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NEWS RELEASE

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region



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WATER QUALITY COALITIONS COMPLY WITH CENTRAL VALLEY WATER BOARD PARTICIPANT LIST REQUIREMENT

All eight agricultural water coalition groups in the Central Valley Regional Water Board's Irrigated Lands Program have submitted participant lists as required by the board. When the board renewed the Irrigated Lands Conditional Waiver in June, it added a requirement that coalition groups in the program must submit electronic lists of their participants by September 30th.

"The agricultural community has really stepped up and I want to thank them. We have a more effective program and are now focused on enforcement on bad actors and working in partnership with growers to protect water quality," stated Bob Schneider, Board Chair.

The Irrigated Lands Program is designed to protect water quality and to help agriculture meet water quality standards. It provides that owners and operators of irrigated lands may join coalitions as an alternative to individual permits for waste discharges from their operations. The Irrigated Lands Program requires coalition groups to monitor, identify water quality problems and to work with growers in their areas to address those problems. Participant growers are required to manage their operations and to implement management practices to prevent water quality problems and to address existing ones.

A significant amount of information was collected and submitted by the coalition groups. Based on preliminary review, data were submitted for over 52,000 parcels in the Sacramento River, San Joaquin River, and Tulare Lake Watersheds.

As non-participating parcels are identified, the Executive Officer is issuing California Water Code section 13267 Orders to obtain more information about operations on those lands and determine if regulatory coverage is required due to waste discharges from those operations. Since March 2005, over 1400 orders have been issued. In late August, 235 Notices of Violation were sent to land owners failing to respond to the orders. More Notices of Violation will be issued in the coming weeks. The California Water Code authorizes the Water Board to issue administrative civil liability up to \$1000 per day for failure to respond to a 13267 Order.

In renewing the waiver this year, the Regional Water Board also set a deadline by which owners or operators of irrigated lands must join a coalition group. Coalition groups generally cannot accept new participants after 31 December 2006.