

ITEM: 4

SUBJECT: Workshop on Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers in the Sacramento River Watershed that are Members of the Third-party Group

BOARD ACTION: *No board action. Information Item.*

BACKGROUND: On 11 September 2013, staff circulated draft waste discharge requirements for discharges from irrigated lands for growers that are members of a third-party group within the Sacramento River Watershed (draft order). Interested person comments were due by 11 October 2013. Staff revisions to the draft order based on interested person comments are expected to begin in October of this year. A tentative general order is scheduled to be circulated for public comment in December 2013. At a March 2014 hearing in Rancho Cordova, staff intends to propose board adoption of the tentative general order. The draft order and attachments are included in this agenda package.

In general, the draft order is similar to the board adopted Waste Discharge Requirements for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed (Eastern San Joaquin Order). The draft order addresses discharges to both surface water and groundwater, requires surface water monitoring, trend groundwater monitoring, and evaluation of management practice effectiveness. The draft order maintains the use of third-party entities to represent growers, and requires farm evaluations by growers, nitrogen management and reporting by individual growers in high vulnerability groundwater areas, and sediment and erosion control plans where applicable. The draft order also provides more time for small farming operations to comply with certain requirements.

The primary differences between the draft order and the Eastern San Joaquin Order are in three areas.

- 1) Members of the third-party who are identified as having the potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters or may cause a violation of an applicable water quality objective are required to implement Sediment and Erosion Control Plans. The draft order includes a provision whereby these Members may participate in a watershed/subwatershed based (or collective) Sediment and Erosion Control Plan that includes collective management practices for the control of sediment (e.g. sediment control basin at the bottom of a drainage area), in addition to individual management practices.
- 2) For surface water monitoring, Representative sites are monitored for two consecutive years in a four year period. Representative sites are similar to and geographically near the drainages they represent. If a water quality objective trigger limit is exceeded in monitoring at a Representative site, monitoring must continue for an additional year beyond the originally scheduled years.

Monitoring at Integration monitoring sites, which sample surface water from large and diverse drainages, will be conducted four times annually on an ongoing basis to identify long-term trends of agricultural drainage in the Sacramento River Watershed.

The third-party will have the option of applying for a reduced monitoring schedule for areas where there is a low threat of pesticide discharges from irrigated lands, there are no management plans for toxicity, pesticides, copper or nutrients, and there is a low intensity of agricultural land use. The reduced monitoring will be coupled with a program for management practice verification.

- 3) Current coalition members would have one year to confirm their coverage under the final Order with submittal of the initial membership renewal form. This change from the approach in the Eastern San Joaquin Order will allow the third-party to work with the different billing cycles of each of its different subwatershed groups.

RECOMMENDATION There is no staff recommendation for this workshop item. The board may provide direction to staff based on the staff presentation and comments received from the public.

Mgmt. Review ___JK___
Legal Review ___APM___
30 October 2013
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