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NEWS RELEASE

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region



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CENTRAL VALLEY WATER BOARD EXPANDS IRRIGATED LANDS PROGRAM TO PROTECT GROUND WATER

For seven years, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board has regulated discharges from irrigated agriculture to rivers and streams. Today, the Board released a proposed program and draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) that would expand regulated irrigated agricultural discharges to include both surface waters and ground waters from over 7 million acres of land.

The irrigated lands regulatory program was the result of changes in the California Water Code by the Legislature. In 2003, under the new rules, the Central Valley Water Board allowed farmers to combine resources by forming water quality coalitions. Through the coalitions, monitoring of waterways was initiated and regional management plans were developed to prevent pollution and improve water quality.

The Central Valley Water Board, in collaboration with diverse group of government agency, agricultural, environmental and environmental justice interests, has identified a regulatory approach that protects water quality and the environment in a cost effective manner.

Under the proposal, agricultural water quality coalitions would continue in a lead role working on local solutions with growers to protect rivers and streams and, for the first time, to protect ground water basins used for drinking water. If a grower fails to protect water quality as part of a Coalition, the Water Board will issue an individual permit to that grower.

“This proposal is a result of the cooperative efforts of a variety of groups who recognize the importance of protecting the Central Valley’s water resources and sustaining our agricultural economy. We believe we can build on that collaborative spirit to address our water quality problems using the common sense approach outlined in this program,” said Pamela Creedon, Executive Officer of the Central Valley Water Board

The Water Board is providing a 60-day comment period on the proposed program, draft PEIR, and economic analysis. Additional information, including the documents available for review and the dates and locations of upcoming public workshops, can be found at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/long_term_program_development/ .