

Irrigated Lands Waiver

The Water Boards have made some important decisions that are effective immediately and may affect you.

The purpose of this brochure is to explain these decisions and what they mean to you.

Growers within the Central Valley who have irrigation return water and/or stormwater runoff leaving their croplands are affected by these decisions. The Regional Board decided on three options for growers to avoid pollution of rivers, streams and creeks by pesticides, fertilizers, sediment, and other pollutants.

Here's What You Need to Do:

First, you must decide which of the three options works best for you:

1. Join a coalition group and apply for a group waiver, or
2. Apply for an individual discharger waiver, or
3. Submit a complete application for a permit.

Participating in a coalition group is the simplest and most economical way to comply with the requirements.

OPTION 1:

Join a coalition group and comply with the coalition group waiver.

A coalition group is any group receiving Regional Board approval to operate under the terms and conditions of the coalition group conditional waiver.

Coalition groups organize growers to share best management practices, conduct monitoring of rivers and creeks, apply for grants, and work cooperatively toward improving water quality.

In addition to growers, coalition groups may include representatives from the farm bureaus, county agricultural commissioners, RCDs, the NRCS, farm advisors and water agencies. You should check with any of these organizations in your area to get information.

The coalition group, on behalf of the members, must submit an application called a Notice of Intent to the Regional Board. On acceptance of the Notice of Intent, the Regional Board will issue a Notice of Applicability that the coalition group waiver covers the coalition group and its participants.

More costly than forming a coalition group, but also an option, is the individual discharge waiver.

OPTION 2:

How to Apply for, and Comply with an individual discharger waiver.

Growers who do not join a coalition group may submit an individual discharger Notice of Intent to the Regional Board. The individual discharger Notice of Intent form is at our Web site: www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb5/programs/irrigated_lands/ or available from the Regional Board.

On acceptance of the Notice of Intent, the Regional Board will issue a Notice of Applicability to the grower.

If you want the regional board to develop requirements for your individual situation, you may chose Option 3. This is the most challenging for the grower.

OPTION 3:

Submit a complete application for a permit.

Growers who do not choose Options 1 or 2 must submit an application called a Report of Waste Discharge to the Regional Board. The application form is at our Web site: www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb5/programs/irrigated_lands/ or available from the Regional Board.

The grower may also be required to provide sufficient information for the Regional Board to fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

Once the Regional Board determines that it has enough information, it may develop and issue a permit to the individual grower. This permit is called a waste discharge requirement.

How will the waivers begin to protect water quality?

The coalition group waiver and the individual discharger waiver require owners and/or operators of irrigated lands to manage their operations so they do not cause or contribute to surface water pollution. The waivers contain conditions that require water quality monitoring, implementation of management practices to address water quality problems and reporting to the Regional Board. The conditional waivers allow time for coalition groups to form, begin to identify and deal with the problems in their watersheds.

The waivers are a part of an evolving water quality protection program. If these waivers are found to be ineffective, permits will be issued.

In order to comply with the conditions of the waivers, coalition groups and individual growers will review the available data for their watershed, develop monitoring plans, and prioritize their efforts to address known problems or pollutants of concern, such as pesticides or nutrients.

Can I lose eligibility to participate in the conditional waivers?

Yes. Growers who do not meet waiver conditions or who do not participate under one of the waivers submit a Report of Waste Discharge to the Regional Board and waste discharge requirements may be issued.

Keep informed!

These conditional waivers are part of a long-term effort to address water quality issues from agricultural discharges. Owners and operators of irrigated lands are encouraged to contact farm bureaus, county agricultural commissioners, RCDs, the NRCS, farm advisors, water agencies, local coalition groups or the Regional Board to learn more about the program, and track progress as these efforts move forward.

For more information, see our Web site:
www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb5/programs/irrigated_lands/

- **E-mail us at: AgWaiver@rb5s.swrcb.ca.gov**
- **Call (916) 464-3291**

