



July 17, 2025

Via Email Only

Ryan Lodge
Executive Officer
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Ryan.Lodge@waterboards.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Agricultural Partners' Response to Staff Communication Regarding an Interim Drinking Water Program

Dear Mr. Lodge:

On June 4, 2025, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) staff provided a written response to the interim drinking water program put forward by the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, Grower-Shipper Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Western Growers Association, Western Plant Health Association, and the California Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of its seven Central Coast County Farm Bureaus (collectively, Ag Partners). On behalf of the Ag Partners, we provide here responses to the June 4, 2025, correspondence.

In summary, Central Coast Water Board staff provided their perspective related to elements of the program that they considered appropriate as part of an alternative water supply program that meets the requirements of State Water Resources Control Board

(State Water Board) Order WQ 2023-0081.¹ Staff also requested further information from the Ag Partners about various aspects of the interim drinking water program Ag Partners put forward.

As a preliminary matter, the Ag Partners would like to convey their continued interest in developing an interim drinking water program that can quickly and efficiently provide alternative water supplies for residents relying on groundwater and where a drinking water well exceeds the maximum contaminant level for nitrate as a result of agricultural operations. With that primary goal and objective at the forefront, the Ag Partners have provided several options for such an interim drinking water program that the Ag Partners can obtain support for from their grower members throughout the Central Coast region. Consistent with Order WQ 2023-0081, the Ag Partners have identified modest and appropriate incentives for inclusion of an interim drinking water program as part of revisions to the General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands (Ag Order 4.0) on remand from the State Water Board.

Unfortunately, the Ag Partners understand from Central Coast Water Board staff oral comments and statements made in the June 4, 2025, correspondence that the Central Coast Water Board no longer intends to first develop an interim drinking water program (or as referred to by staff as a Preliminary Alternative Water Supply program) before working on establishing a long-term program. Rather, the Central Coast Water Board staff instead propose to develop both at once. If this is true, the Ag Partners find this unfortunate as it will likely result in significant delay in implementation of any program for alternative drinking water supply. If the Ag Partners are mistaken in their interpretation of comments made to date, please let us know as we would like to continue to discuss development of an interim or Preliminary Alternative Water Supply program in the short-term to address the needs of those relying on domestic wells that may exceed the nitrate drinking water standard as a result of agricultural operations. Notably, this does not exclude discussions with respect to a longer-term program but instead makes the interim/Preliminary Alternative Water Supply program the highest priority for development and implementation.

Here, the Ag Partners respond to questions and comments conveyed in the June 4, 2025, correspondence and continue to express opportunities within the framework for an interim water supply program, consistent with the intent and purposes of Order WQ 2023-0081.

¹ Order WQ 2023-0081 remands certain requirements contained in General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands Order No. R2-2021-0040 back to the Central Coast Water Board for revision.

Our response is organized as follows: 1) Overview of Process To-Date; 2) Order WQ 2023-0081 Elements and Legal Authority; 3) Response to the June 2025 Central Coast Water Board Staff Letter; and 4) Procedural Requests and Next Steps.

PART 1 OVERVIEW OF PROCESS TO-DATE

The Ag Partners have engaged in good faith negotiations with staff since September 2023, days before the Order WQ 2023-0081 was adopted. Early on, Ag Partners conveyed their willingness to work with Central Coast Water Board staff to develop an interim drinking water program that could be established and put into place quickly and efficiently and that included modest incentives for Central Coast growers to participate in the program. The Ag Partners have continually focused on setting up an interim drinking water program, recognizing that a long-term program will take considerably more time and effort in its development. After initial discussions, Central Coast Water Board staff conveyed that they were going to coordinate with the State Water Board and multiple divisions within the State Water Board to establish an internal project team prior to moving forward with further discussions on an interim program. Meetings between Ag Partners and Central Coast Water Board staff resumed in March 2024 to further discuss staff's expectations for an alternative drinking water program. In May 2024, the Ag Partners submitted written program principles to Central Coast Water Board staff for the development and implementation of an interim drinking water program.

