
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Central Valley and Lahontan Regional Water Boards

Federal Nonpoint Source Permit - 2017 Outreach Meetings Summary

- A. Meeting Locations:** Susanville, Redding, Bishop, Rancho Cordova, Clovis, Apple Valley
- B. Meeting Dates:** October 24, 2017 – December 5, 2017
- C. Meeting Purpose:**

The Central Valley and Lahontan Regional Water Boards held meetings to inform the public and gather initial feedback and concerns about the Regional Water Boards' effort to develop permits (Waste Discharge Requirements) to reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution (NPS) from activities on lands managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

D. Meeting Format:

Regional Water Board staff gave two presentations to the audience, each followed by a general question and answer session regarding the material presented. After the two presentations, the audience participated in a short activity and facilitated discussion related to NPS pollution on federal lands.

E. Activity Description:

All meeting participants were given sticky dots; five dots to dispense on one pie chart "Activities to be included in the permit" and another three dots to dispense on a second pie chart "Activities potentially included in the permit." The first chart had five types of activities that the BLM/USFS administer on their land: Range Management, Forest and Vegetation Management, Stream and Meadow Restoration, Managed Recreation, and Road System Management. The second chart had additional activities that may occur on federal lands: Utility Line Corridors, Reporting of Illegal Cannabis Cultivation, Dispersed Recreation, Small Scale Mineral Extraction, and Other. Participants were asked to place their dots on the activity on the pie chart that the individual believes is the most important to address in the permit due to water quality concerns. Participants could place all of their dots on one activity or spread the dots over several activities. The "Other" category was used for participants to bring up water quality issues or activities that were not captured on the charts.

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F. General Discussion Topics

- 1) State and Federal mandates requiring permit development
- 2) Best management practices (how they will be incorporated into the permit, how to monitor effectiveness, opportunities for modifications/improvements)
- 3) Water quality assessment and prioritization under the programmatic approach (scale, timelines, types of data/assessments that would be considered)
- 4) Diversity of California landscapes (north vs. south, best management practice appropriateness, fear of one size fits all approach)
- 5) Management difficulties around illegal/unauthorized activities, illegal cannabis operations
- 6) Support for programmatic approach vs project-by-project approach

G. Common Questions from Participants

- 1) Why is this permit needed now? What was the catalyst or trigger for permit?
- 2) Where are the problems on federal lands? Does this imply federal agencies are not doing enough? Is this a permit looking for a problem? Level of pollution relative to cities and counties?
- 3) How do Best Management Practices fit into the permit? And will they be improved via the process?
- 4) How will the Water Boards work with federal agencies during permit development and implementation?
- 5) Permit implementation questions: Who will sign permit? Will each forest/agency apply separately? What is the scale of assessments and prioritization? Who will conduct the water quality monitoring? Who establishes milestones? What kind of reporting would occur?
- 6) How will this permit relate to other existing Water Board permits, agency agreements, and federal Clean Water Act (CWA) 404 permitting? Will this permit replace the existing timber permits?
- 7) Will the permit be implemented with current staffing levels for both State and Federal agencies? What are the anticipated workload impacts?

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H. General Concerns/Comments from Participants

- 1) Scope of permit
 - a. National Park Service lands should be included, they conduct similar activities
 - b. Limit the scope of permit to controllable activities
 - c. Limit scope to areas that don't meet regulatory standards
- 2) Road management – under-funded, focused on safety not environmental concerns, multi-jurisdictional issues, permitting headaches
- 3) Support for including CWA 401 Water Quality Certification within the permit
- 4) Illegal activities (dumping, trespass, illicit use) are challenging to control and there is not always communication between law enforcement and environmental divisions
- 5) USFS/BLM already have guidelines for addressing water quality issues but funding and enforcement is lacking
- 6) Leverage existing federal action plans and monitoring programs
- 7) Don't hamper forest health/vegetation management projects that reduce fuel loading
- 8) Flash flooding and high stream flows can transport NPS pollutants
- 9) Some water quality issues are not associated with projects
- 10) The permit needs to acknowledge and respect the diversity of the landscape and northern vs. southern California concerns
- 11) Potential impacts to taxpayers

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I. Activity Discussion Topics

- 1) Poorly managed off-highway vehicle use can cause erosion, habitat fragmentation, damage to springs, hillslope erosion, poor air quality
- 2) Improper range management on federal lands has impacts on riparian systems and water quality
- 3) Recreation facilities often located near watercourses, resulting in water quality impacts
- 4) Dispersed recreation often occurs near watercourses
- 5) Roads management is one of largest water quality issues on National Forests (poor road design, road location, funding constraints)
- 6) Lack of funding for road maintenance
- 7) Stream restoration has the potential to have large benefits to water quality
- 8) Illegal cannabis operations (difficult to control, serious issue, toxic substances, law enforcement vs environmental issues)
- 9) Wildfires/Emergency response, post fire activities
- 10) Absentee landowners and checker-board ownership complicate issue of where NPS pollution originates
- 11) Current USFS technician maintenance forms don't reflect water quality issues
- 12) Small scale/recreational mining is not very regulated; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis not required for a notice of exploration
- 13) Utility corridors are problematic in some areas only
- 14) Artificial water sources and special use permits for water extraction can affect base flow, temperature, and water quality
- 15) Wild horse and burro herds can impact springs and riparian areas; herd management is controversial and poorly funded

