

State Water Resources Control Board

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STATE & REGIONAL WATER BOARDS REVIEW PROGRESS ON IRRIGATED LANDS PROGRAM

SACRAMENTO – The State and Regional Water Boards Thursday held a joint meeting to review the progress of the Irrigated Lands Waiver.

In January, the State Water Resources Control Board upheld the Central Valley Regional Board's conditional waiver, which requires monitoring of runoff from irrigated lands. The State Board ordered a six-month review of the conditional waiver. The first review was held Thursday in a rare joint State and Regional Water Board meeting.

The Regional Board waived the requirement to get permits with the condition that gives growers three options:

- Join a coalition group and apply for a group waiver, or
- Apply for an individual discharger waiver, or
- Get an individual permit.

Each of these options requires that growers manage their operations so they do not cause or contribute to surface water pollution. Growers are required to conduct water-monitoring, carry out management practices to prevent water quality problems and prioritize their efforts to address problems or pollutants of concern, such as pesticides or nutrients. Agricultural commissioners, growers, coalition groups and environmental groups were among the many speakers who described efforts and obstacles at Thursday's six-hour meeting.

"Californians want and deserve clean water. The Irrigated Lands Program is designed to work with growers to achieve this goal in a reasonable manner. Most of the growers in the Central Valley understand this and have established and joined coalition groups, designed monitoring plans, and are working to ensure that runoff from irrigated lands does not degrade the quality of water in the Central Valley," said Bob Schneider, chair of the Central Valley Regional Board.

"This process is an evolving one and one that addresses water quality problems. The coalition groups have made strides in the process and are moving forward," said Arthur G. Baggett, Jr., chair of the State Water Board. "We heard about a lot of terrific work today, but we also heard about areas where efforts need to be stepped up. We will continue the program and encourage groups to increase efforts in monitoring, outreach, and coalition membership."

Growers can keep informed about the process by logging on to the Web site at: www.swrcb.gov/rwqcb5/programs/irrigated_lands
e-mailing at: AgWaiver@rb5s.swrcb.ca.gov
telephone: (916) 464-3291

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