



North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF VOLUNTARY SEDIMENT CONTROL PROGRAMS

**General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial
Vineyards in the North Coast Region
Order No. R1-2024-0056**

Date Posted: April 3, 2026

Table of Contents

I. Overview	3
Eligibility and Requirements	4
Submittal Procedure and Deadline	4
Contacts	4
II. Organization and Content of Voluntary Program Application	5
Program Overview and Qualifications.....	5
Sediment and Erosion Control Standards.....	6
Sediment and Erosion Control Plan (SECP) Requirements	6
Program Compliance Verification	7
Documentation and Recordkeeping.....	8
III. Evaluation of Voluntary Program Applications	9
Evaluation Criteria	9
Program Approval.....	10

I. Application for Approval of Voluntary Sediment Control Programs--Overview

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (**North Coast Water Board**) adopted the [General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Vineyards in the North Coast Region](#) (**Order** or **Vineyard Order**) in June 2025. The Order establishes a regulatory framework for minimizing waste discharges and preventing adverse impacts to water resources associated with commercial winegrape cultivation. The Order includes specific requirements and a [Monitoring and Reporting Program](#) (**MRP**) designed to support the Order's objectives and ensure consistency with state and regional water quality plans, policies, and programs, including the statewide Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

The Vineyard Order allows Enrollees to participate in approved Third-Party Voluntary Sediment Control Programs (**Voluntary Programs**) in order to satisfy certain sediment and erosion control requirements. Voluntary Programs provide a structured approach for completing planning documents such as Sediment and Erosion Control Plans (SECPs), assisting participants with implementation and documentation of Management Practices, and in-person field verification of Management Practices. General requirements of Voluntary Programs are included in [Attachment C of the Vineyard Order](#).

This document establishes the process by which entities may apply for approval to administer a Voluntary Program under the Vineyard Order. Entities seeking approval must submit a Program Manual describing the structure, procedures, and operating framework of the proposed program.

The Program Manual serves two primary purposes. First, it documents the program's structure, standards, and procedures, including how management practices, planning documents, audits, and other program elements will be implemented to achieve the applicable requirements of the Vineyard Order. The North Coast Water Board will evaluate sufficiency of the described program based on the contents of the Program Manual described below in Section II.

Second, once approved by the Executive Officer, the Program Manual will serve as an ongoing reference document for Enrollees and for Voluntary Program and North Coast Water Board staff. The document will be used to evaluate implementation of the program and to assess the continued compliance of both the program and its enrolled participants during inspections and other oversight activities.

Approval is based on the evaluation protocol described below in Section III relative to the applicant's demonstrated ability to fulfill the Voluntary Program obligations described in Section II. At a minimum, an approved Voluntary Program must establish sediment and erosion control management practice standards, require implementation of those practices through Sediment and Erosion Control Plans, and conduct evaluations and verifications of those plans through regular in-person audits of vineyards participating in the Voluntary Program.

Eligibility and Requirements

Entities interested in operating as a Voluntary Program under the Order should review [Attachment C: Third-Party Requirements](#) of the Order for minimum eligibility criteria. Proposals will be accepted from any type of entity that is able to demonstrate that their program will meet the stated objectives and requirements of a Voluntary Program.

Submittal Procedure and Deadline

Applications must be prepared in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Applications and all attachments must be submitted in PDF format by the deadline of **October 2, 2026**.
- Applications must include all elements as specified below in Section II: Organization and Content of Voluntary Program Application.
- Applications and all attachments must be accessible to anyone with a disability pursuant to section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and meet **WCAG 2.1 success criteria**¹ accompanied by a validation report that certifies accessibility standards are met.

Applications must be submitted by email to brenna.sullivan@waterboards.ca.gov with "Application for Approval of Voluntary Program_[Name of Submitting Entity]" in the subject line **before 5:00PM Pacific Standard Time on October 2, 2026** in order to be considered.

Contacts

Questions to clarify the intent of this solicitation may be addressed to the North Coast Water Board Vineyard Program contacts listed below.

Brenna Sullivan, Lead Staff
brenna.sullivan@waterboards.ca.gov
(707) 576-2699

David Kuszmar, Lead Supervisor
david.kuszmar@waterboards.ca.gov
(707) 576-2693

¹ See [WCAG 2.1](#) for guidelines: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

II. Organization and Content of Voluntary Program Application

This section describes the required organization and content of a Voluntary Program Application. The submission must be prepared as a **Program Manual** describing the structure, procedures, and operating framework of the proposed Voluntary Program.

The Program Manual must clearly describe how the program will function to ensure that participating Enrollees meet relevant Sediment and Erosion Control requirements of Section II.C (pp. 47-52) of the [Vineyard Order](#). The North Coast Water Board staff will evaluate the adequacy of the proposed program during the approval process for its sufficiency to meet relevant Order requirements.

