

News Release

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
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CENTRAL COAST WATER BOARD EXECUTIVE OFFICER REACHES AGREEMENT WITH FARMS ON IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE PENALTIES

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Agro-Jal Farms, Strawberry Services, Francioni Brothers, and FYP Vineyards agreed to pay fines ranging from \$3,000 to \$14,000 for irrigated agriculture violations that began in January 2005.

In December 2007, Water Board staff proposed penalties for each farm for failing to enroll in the irrigated agriculture regulatory program, and failing to pay administrative and monitoring fees that apply to all commercial irrigated farming operations from Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties, down through Santa Barbara County.

The Central Coast Water Board issued the order for irrigated agriculture in July 2004 to ensure that farming operations properly manage runoff to protect surface water and groundwater quality. The farms' late enrollments delayed farm water quality management plan development and farm staff training. Late enrollments also required other participating farms to cover the costs of a cooperative monitoring program. Monitoring is designed to assist all parties in better understanding the pollutants in irrigation runoff, its impacts on water quality, and potential solutions. Drainage from farm irrigation commonly flows to surface waters throughout the region.

In addition to paying the penalties, each farm has enrolled in the program; developed or is developing a water quality management plan; trained its personnel, and paid all past fees due since January 2005. A portion of each penalty will go to Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc. to provide additional ag water quality monitoring throughout the region.

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is a California state agency tasked with preservation and enhancement of water quality.

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