



State Water Resources Control Board

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Water Quality Protection Conditional Waivers Approved

Sacramento-The five-member State Water Resources Control Board today unanimously approved three conditional waivers offering cutting edge protection for water quality.

"This is a great opportunity for farmers and others to affirm their role as stewards of the land," said Arthur G. Baggett, Jr., chair of the State Water Resources Control Board. "This is the first program to regulate agriculture in the United States and a first step in a process to ensure we protect our water quality and our public's health."

The first conditional waiver gaining approval is for agricultural discharges to state waters. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for discharges of water containing pesticides, nutrients and other contaminates to surface water from irrigated lands in July 2003. Owners or operators of irrigated farm lands will now have three choices for discharges of waste to surface water:

- Participation by individual farmers (Individual Dischargers)
- Participation by groups of farmers (Coalition Groups).
- Participation by filing a report of waste discharge and receiving waste discharge requirements

Individual Dischargers and Coalition Groups must submit a Notice of Intent to the Regional Board to become enrolled in the program, and must prepare runoff monitoring plans as well as management plans for control of their runoff.

The conditional waivers are a part of the Regional Board's irrigated lands program that regulates water runoff from farms and croplands. Other aspects of the program include the development of a 10-year plan to meet water quality standards, working with coalition groups, local groups, landowners, growers and others and providing monitoring and research on how various agricultural practices affect the surface waters of the Central Valley. The conditional waiver allows time for coalition groups to form, identify and deal with runoff problems in their watersheds.

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The other conditional waivers approved are for timber harvesting practices. These conditional waivers include monitoring requirements, reporting requirements and the development of best management practices.

The State Board orders uphold the Central Valley and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Boards' conditional waivers for discharges from timber harvesting activities, including the decision to issue conditional waivers instead of waste discharge requirements.

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