

**CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
DISCLOSURE FORM
EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING PENDING GENERAL ORDERS**

*Note: This form is intended to assist the public in providing the disclosure required by law. It is designed to document meetings and phone calls. Written communications may be disclosed by providing a complete copy of the written document, with attachments. Unless the board member(s) provide you with a different contact person, please your materials to: stacy.denney@waterboards.ca.gov
Use of this form is not mandatory.*

1. Pending General Order that the communication concerned:
Central Coast Ag Order 4.0
2. Name, title and contact information of person completing this form:
Steve Shimek, Executive Director, The Otter Project and Monterey Coastkeeper
3. Date of meeting, phone call or other communication: Email to all Board Members
Time: 12pm 9/6/20
Location: Email
4. Type of communication (written, oral or both): Email
5. Names of all participants in the communication, including all board members who participated: Jane Gray, Michael Johnston, Jean-Pierre Wolff, Jeff Young, Monica Hunter
6. Name of person(s) who initiated the communication: Steve Shimek
7. Describe the communication and the content of the communication: We discussed Draft Ag Order 4.0, a pdf of the email content is attached.
8. Attach a copy of handouts, PowerPoint presentations and other materials any person used or distributed at the meeting. If you have electronic copies, please email them to facilitate web posting.

Attached pdf.

COMMENTARY

ENVIRONMENT

MY TURN

California must stop agriculture from fouling our drinking water

BY GUEST COMMENTARY 

PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 19, 2019



 San Jerardo housing cooperative in Salinas, November 2019. (Photo by Barry Nelson, Western Water Strategies.)



By Horacio Amezquita, Special to CalMatters

The San Jerardo housing cooperative in Salinas is home to 60 farm workers and their families. I am its general manager.

The people in my housing cooperative breathe pesticides when neighboring fields are sprayed. When agricultural practices harm wildlife, we see the change in our backyards. The people of San Jerardo also have a stake in moving toward more sustainable agricultural practices.

Our drinking water is where this connection with agriculture is most powerful. Since 1990, the people of San Jerardo have drilled one well after another, only to see each closed as a result of agricultural contamination including nitrates and pesticides.

Our children and our elders have develop painful rashes as a result. We worry about other health impacts from this stew of contaminants. At times, we've been told to drink bottled water and take cold showers because hot showers can increase the risk from contaminated water.

We've treated contaminated well water, and know how expensive that can be. In addition, when multiple contaminants reach high levels, treatment can become impossible. And then we drill again.

Twice, we have drilled only to find water quality too poor to develop a well.

San Jerardo is now on its fourth well. When it was drilled in 2010, 2 miles uphill from our community, the water was good. But now it also is showing higher levels of contaminants, and we worry every day about our water. We also pay water rates that are four times what they were a few years ago, as we work to ensure clean water for our families.



Abandoned well at San Jerardo housing cooperative in Salinas, November 2019. (Photo by Barry Nelson, Western Water Strategies.)

For almost 30 years, our community has been chasing clean water. Dozens of communities in our area are in the same position.

Agriculture must use more sustainable practices to reduce the poisons in our groundwater. When agriculture applies chemicals wastefully, we are forced to drink that waste. If the concentration of contaminants get too high, our wells are closed.

If farmers learn from their innovative neighbors, those best practices can provide many benefits. For example, by planting cover crops in the winter, farmers can increase soil health, allowing land to retain more water, allowing more carbon to be captured in the soil and allowing less fertilizer to be applied.

If creeks and rivers are protected, farmers and nature will both benefit. The Salinas River was once a wide and slow river. But agricultural fields have squeezed the Salinas down to a narrow fast river that cannot recharge groundwater.

By protecting our creeks and rivers, farmers can increase groundwater recharge, reduce sedimentation problems, allow nature to filter out contamination and provide a home for wildlife.

Some people believe rural groundwater contamination is a problem without a solution. We know that's not true. A decade ago, our neighbor stopped farming for a year during the recession.

In less than a year, we saw contamination levels in our well drop by more than half. We know that improved farming practices are affordable and can produce big benefits faster than many people realize.

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is beginning to work on a [new set of requirements for agriculture](#) on the Central Coast, to ensure that our rivers and our water quality are protected.

Those of us who drink from that water urge board members to work hard to find practical, effective solutions that can ensure a healthy future for our children and our communities.

Horacio Amezcuita is the general manager of San Jerardo housing cooperative in Salinas. horacioamezcuita@yahoo.com. He wrote this commentary for CalMatters.

