

# STATEWIDE GRAZING REGULATORY ACTION PROJECT (GRAP)

Fact Sheet – October 2014



This fact sheet provides background information and outlines actions that are part of a statewide effort to develop a regulatory strategy for addressing water quality impacts related to livestock grazing in California. The goal is to develop a regulatory strategy that will set forth requirements for livestock grazing that address potential impacts to water quality, while at the same time limiting, to the extent feasible, the cost of compliance for the livestock community. It will build upon the knowledge that has been gained over the past decade about what types of best management practices work in the different regions of the state. A key part of the development of the regulatory action is integrating input from the California Water Boards and interested stakeholders, including other state, federal, and local agencies, tribes, environmental organizations, and the grazing community.

**BACKGROUND:** In California, there are more than 40 million acres of rangeland (approximately 38 percent of the state's surface area), with approximately half in public, and half in private ownership. Well-managed livestock grazing operations provide benefits to the environment, the economy, and California consumers. In some instances, however, grazing operations contribute to impairment of water quality and impact beneficial uses. Approximately 120 water quality impairments (including fecal bacteria, temperature, sediments or nutrients) identified on the 2010 Clean Water Act (CWA) List of Impaired Waters for California are on lands with active grazing operations. Under existing law, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) are required for all waters and pollutants on the CWA list, including waters impacted by grazing operations.

Developing a TMDL for each impaired water body is not a practical solution. To date, the Water Boards have chosen to regulate livestock grazing through Water Board orders, grazing waivers, Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) prohibitions, developing TMDLs and taking enforcement actions. These approaches have varied in their application and effectiveness, and have resulted in inconsistencies statewide. The Statewide Grazing Regulatory Action Project (GRAP) is one of several collaborative efforts established by the Water Boards directing staff to work with interested stakeholders on ways to more efficiently and consistently address impaired waters.

In addition to meeting the requirements of the CWA, the Water Boards must meet the requirements of the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, which requires the Water Boards to address all discharges of waste that could affect the quality of the waters of the State, including all nonpoint sources of pollution. This means that not only must the Water Boards address water bodies impaired by grazing activities, but that they must also protect the numerous high-quality streams within public lands, including federally managed wilderness areas, from water quality degradation caused by livestock grazing. Grazing in California is a nonpoint source of water pollution that is not currently regulated statewide. Examples of nonpoint source pollution that may be associated with grazing include discharges of sediment from the erosion of stream banks, discharges of bacteria from livestock feces that get into the surface water, and increased temperature of streams caused from trampling of riparian habitat.

**GOALS of the GRAZING REGULATORY ACTION PROGRAM (GRAP):** The GRAP team is a collaboration of Regional and State Water Board staff. The goal of the GRAP is to develop regulatory strategies to address water quality impacts from grazing on public and private lands, and achieve compliance with water quality standards through a regulatory program that results in greater efficiency and statewide consistency, while at the same time respecting regional differences in hydrology, topography, climate, land use, and microeconomics, as well as the cost of compliance for the grazing community.

**ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS:** The participation of interested stakeholders in the development of a statewide grazing regulatory strategy is crucial to its success. The Water Boards will actively engage stakeholder groups by soliciting early public comments during focused outreach listening sessions in 2014 and early 2015. The initial outreach sessions will invite input from five key stakeholder sectors: Ranching and related Industries; Government and Local Agencies; Tribes; Environmental and Environmental Justice Organizations; and Academia.

During the focused listening sessions, the Water Boards will seek input in particular on the following questions:

1. How should we define grazing (e.g., herd size, range size, duration/intensity, water source, type of animal, open range, irrigated pasture)?
2. What would a successful regulatory program look like to you? In your experience, what types of management practices have been effective in protecting or improving water quality?
3. In your experience, what types of monitoring have been effective in assessing water quality?
4. What are the unusual or extreme circumstances that GRAP should consider as part of its regulatory program (e.g., weather, market conditions, wildfire, livestock diseases)?

Water Board staff will compile all input from these initial outreach sessions and consider it in the development of the GRAP proposal during 2015. As the proposal is developed, there will be additional opportunities for stakeholder input.

**SCHEDULE:**



For more information and to participate as a stakeholder in our grazing strategy program, visit our Web site at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/nps/grap.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/nps/grap.shtml)