



File Code: 2200
Date: July 28, 2016

Ms. Joanne Schneider
Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board
3737 Main Street, Suite 500
Riverside, CA 92501

Dear Ms. Schneider:

After reviewing the draft Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (SARWQCB) waiver and specific footnotes pertaining to USFS lands, we would like to comment on the proposed language. We queried active allotments on the San Jacinto Ranger District (SJRD), San Bernardino National Forest to assess the applicability of the proposed CWAD waiver to SJRD-wide grazing activities.

Active allotments on the SJRD vary in size from 1,551 acres to 30,914 acres. The currently proposed CWAD draft language^[1] states Forest Service grazing allotments with 180 or less animals on 10,000 acres or more would be exempt from coverage under this order. That equates to a stocking rate of 56 acres per animal unit year. *Having a limitation of 10,000 acres would not exempt active allotments at the forest level that have actual stocking levels well below the stocking rate of 56 acres per animal unit year implied by the proposed CWAD.* As currently proposed, the CWAD language would not exempt allotments 10,000 acres or less in size that have hundreds of acres per animal unit (Appendix 1).

As described in the UC Cooperative Extension guidance document attached to these comments, calculating actual stocking rates is not limited to a formula based on the number of “animals” and total acres (George and Lile, 2015; Nader *et al* 1998). Oak woodland or Chaparral stocking rates on National Forest Service lands would usually be greater than the 30 acres per cow/calf animal unit per year described in the UCCE stockmen’s guide.

[1] Excerpted from California Regional Water Quality Control Board Santa Ana Region ORDER NO. R8-2016-0003: CONDITIONAL WAIVER OF WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCHARGES FROM AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS IN THE WATERSHEDS OF THE SAN JACINTO RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES, AND CANYON LAKE AND LAKE ELSINORE AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES, COLLECTIVELY “THE SAN JACINTO RIVER WATERSHED” RIVERSIDE COUNTY:

- Draft CWAD language, footnote 3, page 10: United States Forest Service (USFS) grazing allotments, which are typically more than 10,000 acres and are permitted a small number of grazing animals (typically under 180), resulting in extremely low animal density, and where no pesticides, herbicides or nutrients are applied, are exempt from coverage under this Order.
- Draft CWAD language, footnote 7, page 20: USFS grazing allotments with low animal density (180 or less animals on 10,000 acres or more), and where no pesticides, herbicides or nutrients are applied, are not subject to the terms of this Order.



A previous iteration of this Draft Order was discussed in a June 30, 2016 conference call with Wanda Cross and Joanne Schneider of the SARWQCB and Forest Service (FS) staff. Ms. Cross and Ms. Schneider identified concerns that underlie Draft Order NO. R8-2016-0003, including the use of pesticides and herbicides, supplemental feeding and concentration of cattle. In that discussion, FS staff distinguished SJRD allotments from the type of operations intended to be regulated by the Draft Order because of the following characteristics of SJRD allotments:

- the dispersed nature (scale) of the allotment(s),
- the low density of cattle,
- non-use of pesticides and herbicides
- no supplemental feeding/addition of nutrients to the system,
- no concentration of cattle in corrals except to prepare them for transport
- no irrigation in the allotment

As a consequence of this meeting, the Draft Order was revised to the currently proposed language excerpted in Footnote 1, exempting Forest Service grazing allotments with 180 or less animals on 10,000 acres or more (SARWQCB email, July 5, 2016). For the reasons outlined above, we suggest the following language to replace the currently proposed language in the Draft Order:

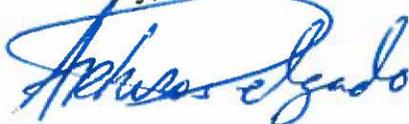
“USFS grazing allotments with low animal density (greater than or equal to 50 acres per Animal Unit per year), and where no pesticides, herbicides, nutrients, or irrigation are applied to the land, are not subject to the terms of this Order.”

We believe our proposed language addresses the concerns identified by the SARWQCB by:

- Taking both animal units and acres into account; and
- Applying a management-based standard based on stocking rates in SJRD allotments.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Order and look forward to hearing about your decision.

Sincerely,



District Ranger

Cc: Wanda Cross, Ken Theisen

Attachments:

- 1) Appendix A
- 2) Stocking Rate and Carrying Capacity (George and Lile 2015)
- 3) Water Quality Effect of Rangeland Beef Cattle Excrement (Nader *et al*, 1998)

Appendix 1: Allotment data for the San Bernardino National Forest, including animal units, acres, and stocking rates.

Note: Due to allotment status (vacant), not all use data was available at this time (N/A).

Ranger District	Allotment	Status	Previous NEPA Decisions	RWQCB	San Jacinto Watershed	AU	Acres	Stocking Rate
San Jacinto Ranger District	Wellman	Active	N/A	Colorado River/ Santa Ana	Y	50	30914	618
San Jacinto Ranger District	Vista Grande	Vacant	N/A	Colorado River/ Santa Ana	Y	N/A	4219	N/A
San Jacinto Ranger District	Garner	Active	N/A	Lahontan/ Santa Ana	Y	180	18374	102
San Jacinto Ranger District	Rouse	Active	2011	Santa Ana	Y	25	21338	854
San Jacinto Ranger District	Soboba	Vacant	N/A	Santa Ana	Y	N/A	1551	N/A

