

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

ORDER R5-2015-XXXX – INFORMATION SHEET

**REVISING ORDER R5-2014-0001
WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER
FOR GROWERS WITHIN THE WESTERN TULARE LAKE BASIN AREA THAT ARE
MEMBERS OF A THIRD-PARTY GROUP (WESTERN TULARE LAKE BASIN AREA OR
WTLBA GENERAL ORDER)**

As described in the Findings, the Tentative Order would change deadlines for Members of a Third-Party Group to:

- Submit an initial Farm Evaluation;
- Complete a Nitrogen Management Plan using a template approved by the Board's Executive Officer;
- Certify a Nitrogen Management Plan; and
- Prepare a Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report.

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board staff (Staff) are proposing changes to the impending deadlines because the above requirements are dependent on information that will be contained in the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR).

Background Information

The WTLBA General Order requires the third-party group to submit a GAR by 16 February 2015. In addition to providing the foundational information for development of groundwater monitoring programs within the Western Tulare Lake Basin Area, the GAR identifies high and low vulnerability areas. The WTLBA General Order also requires that all farms in high vulnerability areas submit a completed Farm Evaluation to the third-party group by 1 March 2015 and that all large farming operations located in high vulnerability areas prepare a Nitrogen Management Plan by 1 March 2015. This schedule only provides 13 days for Staff and the third-party group to complete the GAR review process and notify growers of their vulnerability designation. Growers in high vulnerability areas would then still need to complete Farm Evaluations and Nitrogen Management Plans within the same 13 day period. This submittal schedule is infeasible and therefore, modifications to some deadlines within the WTLBA General Order are needed to ensure that growers in high vulnerability area have sufficient time to complete Farm Evaluations and Nitrogen Management Plans.

In addition to the timing conflicts, this Order also considered the impacts the drought is having on growers within the Western Tulare Lake Basin Area and provides growers with temporary relief by postponing the costs associated with some of the WTLBA General Order requirements while also resolving the timing conflicts discussed above.

Revisions to Submittal Schedule

This Order includes revisions to the submittal schedule for the Farm Evaluation, preparation and certification of Nitrogen Management Plans, and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Reports. Specifically, this Order provides growers in high vulnerability areas with a one year extension for the submittal of a Farm Evaluations, certification of Nitrogen Management Plans, and the submittal of a Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Reports.

Though this Order revises several impending deadlines, it does not significantly alter the deadline for large farms in high vulnerability areas to prepare Nitrogen Management Plans. After the Order is modified, large farms in high vulnerability areas will be required to prepare a Nitrogen Management Plan within 90 days of the date the Executive Officer issues the Nitrogen Management Plan Template. On 23 December 2014, the Executive Officer issued the Nitrogen Management Plan Template to the third-party groups. Thus, the 1 March 2015 deadline that is currently part of the Order will not significantly change. It is critical that Nitrogen Management Plans are completed in the spring, prior to the growing season for most crop types.

Staff has scheduled a meeting with the third-party group on 9 January 2015 to discuss the process for determining high and low vulnerability areas. If an agreement on the vulnerability designation process is not reached by 16 February 2015, the Executive Officer may make the final determination regarding high and low vulnerability areas. The changes included in this Order are consistent with changes made by the Waste Discharge Requirements General Order R5-2014-0143, adopted by the Board on 4 December 2014.