



# YUBA-SUTTER FARM BUREAU

*Serving agriculture since 1919*



May 24, 2016

Ms. Jeanine Townsend  
Clerk to the Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor [95814]  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100  
[commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov)

RE: Files A2239 (a)-(c) (Eastern San Joaquin Ag Petitions)

Ms. Townsend,

The Yuba-Sutter Farm Bureau (YSFB) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board) Proposed Order revising the Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's General Waste Discharge Requirements.

YSFB is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership California Corporation whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout Yuba and Sutter counties and to find solutions to problems of the farm, the farm home and the rural community. YSFB represents more than 1,200 agricultural, associate and collegiate members in Yuba and Sutter counties, and those agricultural members represent a significant amount of Yuba and Sutter acreage currently enrolled in the Butte-Yuba-Sutter Water Quality Coalition.

YSFB is deeply interested in protecting the long-term viability of agricultural areas and rural communities located in our region as the stability of the local agricultural industry plays an integral role not only within our rural communities and counties, but regionally, nationally and internationally. YSFB and the members we represent are equally interested in protecting our natural resources, including the quality of our water and the health of our soils. Our livelihoods require of us to carefully manage and protect these precious resources. In addition, we live where we farm, where our children play, and where a myriad of wildlife live either seasonally or year round. This intimate relationship we have with the land and our resources requires of us to be mindful of how we manage our farming practices in order to minimize and eliminate adverse impacts to the resources we depend upon.

The intent of this letter is to request no changes to the current Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's General Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR). In our opinion, the current WDR is protective of water quality and is providing ample information needed to determine the effectiveness of the program regarding water quality concerns in compliance with the Water Code and the State Water Board's policies.

The State Board's Proposed Revisions are precedential and would apply to other Water Quality Coalitions in the Central Valley and Statewide, including the WDR for the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition, of which the Butte-Yuba-Sutter Water Quality Coalition is a member. Our Farm Bureau members are required to enroll in the Butte-Yuba-Sutter Water Quality Coalition in order to comply with the irrigated lands regulatory program.

Our concerns regarding the Proposed Revisions are as follows:

- The Proposed Revisions include requirements that will disrupt the existing successful irrigated lands regulatory program which has been effective in addressing surface water quality concerns and protecting water quality. Given the precedential nature of the Proposed Order, it will not only have a severe impact on agricultural operations within the Central Valley, but throughout the state.
- The Proposed Revisions will burden individual farmers and ranchers with additional reporting requirements, increased Regional Board per acre fees, and from increased fees that can be expected from additional administrative and hard costs required of the Butte-Yuba-Sutter Water Quality Coalition to manage the increased workload and data.
- The Proposed Revisions will erode the continued existence of the Butte-Yuba-Sutter Water Quality Coalition, and other local coalitions farmers and ranchers belong to, as the Proposed Revisions undermines the usefulness and benefit of the coalitions.
- The Proposed Revisions are precedential and would give direction to the Central Valley Water Board and all other Regional Water Boards to update (or develop) their irrigated lands regulatory programs to be consistent with the Proposed Order. The Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition has continued to advocate for and provide supporting documentation of our regional differences. Although we oppose the Proposed Revisions for the Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's WDR, requiring the same standards for other areas of the state are not appropriate nor necessary to address the intent of the WDRs to be protective of surface and ground water.
- The Proposed Revisions create privacy concerns given the requirements for the coalitions to submit all raw data, including field-specific farm evaluation and management practice data identified by location, and all nitrogen application data by field. Currently, the coalitions submit data aggregated at the township level (the coalitions maintain the raw data which is accessible to the Regional Board if needed). Information held by the Regional Board is public data; changing the current format to submitting field-specific data directly to the Regional Board is a major privacy concern for our farmers and ranchers.
- The Proposed Revisions completely upends the current monitoring and reporting requirements within the existing irrigated lands regulatory program which provides the Regional Water Board with ample information needed to determine the effectiveness of the program regarding water quality concerns in compliance with the Water Code and the State Water Board's policies.
- The Proposed Revisions include new nitrogen application accounting requirements - reporting of nitrogen applied divided by nitrogen removed (A/R), as well as nitrogen applied minus nitrogen removed (A-R)) and the development of nitrogen removed coefficients - placing significant new and unnecessary burdens on farmers. Each farm will be required to report their crop yield. Currently, only a small handful of nitrogen removed coefficients have been developed for crops grown in California. And finally, the reporting of the multi-year ratio of nitrogen applied to the field to nitrogen removed from the field, or the A/R ratio, will become a regulatory target.
- The Proposed Revisions require each farm to monitor its drinking water wells, including land owner or tenant wells that farmers and ranchers may not have authority to access.

In closing, we want to stress our request for no revisions to the current Eastern San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's General WDR. The current WDR is protective of water quality and is providing ample information needed to determine the effectiveness of the irrigated lands regulatory program regarding water quality concerns in compliance with the Water Code and the State Water Board's policies.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Revisions. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Regards,



David J. Burroughs, President