



# California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Coast Region



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Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor

February 1, 2010

Dear Interested Parties,

**SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN AGRICULTURAL ORDER TO CONTROL DISCHARGES FROM IRRIGATED LANDS; COMMENTS REQUESTED BY APRIL 1, 2010**

This letter transmits a staff report that includes our preliminary draft Agricultural Order (preliminary Order). I am transmitting it today for several reasons:

- 1) **Transparency**- to share staff's understanding of the existing water quality conditions as impacted by agricultural discharges in the Central Coast Region; to share staff's thinking about the types of terms and requirements necessary to directly address these water quality conditions- severe toxicity, unsafe nitrate levels in surface water and groundwater, degradation of aquatic habitat, and excessive sediment loading to surface waters- and to protect beneficial uses of waters in the Central Coast Region.
- 2) **Opportunity**- to invite agricultural dischargers, technical assistance and educational organizations, environmental organizations, drinking water providers, local residents and other interested parties to ask clarifying questions, provide initial feedback, provide comments, and contribute other ideas to control agricultural discharges and improve water quality; to insure ample time for these interested parties to review the information I am transmitting today and develop their responses well in advance of official consideration of a new Agricultural Order by the Central Coast Water Board later in 2010.
- 3) **Open Public Process**- to answer questions from interested parties; to consider and adapt staff recommendations in response to comments and ideas from interested parties early in the process of developing a new Agricultural Order; to insure additional opportunity for all interested parties to provide their own recommendations; to insure opportunity for formal comments on subsequent staff recommendations during future public comment periods for the draft Order.

I am transmitting this staff report with the preliminary Order in accordance with direction from the Central Coast Water Board at their December 10, 2009 Board meeting and responsive to staff's and interested parties' comments and suggestions at that meeting. On December 10, 2010, Board Members directed staff to release a draft order regulating discharges from irrigated lands on February 1, 2010 so interested parties can review and comment. This staff report contains an introduction explaining the context for considering a new Agricultural Order, a description of the water quality conditions in the Central Coast Region as impacted by agricultural discharges, the preliminary Order, and a preliminary evaluation of environmental impacts from implementation of this preliminary Order (initial study/environmental checklist).

*California Environmental Protection Agency*

### Staff Report Review

This staff report provides an informal, early opportunity for interested parties to learn about staff's understanding of the existing water quality conditions as impacted by agricultural discharges in the Central Coast Region and the types of terms and requirements necessary to directly address and resolve these water quality conditions. As such, all forms of comment and input will be summarized for the Central Coast Water Board and considered and incorporated into subsequent staff recommendations, as appropriate. However, staff will not specifically record, itemize and respond to each written comment in this round of informal input. Staff will specifically record, itemize and respond to all written comments during future formal public comment periods.

### Submittal of Comments

The deadline for comments on this preliminary Order is **April 1, 2010**. Board Members also requested that the agricultural community, environmental organizations and any other interested parties provide any alternatives or recommendations in writing by **April 1, 2010** or sooner, if possible.

Please submit comments to:

Angela Schroeter, Agricultural Regulatory Program Manager, at [aschroeter@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:aschroeter@waterboards.ca.gov) or Howard Kolb, Agricultural Order Project Lead Staff, at [hkolb@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:hkolb@waterboards.ca.gov).

Board members also agreed to hear input provided in response to staff's preliminary recommendations and on alternative recommendations for regulating discharges from the agricultural industry, environmental organizations, or any other interested party, in a public workshop on May 12, 2010. We will send out public notices for this workshop in April 2010.

### Future Information Requests

To automatically receive information about the Agricultural Regulatory Program and Agricultural Order, please subscribe to the Agricultural Discharges electronic mailing list at [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email\\_subscriptions/req3\\_subscribe.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/req3_subscribe.shtml).

Please feel free to contact my staff with any questions: Angela Schroeter, Agricultural Regulatory Program Manager, at [aschroeter@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:aschroeter@waterboards.ca.gov) or 805-542-4644 or Lisa McCann, Watershed Protection Section Manager, at [lmccann@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:lmccann@waterboards.ca.gov) or 805-549-3132.

Thank you for your interest in water quality improvement from agricultural discharges.

Sincerely,



Roger W. Briggs  
Executive Officer