After the May submittal, the Ag Partners did not receive further communication from Central Coast Water Board staff until prompted by the Ag Partners in October 2024. However, rather than re-engaging directly with Ag Partners, staff issued a meeting notice to both the Ag Partners and Environmental Justice stakeholders, announcing that Central Coast Water Board staff's draft principles and regulatory framework concepts would be presented at a December 2024 meeting.

In early November 2024, the Ag Partners expressed concern about a multi-stakeholder negotiated process and the ability to efficiently reach a feasible resolution/agreement, recommending instead that Central Coast Water Board staff hold parallel discussions with each group and share proposals between them. Staff responded that the December 6 meeting would present high-level program concepts rather than facilitate negotiations and be followed by separate meetings with agricultural and environmental justice groups before broader public outreach. Central Coast Water Board staff then shared with the Ag Partners that four focused meetings on the alternative water supply program would follow the December 6, 2024, meeting, with similar meetings scheduled for environmental justice stakeholders.

In response, the Ag Partners requested a separate meeting related to their concern that the Central Coast Water Board's proposed approach appeared to not include incentives to

growers for providing funding for drinking water, noting this is a critical issue for the Central Coast agricultural community. Staff replied that all incentives suggested by the Ag Partners (via the principles document and previous discussions) were being considered and would be discussed related to their alignment with the “high-level concepts” to be presented at the December meeting. The request for a separate meeting was declined.

On December 6, 2024, the Central Coast Water Board presented preliminary concepts and a cost assessment for the Central Coast Alternative Water Supply Program (AWSP) to the Ag Partners and Environmental Justice stakeholders. The framework proposed voluntary enrollment in the revised Ag Order for commercial agricultural operators, with a 30-year compliance schedule. For those enrolled, suggested timelines included a final compliance schedule at 30 years, consistent with existing time frames in the General WDRs; not being subject to Cleanup and Abatement Orders (CAOs) for replacement water; and eligibility for third party alternative compliance program benefits such as modification of the interim compliance schedule. A collaborative process through summer 2025, followed by public outreach and workshops in fall 2025, was suggested.

In early January 2025, the first of four meetings was held between staff and the Ag Partners to discuss the development of the alternative water supply program, incorporating concepts discussed during the December 6 meeting. Central Coast Water Board staff presented their non-negotiable items, their interpretation of requirements from Order WQ 2023-0081, and staff openness to a phased approach. They also shared their perspective on take-aways from the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) alternative drinking water program and the Salinas Basin Agricultural Stewardship Group's (SBASG) program as well as expectations regarding transparency and accountability.

At the end of January 2025, a second meeting was held, at which the Ag Partners presented their reaction and feedback on the concepts set forth by Central Coast Water Board staff. In short, the Ag Partners expressed their substantial concern with the staff's proposal and the proposal's lack of consistency with Order WQ 2023-WQ. Notably, Ag Partners shared their concern that staff's proposal did not appear to allow or acknowledge the need for an interim drinking water program while a longer-term program was discussed and developed.

In response to the Ag Partner's concerns, Central Coast Water Board staff put forward a draft concept for a Preliminary Alternative Water Supply (Preliminary AWS) program at a February 2025 meeting. In this proposal, staff noted that this would be an estimated three-year early implementation program, during which progress must be made toward a long-term program, with development completed by the end of the three-year Preliminary AWS program. Unfortunately, however, the Preliminary AWS program set forth by staff was inconsistent with Order WQ 2023-0081 and did not contain any incentives for growers to

participate. Rather, it was a stand-alone requirement with all other provisions within the General WDRs remaining as is.

In late March 2025, the Ag Partners provided a written response to the Central Coast Water Board's proposal, including specific requirements for reaching agreement. A response including questions was received two days prior to the last meeting of staff and the Ag Partners, held on April 11, 2025. At this meeting, staff shared that they were leaning toward rejecting the Ag Partners' proposal because it did not include long-term solutions. Staff shared that they were likely moving away from a preliminary program, but not necessarily a phased program, and that a workshop would be held in which the Central Coast Water Board would provide a proposal that considered all stakeholder input to-date.