J. Meeting Participants (91 total):

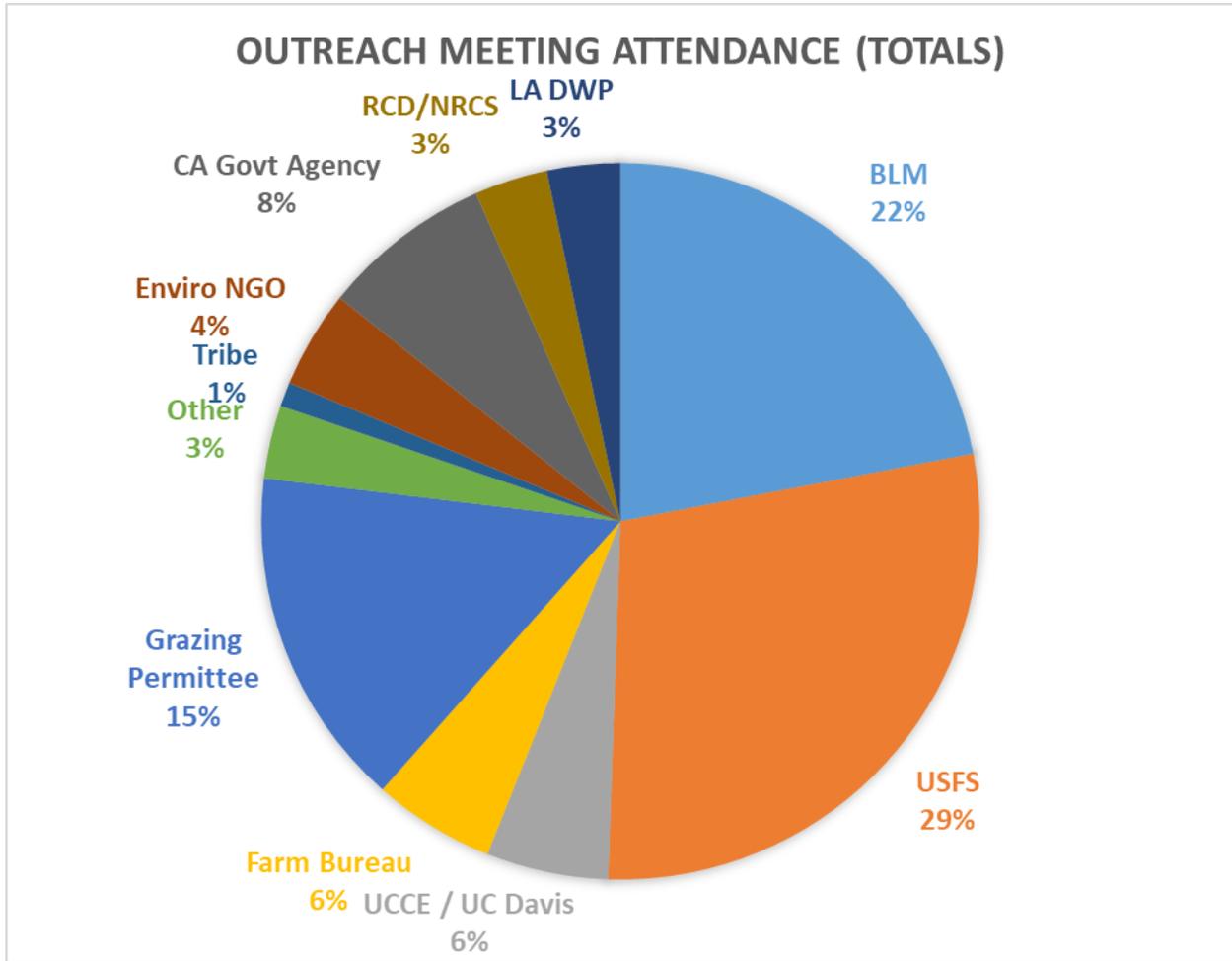
USFS (26), BLM (20), Federal agency grazing permittees (14), California Government Agency (7), University of California Cooperative Extension (5), California Farm Bureau (5), Environmental Non-governmental Organization (4), Resource Conservation District (RCD)/Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (3), Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (3), Tribe (1), Other (3)

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Notes: "CA government agencies" include CA Department of Transportation, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and Sierra Nevada Conservancy; "Environmental NGOs" include Cal Trout, Defenders of Wildlife, and Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center; "Other" indicates general public or decline to state affiliation

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