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NEWS RELEASE

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region



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Water Board Revises Rule to Seek Additional Fees from Farmers to Join Irrigated Lands Coalitions

SACRAMENTO – Central Valley farmers have a little more time to avoid paying additional water-related fees to the state. Those farmers, whose irrigation or storm water runoff eventually runs into rivers, creeks, lakes or other surface waters, are required to comply with the Central Valley Water Board's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP). The program, adopted in 2003, regulates the discharge of waste water that contains pollutants, such as pesticides or fertilizers. The pollutants can degrade the quality of water that is used for drinking and agriculture, and is important to the health of the aquatic ecosystem.

Farmers who are required to participate in the ILRP may either join an Agricultural Water Quality Coalition Group or be regulated as individuals. The Central Valley Regional Water Board recently expanded the authority for the Executive Officer to approve farmers to join coalitions, and established a June 30 deadline for growers to join without the threat of additional application fees.

Water Board Executive Officer Pamela Creedon said, "It is critically important that growers with runoff to surface waters obtain the appropriate regulatory coverage from the Water Board. We are giving non-participating growers a limited opportunity to come forward voluntarily to join a coalition to avoid added fees or enforcement action and penalties."

Individual farmers who do not join a coalition must pay for state oversight, which could range from \$2,000 to \$8,000 a year, plus the cost of conducting individual monitoring of runoff. Farmers who fail to sign up by June 30 will be subject to late fees and penalties by the state. All applications must be approved by the Executive Officer before a farmer will be allowed to join a coalition.

Enforcement action by the Water Board has occurred and will increase. The Executive Officer has issued enforcement orders to alleged non-participating landowners. Monetary penalties have been imposed against growers who have failed to respond to those orders or failed to seek regulatory coverage when required.

For information on the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program please visit:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/