After the April 2025 meeting with staff, the Ag Partners initiated an evaluation of next steps and conducted further research into comparable drinking water programs, to provide further details on the interim drinking water program, as requested.

For nearly two years, the Ag Partners have participated in extensive collaborative discussions to develop an interim drinking water program, contributing constructive frameworks, ideas, and incentive proposals to address the replacement water needs of those that rely on domestic wells affected by nitrate contamination as soon as possible.

At this juncture, the Ag Partners, on behalf of their grower members subject to Ag Order 4.0, are uncertain if there is a viable alternative drinking water program agreement that the Ag Partners could support and promote to their members. We remain hopeful, however, that there is a continued opportunity to continue to work together to address drinking water solutions on the Central Coast. Importantly, the Central Coast Water Board cannot adopt such requirements into Ag Order 4.0 unilaterally without collaboration and support from the agricultural community. Any inclusion of an alternative water supply program that is paid for by growers in the Central Coast as part of an updated Ag Order, in accordance with the Order WQ 2023-0081, must be agreed upon by the agricultural community.

PART 2 ORDER WQ 2023-0081 ELEMENTS AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

The State Water Board's Order WQ 2023-0081 directly articulated the need for incentives to reach an agreement if the Central Coast Water Board was looking to include the alternative drinking water program as part of the General WDRs. The incentives are critical because the Central Coast Water Board lacks authority to mandate a short-term or long-term alternative drinking water program otherwise. Thus, the Central Coast Water Board is limited to what can be reached in agreement with agricultural interests subject to the General WDRs. As noted previously, the Ag Partners are currently supportive of putting

forward an interim alternative drinking water program for those that rely on domestic wells while long-term solutions are further explored.

Key Elements of State Water Board Order WQ 2023-0081

Essential elements and intent of Order WQ 2023-0081 must be followed, including:

- Program must be reasonable, feasible and practicable
- Order WQ 2023-0081 does not dictate time frames, use of alternative funding approaches, and other issues as part of an agreement
- Breadth and scope of the program is limited by State Board and Central Coast Water Board 's authority to mandate such a program – which ultimately is limited by the Central Coast Water Board 's ability to reach agreement with agricultural dischargers
- Order WQ 2023-0081 does NOT include discussion or reference to operations and maintenance as part of short- or long-term alternative water supplies
- Alternative supply must comply with all Primary Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), however, that does not mean that agricultural dischargers are responsible for fixing or mitigating other co-contaminants that may be present in addition to Nitrate
- Order WQ 2023-0081 directs Central Coast Water Board to consider experiences gained – no other explicit direction regarding composition or administration of a program is provided or expected
- Order WQ 2023-0081 referenced a longer compliance schedule as an example of an incentive for reaching agreement – meaning that additional incentives may be appropriate as well

Lack of Legal Authority to Require Drinking Water Program

In short, the Central Coast Water Board does not have the legal authority to require the Ag Partners to develop and implement a short-term or long-term drinking water program outside of an agreement as contemplated by the State Water Board's order. The analysis below provides additional detail regarding the Central Coast Water Board 's jurisdictional limitation.

In Order WQ-2023-0081, the State Water Board directed the Central Coast Water Board to ensure the provision of short-term and long-term alternative drinking water supplies for residents relying on groundwater with nitrate MCL exceedances. The State Water Board provided the specific following options: (1) incorporate a requirement for alternative water supplies into a water quality control plan, (2) incorporate such a requirement into cleanup and abatement orders, *or* (3) reach an agreement with dischargers to incorporate the

requirement into the General WDRs to justify a longer compliance time schedule. (Order WQ 2023-0081, p. 25.) The State Water Board's Order WQ 2023-0081 does *not* authorize the Central Coast Water Board to *mandate* an alternative water supplies program in the General WDRs absent an agreement with the dischargers – i.e., the Ag Partners. In addition to such a mandate not being authorized by the State Water Board, it is also not permitted by the only statutory authority for requiring replacement water supplies from a discharger, found in Water Code section 13304.

Water Code section 13304 allows a regional water board to issue a cleanup and abatement order (CAO) to address the effects of waste discharge that creates or threatens to create pollution or nuisance. A CAO issued pursuant to this section may require the discharger to provide uninterrupted replacement water services to each affected public water supplier or private well owner. (Wat. Code § 13304 subd. (a).) This replacement water must meet all applicable federal, state, and local drinking water standards and be of comparable quality to the original water before the discharge occurred. (*Id.*, subd. (f).) If replacement water is required for more than 30 days, the Central Coast Water Board must request a written “water replacement plan”, which must be approved by the board before it is implemented. (*Id.*, subds. (h) and (i).) Nothing in the statute, and no decision citing this statute, supports the conclusion that the authority to require a water replacement plan may be exercised outside of the context of a CAO.

A WDR is very different from a CAO. Water Code § 13263 states that the Central Coast Water Board may prescribe requirements as to the nature of discharges and “shall implement any relevant water quality control plans that have been adopted, and shall take into consideration the beneficial uses to be protected, the water quality objectives reasonably required for that purpose, other waste discharges, the need to prevent nuisance, and the provisions of Section 13241.” No part of this statute (or in any statute within Article 4 of Chapter 4, i.e., §§ 13260 through 13267) mentions the provision of alternate drinking water or the establishment of a replacement water supply program as a potentially prescribed requirement in a WDR. It is well-settled that administrative agencies in general, and regional water quality control boards specifically, may not take actions which are in excess of the authority provided under their statutory mandate. (*Tirapelle v. Davis* (1993) 20 Cal.App. 4th 1317, 1333: [“an agency may act only within the scope of authority conferred upon it. When an agency transgresses the scope of its authority the purported action is void regardless of whether it is otherwise reasonable”], see *Los Angeles Waterkeeper v. State Water Resources Control Bd.* (2023) 92 Cal.App.5th 230, 247 [the Legislature has limited the authority of regional water boards to specific tasks].)

The State Water Board has previously articulated the “purposeful distinction” between the requirements of CAOs and the requirements of WDRs in Water Quality Order 1996-02: that “WDRs are applicable to proposed or current controlled discharges,” and that CAOs apply to “past discharges, and... uncontrolled, intentional, or negligent releases.” (*Id.*, pp 6-7.)

Moreover, the State Water Board cites its own intention to “maintain a distinction between WDRs and CAOs,” citing past water quality orders where it consistently determined regional water boards mandating cleanup activities and requirements thereunder must do so upon issuance of a CAO, not based on a WDR. (*Ibid.*) This is consistent with the State Water Board’s current directive in Order WQ 2023-0081 by directing the Central Coast Water Board to structure the alternative water supply program through the water quality control plan², *or* through CAOs, *or* through an *agreement* with the dischargers in Ag Order 4.0. This direction maintains the purposeful distinction between the CAO and WDR articulated in Order WQ1996-02, and no part of the State Water Board’s direction in Order WQ 2023-0081 (nor can it legally) implies an intent to depart from the plain reading of these statutes.

Accordingly, there is no authorization, either from the Legislature or from the State Water Board³, for the Central Coast Water Board to unilaterally impose a replacement drinking water program upon agricultural dischargers within the region through Ag Order 4.0. Outside of a CAO or a basin plan amendment, the Central Coast Water Board must enter into an agreement as discussed in this letter. Notably, the Ag Partners recognize that development of a basin plan amendment as suggested in Order WQ 2023-0081 would take many years to develop. The basin plan amendments for the Central Valley Nitrate Control Program overall took almost a decade to develop and another three years to be adopted and approved by all necessary administrative agencies before becoming effective. Thus, although it is listed as an option, the Ag Partners do not see development and adoption of a basin plan amendment as a viable option at this time.

