

Executive Officer's Summary Report
8:30 a.m., January 19, 2012
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
David C. Joseph Hearing Room
5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, California

ITEM: 16

SUBJECT: Update on the Water Quality Compliance Program for Discharges from
Irrigated Agricultural Lands

DISCUSSION

This is an informational item. Regional Water Board staff will be presenting an update on progress towards developing a Water Quality Compliance Program for Discharges from Irrigated Lands (Program) to address water quality impacts associated with irrigated agricultural lands in the North Coast Region.

Overview of Program

Irrigated lands have the potential to contribute to water quality problems through the over-application of fertilizers and pesticides, human-caused erosion of sediment, pollutants in tailwater return flows, and the removal and suppression of riparian vegetation. The Regional Water Board is developing the Program to address these potential impacts to water quality and to meet the requirements of the California Water Code, the State Nonpoint Source Policy, and the Klamath River Total Maximum Daily Loads.

The Program will include some combination of waste discharge requirements, conditional waivers of waste discharge requirements, and/or Basin Plan prohibitions that will function as the enforceable regulatory mechanism(s). The Program will also include non-regulatory components such as technical assistance, outreach, education, and coordination with grant funding.

Stakeholder Process to Date

Since the last presentation to the Regional Water Board on the Program in May 2011, staff have continued working with stakeholders to develop the Program and have formed a Stakeholder Advisory Group (Advisory Group). The Regional Water Board contracted with the Center for Collaborative Policy in January 2011 to serve as facilitators for the Advisory Group. In July 2011, staff notified the public by email of the start of the stakeholder process and also sent out a separate notice to a list of potential stakeholder representatives that may have had an interest in being part of the Advisory

Group. Staff followed this initial outreach with two surveys that were sent to the list of potential Advisory Group members in August 2011 and October 2011. The surveys gathered input on the proposed stakeholder process as well as a preliminary framework for the program. The results of the surveys guided staff's development of the Advisory Group process and helped finalize the list of representatives that were then sent formal invitation letters in November 2011 to participate in the Advisory Group.

Stakeholder Advisory Group and Next Steps

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to provide input to Regional Water Board staff early in the process of developing the Program; prior to public review and consideration by the Regional Water Board. The Advisory Group will advise staff and provide comment on Program elements such as scope, discharge control requirements and practices, monitoring, reporting, and enforcement protocols.

The Advisory Group members will meet as part of a full region-wide group and also as part of four smaller sub-regional groups. The intent is that the sub-regional meetings focus on local issues, while the full Advisory Group meetings provide the opportunity to exchange ideas and ensure consistency regionwide. The sub-regional groups will provide recommendations to the full Advisory Group, which will then make recommendations to Regional Water Board staff. The geographic areas of the sub-regional groups are:

1. Sonoma, Mendocino, and Marin counties
2. Del Norte, Humboldt, and Trinity counties
3. Scott River and Shasta River watersheds, and the Upper Mid-Klamath area, and
4. Tule Lake area and Butte Valley

In December 2011, staff held the first meeting of the Advisory Group. Staff will finalize membership before the next meeting that will be held in February 2012. The Advisory Group process is scheduled to run through April 2013. Public workshops will be held in the summer of 2013 as part of the public review process leading up to a Regional Water Board hearing in the fall of 2013.

PRELIMINARY

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This is an informational item only.