

ITEM: 7c.

SUBJECT: Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands - Groundwater Options

BOARD ACTION *Information Report – No Board Action*

BACKGROUND On 11 July 2003, the Water Board adopted the *Conditional Waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges From Irrigated Lands Within the Central Valley Region* (Conditional Waivers), which provide an option for owners and/or operators of irrigated lands, which discharge tailwater, stormwater runoff, or other waste to surface water, to comply with the California Water Code (Water Code). At that time, data were available on effects of waste discharges from irrigated lands on surface water, but not on groundwater, so the Water Board limited the Conditional Waivers to surface water discharges.

At its 5 August 2005 meeting, the Water Board requested staff to prepare a “plan for presenting the advantages and disadvantages of various [groundwater] options, together with a recommendation on how best to proceed.” This Report provides some preliminary options to address discharges of waste to groundwater from irrigated lands and lays out a plan to collect, evaluate and present to the Water Board more complete information. The Report briefly describes and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of 3 preliminary options, which are listed below:

- Expand the current Conditional Waiver program during the renewal process to include groundwater discharges.
- Develop a Conditional Waiver for growers which discharge waste to groundwater that have a minimal effect on groundwater quality and general Waste Discharge Requirements for discharges that degrade or threaten to degrade groundwater quality.
- Include groundwater discharges in the permanent regulatory program.

A process is underway to develop an Environmental Impact Report for a permanent water quality regulatory program for discharges of waste from irrigated lands. The EIR does not include a full evaluation of groundwater. If the Water Board wishes to expand the EIR to include a full evaluation of groundwater, the contract would need to be amended or a new contract developed.

Mgmt. Review _____

Legal Review _____

15 September 2005
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
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Rancho Cordova, CA