Once approved by the Executive Officer, the Program Manual will become the primary reference document for implementation of the Voluntary Program. The North Coast Water Board will use the Program Manual to evaluate continued compliance of both the Voluntary Program and its enrolled participants during inspections and other oversight activities.

The Program Manual must provide sufficient detail to demonstrate how the prospective program will perform the following core functions of a Voluntary Program:

- Develop and maintain minimum Management Practice requirements or performance standards that meet the relevant Sediment and Erosion Control requirements of Section II.C of the Order.
- Assist Enrollees in developing and maintaining Sediment and Erosion Control Plans (SECPs).
- Review and approve SECPs for consistency with the minimum standards of the Voluntary Program.
- Conduct regular field audits to verify implementation of Management Practices and evaluate their conformance with the standards of the Voluntary Program.
- Implement procedures for remediating or revoking SECP approval or participation in the Voluntary Program when participants fail to meet the stated standards of the Voluntary Program.
- Maintain documentation necessary to demonstrate ongoing good standing of participants in the Voluntary Program and the stated goals, procedures, and standards in the Program Manual.

At a minimum, the Program Manual must include the elements described below:

Program Overview and Qualifications

Provide an overview of the proposed Voluntary Program, the entity responsible for administering it, and the minimum qualifications for key roles within the Voluntary Program. This section should describe:

- The geographic scope of the program and anticipated participation.

Application for Approval of North Coast Vineyard Order Voluntary Programs

- The organizational structure responsible for program administration.
- Identification of the Program Administrator and key staff responsible for program implementation, inspections/audits, and program oversight.
- A brief description of minimum qualification standards for key roles within the Voluntary Program structure (e.g., Program Administrator, auditor, etc.)
- Roles, responsibilities, and/or qualifications of any partner organizations supporting program implementation.

Sediment and Erosion Control Standards

The Program Manual must clearly describe the erosion and sediment control performance standards or minimum requirements that participating Enrollees must meet. This section must describe:

- The performance standards or minimum requirements that will be used to prevent, minimize, or eliminate erosion and excess sediment discharge from vineyard operations.
- How those standards or minimum requirements provide protection that is commensurate with the Minimum Ground Cover Compliance Option requirements of Section II.C of the Vineyard Order.
- The types or categories of Management Practices used to meet those standards.
- References (for example, NRCS practice standards), diagrams, photographs, or other supporting documentation that describe or provide the technical basis for the program's standards or minimum requirements.
- How the Voluntary Program will evaluate whether Management Practices implemented within participating vineyards meet the stated performance standards or minimum requirements.

Sediment and Erosion Control Plan (SECP) Requirements

The Program Manual must describe how participating Enrollees will develop and maintain Sediment and Erosion Control Plans (**SECPs**). This section must describe:

- How the required structure and minimum contents of an SECP developed through the Voluntary Program meets minimum SECP requirements in Section II.C of the Order.
- The process by which the Voluntary Program will assist Enrollees in preparing SECPs.
- Procedures used by the Voluntary Program to review and approve SECPs for sufficiency.
- Documentation requirements for SECPs, including inventories of existing and planned Management Practices and schedule(s) of implementation.

Application for Approval
of North Coast Vineyard Order Voluntary Programs

The Program Manual must clearly describe how SECPs will be used to identify erosion and sediment discharge risks and implement Management Practices necessary to meet the performance standards of the Voluntary Program.

Program Compliance Verification

The Program Manual must describe the procedures the Voluntary Program will use to verify that participating Enrollees meet the erosion and sediment control performance standards or minimum requirements established by the Voluntary Program. Verification procedures must include review of SECPs, on-farm audits of implemented Management Practices, and procedures for identifying and correcting deficiencies where program standards are not met.

At a minimum, the Program Manual must describe the following procedures:

SECP Sufficiency Review: The Program Manual must describe the process the Voluntary Program will use to review SECPs for completeness and consistency with the standards of the Voluntary Program. The review process must ensure that SECPs include Management Practices necessary to meet the erosion and sediment control standards of the Voluntary Program. This section must describe:

- The criteria used to determine whether an SECP meets the minimum requirements of the Voluntary Program.
- The procedures used by the Voluntary Program to review participant SECPs.
- The process for approving SECPs or requiring revisions where plans do not meet program standards.
- Procedures for documenting SECP approval and maintaining SECP records.

