

**Board Meeting Comments from March 17, 2011 Ag Hearing
Submitted on testimony cards by those who couldn't stay at the hearing**

From: Dvera Saxton, PhD Candidate – American University

I am a PhD candidate in Anthropology from the American University. I've lived in Watsonville since 2010, and my research focuses on farmworker health in organic and conventional farming. Farmworker health, my research will show, is not just about the risks inherent to agricultural workplaces; it is also connected to social and economic inequalities as well as environmental hazards present in the communities in which we all live. Agriculture is both sustaining farmworkers and our regional and state economies, and simultaneously killing them. As many laws and policies that exist, they are not enforced, putting not only public and environmental health at risks, but the fate of agriculture itself. Farmers can play an important role in reversing these trends-especially regarding the health of the water-by becoming stewards rather than net consumers and depleters of natural and human resources. I am especially concerned about the introduction of methyl iodide and the permanent damage it will cause to ground water, and thus to human and enviro health as well as agriculture. That would make strawberry growers in part responsible!

From: Monterey Regional Stormwater Program Manager Heidi Nyzemeyer

Questions/Comments for consideration:

- 1) Regarding the "collaborative" approach presented by the Grower-Shipper Association:
 - how can they involve the public via outreach to work together to develop solutions to problem areas if the public cannot access their data?
 - If they (farmers) have the money for third-party oversight, why can't they use that money for groundwater monitoring?
 - How can a third party be objective and enforce the process if that third party is being paid by the growers they oversee?
 - There are no numeric action limits or numeric goals to achieve and measure effectiveness by.
 - Third party only audits once/year for implementation actions. How do they determine the BMPs they are using are effective or not since there isn't any groundwater monitoring?
 - Reporting done on group basis (%) instead of reporting who is noncompliant.
- 2) Tier levels should be congruent with risk level, not size. The Construction GP uses risk levels for construction projects and the new Phase 2 permit will be assigning risk levels to watersheds. There should be similar risk levels for Ag.
- 3) Ag annual reports should include effectiveness assessments. Phase 1 and 2 MS4s have this requirement.
- 4) Monitoring should be equal across the board (Ag, MS4s, etc)

Notes from Regional Board Meeting of 3/17/11

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From: Paula Placencia
[translation of Spanish original]

I would like you to take into account that the farmworker community is the one that suffers the consequences of all these contaminants that have an impact on health.

The government should protect the community, and the regional board has an obligation to protect water quality. The affected community is not only impacted in terms of our health, but also economically. We are talking about the farmworker community, that does not have economic resources.

Thank you very much.

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From Kaley Grimland, Environmental Policy Analyst/Organic Farmer, Carmel, CA 93923

With the passing of the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2010, the FDA will have more access to on-farm inspections and requires that farming operations have a Food Safety Plan. Stricter food safety requirements are the direct cause of removal of agriculture conservation practices (vegetated roads, buffers & ditches, grassed waterways, cover crop, habitat, and filling of farm ponds/drainage ditches) by farmers. Concurrently, the removal of such agriculture conservation practices directly affects on-farm & downstream water quality, watershed and ecosystem health. Therefore, co-management is NECESSARY with food safety regulators, farmers, RWQCB staff and Board, environmentalists, to allow farmers to both prosper in farming and achieving water quality standards.

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From Cecile Mills from Royal Oaks, California.

As a Board, you compromised before. You thought Ag would comply. It didn't. Runoff actually got worse. Now is not the time to compromise-and fail-again. It's too late and you have a duty to your communities. Your first draft of the regulations was a strong stand against agricultural runoff. The current draft, however, has been weakened by compromise again. For both your sakes and ours, vote in favor of the first draft of these regulations. Your time for compromise is past. To ensure fairness, empower state employees to monitor and record runoff, not the Ag businesses. Spare them that cost. When the expenses of doing business become great, smart business owners change how they do business. Your costs as a Board are now too great. Our community water systems are threatened, our precious marine sanctuary is threatened. Vote for the First Draft and empower state employees to do the monitoring and recording. For your courage, both humans and wildlife will thank you.