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NEWS RELEASE

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
24 January 2008

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GROWERS ASSESSED MONETARY PENALTIES - ENFORCEMENT STEPPED UP IN CENTRAL VALLEY WATER BOARD'S IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM

SACRAMENTO – The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) has increased its efforts to enforce its Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP), which regulates approximately 5 million acres of commercial irrigated agriculture from the Oregon border to portions of Los Angeles County.

“We’re pleased with the positive results of added enforcement in our Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program,” said Kenneth D. Landau, Assistant Executive Officer of the Regional Water Board. “We have a lot of acres to cover and extra attention to this program has resulted in compliance with the law, helping to protect the state’s waterways.”

The ILRP regulates irrigation and stormwater flowing from irrigated agricultural lands into surface waters such as drainage ditches, streams and rivers. The streams are monitored, pollutants identified, and corrective action plans developed and implemented. Follow up monitoring determines the effectiveness of the corrective actions.

In September 2007 the Regional Water Board issued five first-of-their-kind Administrative Civil Liability (ACL) complaints to landowners in Colusa, Glenn, Sutter and Merced counties with penalties of \$3,000. The ACLs were issued to growers failing to submit required information on agricultural operations on their properties.

More than 1,400 enforcement orders have been issued to non-participating landowners with operations likely to have runoff requiring coverage under the Irrigated Lands Conditional Waiver (Waiver) or a permit. The enforcement orders require information with which the Regional Water Board can determine whether the farmer has violated the California Water Code by not obtaining coverage under the Waiver or an individual permit. Individuals failing to submit the single-page report required by the orders were sent Notices of Violation (NOV). Individuals that fail to respond to NOVs are issued ACL complaints.

In addition to evaluating program participation, the Water Board is evaluating the compliance of growers that are covered by the Waiver. Forty-eight management plans are being developed by agricultural coalition groups to address documented water quality problems in the Central Valley. The Waiver requires these plans when water quality standards are exceeded. They include more intensive water quality monitoring and growers are required to

implement management practices to address the water quality problems they may contribute to in their watersheds. Those that fail to will be subject to enforcement by the Water Board.

“We anticipate that more Water Board orders and ACL complaints will be issued in 2008, and more management plans will also be developed and implemented,” said Landau. “Our mission is to commit our resources to improving water quality in the most effective manner possible.”

As part of its plan to increase enforcement, the Water Board will increase its field presence and enforcement against unauthorized discharges that impact water quality in the Central Valley. Enforcement efforts across the program will be increased in the coming year to ensure that commercial irrigated agricultural operations do what is needed to protect water quality.

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