On-Farm Audits and Field Verification: The Program Manual must describe the procedures used to conduct on-farm audits of participating vineyards to verify implementation of the SECP. At a minimum, this section must describe:

- Procedures used to schedule and conduct on-farm audits consistent with applicable requirements in Attachment C of the Vineyard Order (i.e., once every five years and during the winter period when Management Practices can be evaluated under wet conditions).
- Qualifications for auditors performing on-farm audits (may be covered under the Program Overview and Qualifications section).
- Standard inspection procedures and documentation used during audits.
- Procedures used to ensure that on-farm audits include (at a minimum):
 - Review of the SECP and associated Management Practices.
 - On-site verification that Management Practices identified in the SECP are present.
 - Evaluation of whether implemented Management Practices meet the performance standards or requirements of the Voluntary Program.

Application for Approval
of North Coast Vineyard Order Voluntary Programs

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of Management Practices at preventing or minimizing erosion and sediment discharge using the auditor's best professional judgment.

Remedial Actions and Program Compliance Tracking: The Program Manual must describe the procedures the Voluntary Program will use when audits identify Management Practices that do not meet the performance standards or minimum requirements of the Voluntary Program. This section must describe:

- Procedures for documenting deficiencies identified during audits.
- Procedures for developing remedial actions necessary to meet program standards.
- Procedures for establishing schedules for implementation of remedial actions.
- Procedures for tracking completion of remedial actions and verifying compliance.

Evaluating Participant Standing: The Program Manual must also describe procedures used to evaluate and address situations where participants fail to maintain good standing in the Voluntary Program, including:

- Failure to implement Management Practices necessary to meet program standards.
- Failure to submit information required by the Voluntary Program.
- Failure to participate in required on-farm audits.

The Program Manual must describe the consequences the Voluntary Program will use to address these situations, including potential revocation of participation in the Voluntary Program.

Documentation and Recordkeeping

The Program Manual must describe the procedures used to maintain program records and documentation necessary to document ongoing participant adherence to the requirements and standards of the Voluntary Program. This section must describe:

- Records maintained for participating vineyards.
- Documentation associated with SECPs and Management Practices.
- Records associated with on-farm audits and corrective actions.
- Procedures used to maintain documentation demonstrating participant good standing with the Voluntary Program.
- Acknowledgement that records relevant to the Voluntary Program's efforts to assist program participants in meeting Vineyard Order requirements must be available to the North Coast Water Board upon request and maintained in a manner that allows the North Coast Water Board to access relevant information during program oversight and inspections.

III. Evaluation of Voluntary Program Applications

Voluntary Program applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis based on the applicant's ability to demonstrate, through the submitted Program Manual, that the proposed program will satisfy the requirements of the Vineyard Order and the Third-Party Voluntary Program requirements described in Attachment C of the Vineyard Order. The evaluation will focus on the adequacy of the program structure, procedures, and standards described in the Program Manual.

Applications must provide sufficient detail to allow the North Coast Water Board to determine how the program will function in practice. Program Manuals that lack sufficient detail regarding program standards, audit procedures, documentation practices, or remediation processes may be determined to be inadequate to justify approval of the Voluntary Program.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. Applicants must score at least 8 points out of a possible 12 points to be considered for approval as a Voluntary Program.

Evaluation Criteria	Max. Points
Responsiveness to Application Requirements Organization and completeness of the Program Manual.	1
Erosion and Sediment Control Standards Adequacy of program performance standards or Management Practice requirements to meet Vineyard Order objectives.	3
SECP Requirements Adequacy of procedures for development, review, and approval of Sediment and Erosion Control Plans.	3
Program Compliance Verification Adequacy of on-farm audit procedures, inspector qualifications, and verification methods. Adequacy of procedures for identifying deficiencies, implementing corrective actions, and maintaining participant standing within the Voluntary Program.	3
Documentation and Recordkeeping Adequacy of systems for maintaining program records and demonstrating program implementation and participant standing.	2

Program Approval

The Executive Officer will review submitted applications and may approve Voluntary Programs that demonstrate the ability to meet the requirements of the Vineyard Order and applicable Third-Party Program requirements described in Attachment C of the Vineyard Order.

As part of the approval process, the Executive Officer may ask prospective programs to provide revisions or additional information or clarify elements submitted in the Program Manual. The North Coast Water Board intends to approve all qualifying Voluntary Programs at least one year in advance of enrollment in the Vineyard Order, which begins on **July 1, 2028**.

Once approved, Voluntary Programs are expected to operate on an ongoing basis throughout the duration of the Vineyard Order. The North Coast Water Board may periodically review approved programs to evaluate continued implementation of the Program Manual. Approved Voluntary Programs in good standing will be listed on the North Coast Water Board's Vineyard program webpage.²

The North Coast Water Board may request additional information, conduct audits of the Voluntary Program, or require modifications to the Program Manual if necessary to ensure the program continues to meet the requirements and objectives of the Vineyard Order.

² https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/agricultural_lands/Vineyards/