

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET FOR REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 19-20, 2015
Prepared on November 4, 2015

ITEM NUMBER: 21

SUBJECT: Executive Officer's Report to the Board

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KEY INFORMATION: Needed to be added to Executive Officers Report

RANGELAND WATER QUALITY

[Lisa McCann/805-549-3132]

On October 15, 2015, Executive Officer, Ken Harris, Watershed Planning and Protection Section Manager, Lisa McCann, and Board Member, Bruce Delgado attended the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition Fall 2015 Meeting, *Where Grazing and Regulations Meet: Working Together for Ranching and Water Quality*. Ken Harris participated on a panel with a rancher at the end of the day. The meeting was held in Hollister at the Veteran's Memorial Building and included a field trip to the Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area to observe and discuss rangeland management practices that protect water quality. The meeting was organized by University of California (UC) Cooperative (Coop) Extension and moderated by Grey Hayes, Director of the Elkhorn Slough Coastal Training Program. The agenda for the meeting covered the following:

- Rangeland Water Quality- Research and Education Update
 - Dr. Leslie Roche, Rangeland Management Specialist, UC Coop Extension (UC Davis)
- Nutrient Dynamics and Water Quality on Rangelands
 - Dr. Randy Dahlgren, Professor of Soil Science and Pedologist/Soil Mineralogist, UC Coop Extension (UC Davis)
- Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area (HHSVRA)
 - Site Orientation, Wes Gray, Environmental Scientist, HHSVRA
 - Ranching Operations, Joe Morris, Rancher, Morris Grassfed Beef
- Rancher and Water Board Conversation
 - Ken Harris, Executive Officer, Central Coast Water Board
 - Keven Kester, Central Coast Rancher and National Cattlemen's Beef Association Policy Division Chairman

Ranchers asked many questions about the water quality regulation of rangeland in the Central Coast Region, particularly now that the State Water Resources Control Board has discontinued the "GRAP" or Grazing Regulatory Action Project. Many ranchers understood the State Water Board's resolution to direct the Regional Water Boards to regulate grazing individually. Many ranchers also questioned the basis for considering rangeland a source of bacteria or nitrate impairment of waterbodies on the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List, and questioned some assumptions of some Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation Plans that include rangeland.

Water Board staff responded or presented the following:

- Clarification of the regulations,

- Assurance that the Central Coast Water Board is not currently developing a new regulatory tool for grazing operations,
- An explanation that rangeland is currently considered low priority for water quality impairments relative to urban and irrigated agricultural areas in the region so few resources are allocated to rangeland and water quality,
- Emphasis that grazing operators should rely on UC Cooperative Extension and existing sources of information and programs, like the California Rangeland Water Quality Management Plan, to protect water quality in their grazing operations.
- Central Coast Water Board will require improved practices, monitoring and/or reporting at operations that are discharging wastes and allowing operations to impair water bodies (if discovered through land use surveys, complaints or area inspections).

Water Board staff and Board member gained exposure to the opportunities and challenges for ranchers operating in the Central Coast Region, the state of the science regarding sources of pollution from grazing operations and the most effective methods to reduce or minimize pollutant discharges, such as minimizing bare ground, retaining as much water/runoff onsite, rotational grazing, allowing adequate time for vegetation to recover before letting another herd onto an area recently grazed.

Many ranchers expressed appreciation that Central Coast Water Board staff was willing to meeting with them, and said that they had good relationships with this region's staff and they better understood the regulations and regulatory situation in the Central Coast Region.