

ITEM

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SUBJECT

Rice Pesticide Program, Management Practices for the 2005 Rice Season

BOARD ACTION

Consideration of Approval of 2005 Management Practices

A Basin Plan prohibition of discharge is in effect for irrigation tailwater containing specific pesticides until the Board approves management practices for 2005. The Board may approve the program as proposed by the California Rice Commission (CRC), approve the program subject to new or additional conditions or take no action, which would keep the prohibition in effect. Staff recommendation is to approve the practices as proposed by the CRC, with a slight modification in language.

BACKGROUND

The Basin Plan states that the discharge of irrigation return flows containing carbofuran, malathion, methyl parathion, molinate and thiobencarb is prohibited unless the discharger is following a management practice approved by the Regional Board, and that implementation of these management practices must be expected to result in compliance with the performance goals. The Basin Plan contains performance goals for the five pesticides and a 1.0 µg/l thiobencarb water quality objective. The water quality objective level, applicable to waters designated as municipal or domestic supply, is also the secondary MCL set to prevent taste complaints in drinking water supplies.

Each year the California Rice Commission (CRC), a commodity group representing all of California's rice growers and handlers, submits an annual report to the Regional Board summarizing the previous season's monitoring efforts and implementation of management practices. The annual report also recommends management practices for the upcoming rice season.

On 18 March 2004, the Board approved management practices for 2004 continuing the new conditions put in place in 2003, including a Storm Event Work Group, increased monitoring of thiobencarb, a prohibition on the use of Bolero® 10G in the Sacramento Valley, restrictions on the use of thiobencarb near rivers, and increased education efforts including CRC-hosted preseason mandatory stewardship meetings.

ISSUES

Board approval of management practices continues to allow rice farmers in the Sacramento to discharge to public waterways. Without approval of the Program farmers will face prohibition of the discharge of return flows containing the five rice pesticides, as stated in the Basin Plan.

In 2004 record acres of rice were planted in the Sacramento Valley due to reduced production in other parts of the world. Even though rice acreage was up substantially in the Sacramento Valley in comparison with previous years, monitoring of agricultural drains and the Sacramento River detected much lower levels of thiobencarb and molinate than observed from 1998 to 2002.

After consultation with Board staff and the Department of Pesticide Registration and soliciting comments from municipal supply stakeholders, the CRC has proposed conditions for the 2005 season. These conditions maintain the 2004 requirements with minor modifications. Additional details are provided in the attached staff report.

Mgmt. Review _____
Legal Review _____

17/18 March 2005

CVRWQCB
Region 5 Board Meeting
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