

12 DECEMBER 2025 BOARD MEETING DISCUSSION AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUBJECT:

Proposed amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Tulare Lake Basin (Basin Plan) to remove the Municipal and Domestic Supply (MUN) and Agricultural Supply (AGR) beneficial uses from groundwater within a designated horizontal and vertical area within and surrounding the administrative boundaries of the South Belridge, Monument Junction and Cymric Oil Fields in Kern County near McKittrick, California.

BOARD ACTION:

Consideration of Approval of the Substitute Environmental Documentation and Adoption of the Proposed Basin Plan Amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Board) is in a multi-year process under which it is evaluating the beneficial uses assigned to surface and ground waters within the boundaries of the Board's Basin Plans. The Board initiated a Basin Plan amendment (BPA) process to review the scope and extent of actual and potential beneficial uses of groundwater near or underlying the Valley Water Management Company's McKittrick 1-1 and McKittrick 1 & 1-3 Facilities (Project Area (defined in the Draft Staff Report)). The Project Area was determined by a Writ of Mandate in litigation from Valley Water Management Company against the Central Valley Water Board.

Board staff evaluated the available data for the Project Area and developed a proposed Revised Project Zone (a portion of the Project Area, defined in the Draft Staff Report) where the de-designation of the Municipal and Domestic Supply (MUN) and Agricultural Supply (AGR) beneficial uses is supported. The Board staff's Revised Project Zone determination is based on exception criteria in the Tulare Lake Basin Plan derived from the State Water Resources Control Board Sources of Drinking Water Policy (for the MUN beneficial use) and from a salinity threshold derived from relevant scientific literature criteria and guidelines for the use of water for livestock and crop irrigation (for the AGR beneficial use).

An External Scientific Peer Review was initially requested by the Board on 27 September 2025, a revised request was submitted by the Board on 8 November 2025, the review was officially initiated 26 March 2025, and the final reports from the four Peer Reviewers were received by the Board on 14 July 2025. Board staff drafted a Response to Comments document for the Peer Review, addressing concerns from the Peer Reviewers.

The proposed BPA would remove the MUN and AGR beneficial uses from groundwater within a horizontally and vertically delineated portion of the South Belridge, Monument Junction, and Cymric Oil Fields in Kern County near the unincorporated community of

McKittrick, California (Revised Project Zone).

The proposed BPA, supporting Draft Staff Report, External Scientific Peer Review, and associated Board staff responses to the External Scientific Peer Review were released for public review and comment on 16 September 2025. The deadline for written comments from this public comment period was 31 October 2025. Five comment letters were received, and Board staff developed a Response to Comments document addressing the comments received.

Agenda materials include this summary, a revised Draft Staff Report that includes the proposed BPA language, the External Scientific Peer Review and associated Board staff responses to the External Scientific Peer Review, the Notice of Public Comment and Hearing, Public Comment Letters, the Board Response to Comments document, and the draft Resolution for adopting the proposed BPA. [All material related to the project](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/mckittrick/) is available at:

(https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/mckittrick/)

ISSUES:

There is disagreement on the geologic interpretation of the vertical location of well data in relationship to the locations of the Corcoran Clay Equivalent and the Tulare Formation.

Additionally, there is concern that applying the value of 5,000 mg/L for Total Dissolved Solids for the threshold of de-designation of the AGR Beneficial Use may not be the correct value, is not a confirmed regulatory value, is not needed for de-designation, and that the value may become precedential for future Board decision making and salinity management.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adoption of the proposed Basin Plan Amendment and approval of the Substitute Environmental Documentation.

REVIEWS:

Management Review:	AWL	11/21/2025
Legal Review:	JMJ	11/20/2025

BOARD MEETING LOCATION:

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
11020 Sun Center Dr. #200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

☒ **AND VIA VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCE**