively develop its draft report on June 9, June 23 and July 1, 2014. The Draft Expert Panel Report was released on July 7, 2014, and a Public Meeting on the Draft Report was held on July 18, 2014. The deadline for written public comment was August 7, 2014. The Expert Panel met on August 20, 2014 to discuss public comments received on the draft report prior to finalizing the findings and recommendations to the State Water Board. On September 23, 2014, the Expert Panel will present its report and recommendations to the State Water Board. The State Water Board will not take any action on September 23, 2014, but may consider providing direction to State Water Board staff for future potential actions related to the report and recommendations.

POLICY ISSUE

Should the State Water Board receive the report and recommendations from the Expert Panel and consider providing directions to State Water Board staff for future potential actions?

FISCAL IMPACT

None (Information Item only).

REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT

None (Information Item only)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The State Water Board should receive the [Expert Panel's report and recommendations](#) and consider providing direction to State Water Board staff for future potential action.

State Water Board action on this item will assist the Water Boards in reaching Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan Update: 2008-2012 to protect and restore groundwater quality. In particular, approval of this item will assist in fulfilling Objective 2.3, ensuring viability of high quality groundwater basins through WDRs and contamination clean-up.