

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

**INFORMATION SHEET
FOR
ORDER NO. R5-2009-0875
SACRAMENTO VALLEY WATER QUALITY COALITION
MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM
UNDER AMENDED ORDER NO. R5-2006-0053
COALITION GROUP CONDITIONAL WAIVER OF
WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS
FOR DISCHARGES FROM IRRIGATED LANDS**

I. REGULATORY BACKGROUND

The Executive Officer of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board) issues this Monitoring and Reporting Program Order (MRP Order) for the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (Sacramento Valley Coalition) pursuant to California Water Code (Water Code) sections 13267 and 13269.

II. MRP PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) oversees implementation of the terms and conditions of the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver, including development of the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (Sacramento Valley Coalition) Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP). Attachment B, Section B, Item 4 of the Conditional Waiver lists the objectives (purposes) of the MRP. These objectives are consistent with the NPS Policy and include the following:

1. To determine whether the discharge of waste from irrigated lands within the Coalition Group boundaries causes or contributes to exceedances of applicable water quality standards or causes nuisance;
2. To provide information about the Coalition Group area characteristics, including but not limited to, land use, crops grown, and chemicals used;
3. To monitor the effectiveness of management practices implemented to address exceedances of applicable water quality standards;
4. To determine which management practices are most effective in reducing wastes discharged to surface waters from irrigated lands;
5. To specify details about monitoring periods, parameters, protocols, and quality assurance;
6. To support the development and implementation of the Conditional Waiver;
7. To verify the adequacy and effectiveness of the Conditional Waiver's conditions; and
8. To evaluate the Coalition Group's compliance with the terms and conditions of the Conditional Waiver.

The five Program questions listed below will assist Sacramento Valley Coalition in producing information to achieve these objectives. The Sacramento Valley Coalition MRP and its associated Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and Management Plans shall be designed to address the five Program questions and ILRP objectives. The Central Valley Water Board recognizes that Sacramento Valley Coalition will not be able to address all five Program questions at one time, given the complexity of agricultural discharges to surface waters and identification of sources, the process needed to assess and implement effective management practices, and other issues.

QUESTION No.1: Are conditions in waters of the State that receive discharges of wastes from irrigated lands within Coalition Group boundaries, as a result of activities within those boundaries, protective of beneficial uses?

QUESTION No.2: What is the magnitude and extent of water quality problems in waters of the State that receive agricultural drainage or are affected by other irrigated agriculture activities within Coalition Group boundaries, as determined using monitoring information?

QUESTION No.3: What are the contributing source(s) from irrigated agriculture to the water quality problems in waters of the State that receive agricultural drainage or are affected by other irrigated agriculture activities within Coalition Group boundaries?

QUESTION No.4: What are the management practices that are being implemented to reduce the impacts of irrigated agriculture on waters of the State within the Coalition Group boundaries and where are they being applied?

QUESTION No.5: Are water quality conditions in waters of the State within Coalition Group boundaries getting better or worse through implementation of management practices?

III. MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM DESIGN

The Sacramento Valley Coalition has been monitoring water quality and reporting monitoring results to the Central Valley Water Board in accordance with the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program since July 2004. The results indicate that water quality is impacted in some areas within Sacramento Valley Coalition boundaries, and the Executive Officer has requested the preparation of Management Plans to address these impacts. The Management Plan sites are identified as special project monitoring sites and are described in the Coalition's approved Management Plan.

The design of the Sacramento Valley Coalition MRP Order includes a Monitoring Strategy made up of Assessment Monitoring, Core Monitoring for tracking of trends, and Special Project Monitoring components. This monitoring design reflects an approach

that will help address the ILRP objectives. This Sacramento Valley Coalition MRP Order meets or exceeds the monitoring and reporting requirements under the Coalition Group MRP Order R5-2008-0005.

Assessment monitoring is a key component of the Monitoring Strategy and shall consist of a comprehensive suite of analyses including water column toxicity, pesticides and metals that will be used to assess the effects of irrigated agriculture on waters of the state within Sacramento Valley Coalition boundaries.

Assessment monitoring shall be used to obtain a comprehensive characterization and evaluation of water quality conditions within the Sacramento Valley Coalition boundaries. Sites shall be selected to represent varying sizes and flows of water bodies and land uses (e.g., agricultural activities, crops, and pesticide use), focusing on diversity across the watershed, and must include water bodies that carry or directly or indirectly receive agricultural drainage into natural water bodies. Assessment Monitoring will include toxicity analyses in the water column and in sediment in order to provide information about the cumulative effects of multiple stressors on water column and sediment biota. Toxicity data also allows for water quality information regarding the effects of new-use chemicals or other contaminants that may not be included in the Coalition's Core monitoring program. Assessment monitoring shall be repeated at three year intervals in order to describe effects of modifications that may occur in Sacramento Valley Coalition agricultural practices.

Core monitoring sites have been selected in order to track trends at selected representative sites over extended periods of time. Core monitoring shall occur at fixed stations and must include a repetition of the Assessment Monitoring analytical regime at a minimum of every three years. The purpose of periodically repeating Assessment Monitoring is to evaluate changes in land-use practices and provide information about long-term trends and effectiveness of the Sacramento Valley Coalition's MRP. Exceedances of standards more than once during a three year period triggers a Management Plan, pursuant to recent Central Valley Water Board action.

Bioassessment monitoring protocols are at the developing stage and there are no Basin Plan requirements or biocriteria to evaluate the results of bioassessment monitoring at this time. Sacramento Valley Coalition is encouraged to conduct bioassessments to collect data that may be used as reference sites and to provide information for scientific and policy decision-making in the future. Bioassessments may serve a Coalition Group's monitoring needs through three primary functions: 1) screening or initial assessment of conditions; 2) characterization of impairment and diagnosis; and 3) trend monitoring to evaluate improvements through the implementation of management practices. Bioassessment data from all wadeable impaired water bodies may serve as a benchmark for measuring existing conditions and could provide evidence for the

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success of management practices. Bioassessment monitoring shall not be done at the expense of required Sacramento Valley Coalition MRP Assessment Monitoring.

Special Project Monitoring will include monitoring for implementation of a TMDL and will also provide the mechanism for Sacramento Valley Coalition to implement Management Plans under Amended Order No. R5-2006-0053. A Management Plan is required when more than one exceedance of a parameter occurs at a site within a three-year period. The Executive Officer may require a Management Plan for any exceedance.

Although monitoring frequency can be reduced and tailored by technical rationale specific to the exceedance parameter, accountability for management practice implementation and periodic effectiveness monitoring are significant aspects of the Special Project Monitoring and must be addressed in detail.