

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Groundwater Protection, Management Practices Evaluation Program

BOARD ACTION: Information Item

BACKGROUND: In November 2016, the Southern San Joaquin Valley Management Practices Evaluation Program Committee (Southern Committee), composed of the Kings River Watershed Coalition Authority, Tule Basin Water Quality Coalition, Kaweah Basin Water Quality Association, Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority, Cawelo Water District Coalition, Westside Water Quality Coalition, and Buena Vista Coalition, submitted their [Management Practices Evaluation Workplan](#).

The Management Practices Evaluation Program (MPEP) requirements are identified in the Monitoring and Reporting Program of the Waste Discharge Requirements for Growers within the Tulare Lake Basin Area that are Members of a Third Party Group, Order No. R5-2013-0120 (Order). These requirements are generally the same in all of the Irrigated Lands General Orders. The objectives of the MPEP are to:

- Identify whether existing site-specific and/or commodity-specific management practices are protective of groundwater quality within high vulnerability groundwater areas;
- Determine if newly implemented management practices are improving or may result in improving groundwater quality;
- Develop an estimate of the effect of Members' discharges of constituents of concern on groundwater quality in high vulnerability areas. A mass balance and conceptual model of the transport, storage, and degradation/chemical transformation mechanisms for the constituents of concern, or equivalent method approved by the Executive Officer or as a result of the recommendations by the expert panels by CDFG and the State Water Board, must be provided; and
- Utilize the results of evaluated management practices to determine whether practices implemented at represented Member farms (i.e., those not specifically evaluated, but having similar site conditions), need to be improved.

Through the MPEP, protective management practices for specific crops and site conditions will be identified. The Order requires that these practices be implemented by growers whose farms match the crop type and site conditions for which they are shown to be effective.

Coalitions in the northern portion of the Central Valley submitted a separate MPEP Workplan in August 2016. Staff has provided informal comments to both Coalition groups on their Workplans and encouraged the two groups to develop a unified approach that will provide consistency for the growers enrolled in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

Representatives of the Southern Committee will present their approach at the

## Board Meeting.

### ISSUES

1. One of the primary MPEP objectives is to identify whether existing site-specific and/or commodity-specific management practices are protective of groundwater quality within high vulnerability groundwater areas. The MPEP Workplan needs to include a metric for concluding whether a practice is deemed to be protective. There is also recognition that for many agricultural operations, a suite of protective management practices will be needed to ensure groundwater protection.
2. The Order requires applicable protective practices be implemented by members in both high and low vulnerability areas; therefore, the MPEP must include a clearly defined process for evaluating the applicability of protective practices identified through literature or focused field studies for represented member farms.

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