

Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program

### Overview

There are an estimated 35,000 irrigated agricultural operations within the Central Valley Water Board’s jurisdiction, on approximately 7 million acres of land. Common to these operations is the use of water to sustain crops. Depending on the irrigation method, geography, geology, climate, and constituents (e.g., nutrients, pesticides) present or used at a site, water discharged from the site may carry these constituents as waste into groundwater or surface waters.

The Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) regulates waste discharges from irrigated lands using seven [geographic](#) and one [commodity-specific](#) general orders for growers that are part of a third-party group (coalitions). There are [14 coalitions](#) helping growers comply with the general orders. There is also a general order for growers who choose to be regulated [individually](#).

The ILRP general orders were adopted from December 2012 to July 2015; coalitions are working with growers at slightly different stages of implementation. The first general order, adopted for the [Eastern San Joaquin Watershed](#), was petitioned by environmental/environmental justice groups and agricultural representatives. A number of issues have been raised by the petitioners, including the adequacy of the ILRP’s current groundwater protection strategy. In February 2016, the State Water Board issued a [proposed order](#) in response to the [petition](#). During FY 2016 - 2017, staff will continue to address issues brought up during the petition as we provide more details regarding the robustness of the current ILRP groundwater protection strategy.

The ILRP consists of 0.7 PY<sup>1</sup> (Redding), 6.8 PY (Fresno) and 11.2 PY (Sacramento) for a total of 18.7 PYs for the region. Program implementation activities are shown in the charts below.

<sup>1</sup>PY=person year or resources to fund one Central Valley Water Board staff

### Goals

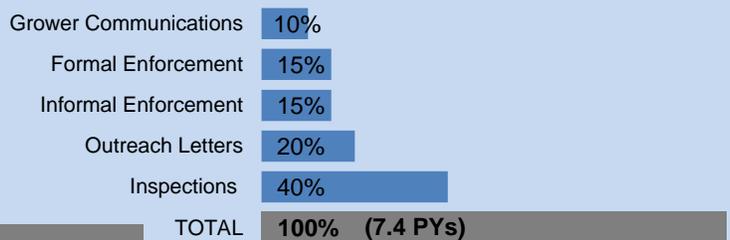
The goal of the ILRP is to prevent discharges from irrigated lands from causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality objectives through order implementation, appropriate compliance and enforcement, and coordination with all interested parties. This includes preserving both the human right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water, and a healthy and sustainable irrigated agriculture.

Order implementation includes oversight of coalition and grower activities and management of water quality data. Compliance and enforcement activities include maximizing grower enrollment and order compliance. Coordination is facilitated through regular stakeholder meetings and other venues.

#### Coalition Oversight



#### Compliance/Enforcement



## Major Accomplishments (since beginning of program)

### **Adoption of all ILRP General Orders**

The ILRP was initiated in 2003 with adoption of a conditional waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for discharges from irrigated lands to surface waters. The recent adoption of general order WDRs includes regulation of waste discharges to groundwater. This involved significant stakeholder participation and development of a programmatic environmental impact report. The program continues to maintain a very high level of stakeholder input.

### **Surface Water Successes**

- *Management Plan Completions* – ILRP requires growers to implement improved practices to eliminate identified water quality problems caused by agricultural pollutants. This has resulted in successful completion of ~160 management plans for pesticides, aquatic toxicity, sediment toxicity, trace metals, legacy pesticides, and other parameters.
- *Delisting of CWA Section 303(d) impaired waters* – ILRP management plan completions contributed significantly to de-listings of diazinon in reaches of the San Joaquin, Feather and Sacramento Rivers. Additional delistings of diazinon, chlorpyrifos, and diuron will be pursued based predominantly on ILRP management plan efforts.

### **Compliance and Enforcement Successes**

- *Increased enrollment acreage* – With currently 5.6 million acres enrolled in the ILRP, enrollment of irrigated lands has increased about a million acres since the adoption of the new General Orders. ILRP staff and coalition efforts to enroll the remaining irrigated acreage (estimated at about 1.4 million acres) are ongoing.
- *Enforcement coordination with coalitions* – ILRP staff successfully used “last chance” phone calls and coordination with coalitions to bring several growers into compliance (either with the requirement to obtain regulatory coverage or to submit a farm evaluation) before formal enforcement was initiated.

### **Development of Groundwater Protection Strategy**

The ILRP relies on grower implementation of management practices to protect groundwater quality. The Coalitions identify practices that are protective of groundwater quality with help from scientists and outside experts using field level data from growers, field studies and modeling.

## Performance targets for FY 2016-2017

	<u>Target</u>
Groundwater Quality Management Plan Reviews	14
Annual Report Reviews	13
Management Practice Evaluation Plan Reviews	2
Issue Pesticide Evaluation Protocol	1
Non-enrollment Inspections	2000
On-farm (Order compliance) Inspections	115
Stakeholder Meetings	4
Draft surface water quality status and trend report	1
Actively participate in State Water Board Petition Process	1

## Ongoing Issues

- More focused outreach to small grower operations, especially those with non-English speaking operators, is needed for comprehensive implementation of the program.
- Program must provide transparency and flexibility to evolve with best available science in protecting water quality.