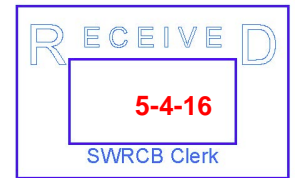


Comments on SWRCB Proposed Order: Revisions to East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition
General Waste Discharge Requirements: Statewide Application

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May 4 9:00 am: Cal EPA Building: 1001 I Street Sacramento

My husband Bob and I are first generation farmers: Walnuts, Yolo County

We moved to our ranch north of Woodland 24 +/- years ago. We lived there with our children: still live there and continue to drink our groundwater. In fact, since it is lower in acidity than town water - I carefully pour it in s/s bottles for all out of home use and we have used it for years in lieu of buying cases of plastic bottles -

We consider ourselves stewards of our land and our water. We are careful about the management practices that we use in our operation, and between my husband and I, I handle the compliance work: pesticide permits, Hazardous Material filings, burn permits, personal property itemizations, etc. Our foreman has worked for us over 25 years. He and his family also live on one of our ranches and also drink the groundwater. I consider it my responsibility to have our domestic wells tested when I believe it to be necessary: and I believe that it is not the responsibility of the SWRCB to attach a domestic well testing requirement to - essentially - an unrelated Irrigated Lands Statewide Waste Discharge Requirement. I add that our foreman and his family's well being is of sufficient concern to us that we have paid medical and dental insurance premiums for all of them - for years before there were any legal requirements to do so. In fact, we are all on the same medical plan.

I have many concerns about this proposed draft order and its extension throughout the state. I call your attention to three: I have been active in farm bureau for the last 10 years or so and have become familiar with our ag community. I want to emphasize that our growers are committed to following the Central Vally order: they want to farm within the law. What concerns me is the increasing percentage of our growers who are becoming marginalized by the never ending pressure placed on them by the current Water Board requirements. Some of these growers are not native English speakers. Some are finding it increasingly difficult to understand and interact with our coalition, to do the prescribed tasks in a timely fashion, or at all, because they have no computer skills, to say nothing of internet access, they may have limited technical skills, or are simply members of an older generation. They may be simply overwhelmed by the crush of ongoing requirements. Increasing the burden and detail of the watershed requirements will make it even more difficult for these valuable members of our farming community to stay within the law. I cannot believe that it is the intent of the SWRCB to force persons out of compliance and out of agriculture who cannot comply with these requirements due to their unique situations, and through no fault of their own. I also note that these increased requirements impose a much less onerous burden on large farming operations and penalize small operations, who simply cannot hire an employee or assign an existing employee to handle these tasks. For instance, in our operation, I am the person who will have to take on these additional responsibilities. These requirements will cause me even more difficulties in balancing my family, ranch, community and volunteer responsibilities.

Second: there is no reason to impose on a sub watershed coalition that is working well, with no exceedences, additional requirements simply because, in the judgment of the SWRCB, some areas of the state would benefit from stricter requirements. If the Board continues down this road and imposes these onerous requirements statewide, it will be viewed as punitive by the farmers in our coalition and they may be less willing to commit the time and effort to comply if they believe their valuable and time consuming efforts that have resulted in successful Yolo County water management are being met with the regulatory equivalent of punishment. It shows a total lack of trust and confidence by the SWRCB in the coalitions and the growers, which mutuality must exist for the coalitions to successfully perform their functions.

Third, I have major concerns about the loss of privacy to our growers. The coalition has worked well because it is an insulator between the farmer and the public. All of the requisite information that the Board has asked for has been timely provided by the growers, to the coalition and funneled through it to the Regional Board. This protocol has prevented farmer specific information from becoming public record in the hands of a state agency. Giving farmers this protection has no doubt provided a barrier to unnecessary queries and targeting of individual growers by members of the public. I believe the burden imposed on the farming community by a change from private information to agency and web based information risks unnecessary harassment and potential groundless litigation which nevertheless must be defended and can, itself, put the targeted farmer out of business. The proposed concept also suggests increased costs for employees, both at the coalitions and at the CVWQCB, all of which will be an unwelcome and difficult expense to be borne by the agricultural community.

In conclusion, I ask the SWRCB to withdraw this proposed order.