



Media Release

Central Coast Regional Water Board Approves Irrigated Lands Agricultural Order

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The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board today approved a new irrigated lands agricultural order that continues the monitoring and reporting requirements for nitrate and pesticides of the 2012 order, while expanding the number of ranches included in the requirements.

The order addresses serious groundwater and surface water contamination in Central Coast farming areas brought about by over application of fertilizers and pesticides.

The new order follows the format of the 2012 order, in which farms and ranches are divided into three tiers based on the potential threat they pose to water quality, with correspondingly strict monitoring and reporting requirements.

While most of the provisions in the order are the same as those in the 2012 order, there are some significant changes. The new order will require fertilizer application reporting for 1,700 farms and ranches, compared to 600 in the previous order. At the same time, the interim order reduces or deletes some of the monitoring requirements from the 2012 order.

The changes are the result of extensive outreach and dialog between Water Board staff and stakeholders, including farm groups and environmental and social justice representatives, as well as data and information analysis from the previous order.

The Central Coast Water Board's Chair, Dr. Jean-Pierre Wolff, stated that "engagement among ag interests, environmental groups, and governmental agencies helped produce a better permit that will improve water quality throughout the Region."

"This order will continue to provide critical data needed to address the serious water contamination in our region, while giving growers the clarity and continuity they need going forward," said Central Coast Water Board Executive Officer John Robertson.

The term of the new order is three years rather than the maximum five years for a typical order, so that pending legal rulings and policy decisions can be incorporated in a subsequent order.



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Nitrate pollution of drinking water supplies is a critical problem throughout the Central Coast Region. Studies indicate that fertilizer from irrigated agriculture is the largest primary source of nitrate pollution in drinking water wells. Significant loading of nitrate continues as a result of agricultural fertilizer practices.

Hundreds of drinking water wells serving thousands of people throughout the region have nitrate levels exceeding the drinking water standard. This presents a significant threat to human health.

The text of the interim order can be read here:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/index.shtml

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