

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION

ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY ORDER R5-2016-XXXX

IN THE MATTER OF

WILLIAM AND MARIA EGLESTON
MERCED COUNTY

This Order is issued pursuant to California Water Code¹ section 13323 to William & Maria Egleston, (Dischargers) for failing to submit a Report of Waste Discharge (RoWD) required under Water Code section 13260.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board or Board) finds the following:

1. The discharge of irrigation return flows or storm water from irrigated lands in the Central Valley Region may contribute, or have the potential to contribute waste to ground and/or surface waters. The term "waste" is broadly defined in California Water Code section 13050, subdivision (d), and includes runoff of sediment or agricultural chemicals. The term "waters of the state" includes all surface water and groundwater within the state. (Wat. Code, § 13050(e).) The Central Valley Water Board is required to regulate discharges to waters of the state. (Wat. Code, § 13263.)
2. Attachment E of the Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Discharges from Irrigated Lands within the Central Valley Region for Dischargers not Participating in a Third-Party Group (Order R5-2013-0100) and Attachment E of the Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group (Order R5-2012-0116-R3) define "irrigated lands" as "[I]and irrigated to produce crops or pasture for commercial purposes; nurseries; and privately and publicly managed wetlands."
3. Central Valley Water Board staff developed a list of landowners in Merced County, including the Dischargers, which were likely to be discharging wastewater from irrigated lands to waters of the state and did not have regulatory coverage under waste discharge requirements (i.e., permits) or waivers of waste discharge requirements.
4. In developing this list, Central Valley Water Board staff used county assessor data and geographical land use data (i.e., the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) land use data) to assist in identifying potential discharges of

¹ All references to the Water Code refer to the California Water Code unless otherwise noted.

agricultural wastewater to waters of the state and to identify owners and operators of agricultural lands who may not have complied with the Water Code. Both data sets were used to develop lists of parcels for which Water Code section 13260 Directive Letters were issued requiring landowners to obtain regulatory coverage for lands irrigated for a commercial purpose.

5. Evaluation of county assessor and FMMP data indicates that the Dischargers own 19.5 acres of agricultural land, as identified as Merced County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 056-040-049.
6. On 6 February 2013 and 18 April 2013, the Central Valley Water Board issued notices to the Dischargers describing new water quality regulations and options available to comply with the regulations.
7. In 2013, the Dischargers enrolled in the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (Coalition). In July 2014, the Dischargers' membership was canceled for failure to pay Coalition dues.
8. On 7 November 2014, the Assistant Executive Officer of the Central Valley Water Board issued a Water Code section 13260 Directive Letter (Directive) to the Dischargers, sent via certified mail. The Directive was sent based on information that the Dischargers' irrigated lands no longer had regulatory coverage. The Directive required the Dischargers to obtain regulatory coverage within 15 calendar days of receipt of the Directive.
9. The Dischargers received the Directive on 8 November 2014. The Dischargers neither obtained regulatory coverage by 23 November 2014 nor contacted the Board.
10. Because the Dischargers failed to respond by the deadline specified in the Directive, a Notice of Violation (NOV) was sent to the Dischargers via certified mail on 8 January 2015. The Dischargers received the NOV on 10 January 2015.
11. On 13 January 2015, the Dischargers submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to join the Coalition and a \$200 administrative fee to the Board. However, the Dischargers did not obtain regulatory coverage by joining the Coalition or other means.
12. On 17 December 2015, Board staff conducted a field inspection of the Dischargers' property at Merced County APN 056-040-049, and found evidence of land irrigated for a commercial purpose based on the type of crop, almonds, and the size of the operation, 19.5 acres.
13. On 12 January 2016, Board staff contacted the Dischargers to discuss the forthcoming ACL and a proposed penalty. Staff explained that the

Dischargers should promptly obtain regulatory coverage or face a potential ACL Complaint.

14. On 5 February 2016, Board staff sent the Dischargers a notification letter via certified mail stating that an ACL Complaint would be issued if they did not obtain regulatory coverage and initiate settlement discussions by 24 February 2016.
15. The Dischargers received the pre-ACL letter on 8 February 2016. The Dischargers contacted Board staff in response to the pre-ACL letter, but a settlement was not reached.
16. On 28 March 2016, the Dischargers re-enrolled in the Coalition and paid the Coalition dues and back dues, thus coming into compliance with the Directive.

VIOLATION

17. On 8 August 2016, the Assistant Executive Officer of the Central Valley Water Board issued Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (ACL Complaint) R5-2016-0542 to the Dischargers in the amount of twenty two thousand and twenty two dollars (\$22,022) for failure to timely obtain Coalition membership or submit a RoWD as required by Water Code section 13260.

REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

18. The Central Valley Water Board's authority to regulate waste discharges that could affect the quality of the waters of the state, which includes both surface water and groundwater, is found in the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Water Code Division 7).
19. Water Code section 13260, subdivision (a), requires that any "person discharging waste, or proposing to discharge waste, within any region that could affect the quality of the waters of the state, other than into a community sewer system," shall file with the appropriate regional board a report of waste discharge containing such information and data as may be required by the regional board. The Central Valley Regional Board implements Water Code section 13260 in the area where the Dischargers' lands are located.
20. Pursuant to Water Code section 13261, subdivision (a), "[a] person who fails to furnish a report or pay a fee under Section 13260 when so requested by a regional board is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be liable civilly in accordance with subdivision (b)."

21. Water Code section 13261, subdivision (b)(1), states:

Civil liability may be administratively imposed by a regional board or the state board in accordance with Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 13323) of Chapter 5 for a violation of subdivision (a) in an amount not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each day in which the violation occurs. Civil liability shall not be imposed by the regional board pursuant to this section if the state board has imposed liability against the same person for the same violation.

22. Pursuant to Water Code section 13327, in determining the amount of civil liability, the Central Valley Water Board shall take into consideration the nature, circumstance, extent, and gravity of the violation or violations, whether the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement, the degree of toxicity of the discharge, and, with respect to the violator, the ability to pay, the effect on ability to continue in business, any voluntary cleanup efforts undertaken, any prior history of violations, the degree of culpability, economic benefit or savings, if any, resulting from the violation, and other matters as justice may require.
23. On 17 November 2008 the State Water Resources Control Board adopted Resolution No. 2009-0083 amending the Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy). The Enforcement Policy was approved by the Office of Administrative Law and became effective on 20 May 2010. The Enforcement Policy establishes a methodology for assessing administrative civil liability. The use of this methodology addresses the factors that are required to be considered when imposing an administrative civil liability as outlined in Water Code section 13327.
24. This administrative civil liability was derived from the use of the penalty methodology in the Enforcement Policy, as explained in detail in Attachment A to this Order. The administrative civil liability takes into account such factors as the Dischargers' culpability, history of violations, ability to pay and continue in business, and other factors as justice may require.
25. **Maximum and Minimum Penalties.** As described above, the statutory maximum under Water Code section 13261, subdivision (b)(1) is \$1,000 per day of violation. The Dischargers were out of compliance for 491 days, thus resulting in a maximum penalty of \$491,000. The Enforcement Policy recommends that the minimum liability imposed be at least ten percent higher than the economic benefit so that liabilities are not construed as the cost of doing business and so that the assessed liability provides a meaningful deterrent to future violations. The economic benefit to the Dischargers resulting from the failure to timely enroll under Order R5-2012-0116-R3 is \$9 (see Attachment A for how this was derived). Per the

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Enforcement Policy, the minimum penalty is the economic benefit plus ten percent (\$9.90).

26. Notwithstanding the issuance of this Order, the Central Valley Water Board retains the authority to assess additional penalties for violations of the Water Code that may subsequently occur.
27. Issuance of this ACL Order is an enforcement action, and is therefore exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code § 21000 et seq.), in accordance with California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15321, subdivision (a)(2).
28. This Order is effective and final upon issuance by the Central Valley Water Board. Payment must be received by the Central Valley Water Board no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which this Order is issued.
29. In the event that the Dischargers fail to comply with the requirements of this Order, the Executive Officer or her delegee is authorized to refer this matter to the Attorney General's Office for enforcement.
30. Any person aggrieved by this action of the Central Valley Water Board may petition the State Water Board to review the action in accordance with Water Code section 13320 and California Code of Regulations, title 23, sections 2050 and following. The State Water Board must receive the petition by 5:00 p.m., 30 days after the date that this Order becomes final, except that if the thirtieth day following the date that this Order becomes final falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state holiday, the petition must be received by the State Water Board by 5:00 p.m. on the next business day. Copies of the law and regulations applicable to filing petitions may be found on the Internet at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality or will be provided upon request.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. William and Maria Egleston shall be assessed an Administrative Civil Liability in the amount of twenty two thousand and twenty two dollars (\$22,022).
2. Payment shall be made no later than 30 days from the date of issuance of this Order by check payable to the *State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account*, and shall have the number of this ACL Order written upon it.

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I, PAMELA C. CREEDON, Executive Officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of an Order issued by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region.

Pamela C. Creedon
Executive Officer

Date

Attachment A: Penalty Calculation Methodology