PART 3 RESPONSE TO THE JUNE 2025 CENTRAL COAST WATER BOARD STAFF LETTER

The responses below follow the format of the letter received by staff, for ease of reference. However, before responding specifically to staff’s initial responses to the Ag Partner’s proposal, it is important to first clarify the context with which the responses are provided. It appears from our interpretation of the Central Coast Water Board staff’s June 4, 2025, correspondence that Central Coast Water Board staff are only willing to consider the Ag Partner’s proposal as part of a broader AWS that incorporates short-term and long-term solutions. The Ag Partners put forward its proposal in the context of establishing an interim, short-term program as quickly as possible while discussions for a long-term program ensue. Accordingly, the Ag Partners’ responses here continue to be related to quick

² Given the requirements of Water Code section 13263 subd. (a) that WDRs must incorporate the requirements of relevant water quality control plans, it necessarily follows that the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin would have to be formally amended to include such a requirement before it could otherwise be implemented into the WDR.

³ Absent legislative action, the State Water Board also does not have the authority to mandate an alternative water supply program outside the boundaries described.

development and implementation of a short-term or interim program. As stated, Ag Partners are not opposed to discussing principles and elements associated with a long-term program; however, such discussions should be separate and apart from implementation of an interim program. This approach is consistent with the CVSALTS Nitrate Control Program, which includes an Early Action Plan and interim alternative supplies while long-term solutions and funding for long-term are developed and identified, respectively.

Program Elements Already Required by the Order WQ 2023-0081

Staff responded that the Ag Order requirements the Ag Partners requested be updated, specifically Part 2, Section C.2, Paragraphs 8 and 13, will be removed under adoption of the revised Ag Order 4.0.

Ag Partners Response: Ag Partners appreciate that Central Coast Water Board staff agree that these provisions need to be deleted in their entirety as directed by Order WQ 2023-0081.

Program Elements/Incentives That Cannot be Agreed to at This Time

The Ag Partners previously requested that 1, 2, 3-TCP testing be eliminated from the Ag Order due to this not being a widespread issue in agricultural areas, and any exceedances found have been relatively small. Staff responded that due to the prevalence of multiple non-detect results from most monitoring samples collected these requirements will no longer be required for many soon.

Ag Partners Response: While the Ag Partners appreciate that the requirement will become obsolete for many growers soon, we suggest that the monitoring results support removal of the requirement all together. Regardless, however, the Ag Partners are willing to reconsider this request as part of incentivizing an interim alternative water supply program for those that rely on domestic wells that exceed the nitrate drinking water standard.

Program Elements/Incentives Open to Discussion

Protection from Cleanup and Abatement Orders

Staff responded that they will potentially incorporate provisions protecting participants from new Cleanup and Abatement Orders requiring replacement drinking water.

Ag Partners Response: We request this protection be automatically included in the context of an interim program for the duration of the interim program.

Phased Program Implementation

Staff acknowledges that a phased program could be established to address short-term and then long-term alternative water supply needs. It appears that staff intends to seek public input on a phased approach before giving additional consideration to development of an interim/short-term program first, then followed by long-term program discussions.

Ag Partners Response: The Ag Partners remain open to discussing processes for long-term program development; however, the current focus should be on short-term solutions. Throughout these discussions, the Ag Partners have advocated for adopting a revised Ag Order 4.0 that establishes a 10-year interim program that can be implemented expeditiously to provide immediate water access to those that rely on individual domestic wells that exceed the nitrate standard. By establishing an interim program for up to 10-years, the Central Coast Water Board, Ag Partners and interested persons would then have sufficient time to evaluate comprehensive long-term alternatives and funding for such alternatives. Based on experience within the Central Valley, 10-years is not an excessive length of time to develop a long-term program that outlines expectations and understandings with respect to implementation of a long-term program. Accordingly, we believe it reasonable and appropriate for the Central Coast Water Board to first develop an interim program that can be implemented for up to 10-years. Otherwise, the length of time to develop a short-term and long-term program simultaneously will take an excessive amount of time and will prevent those that rely on domestic wells from having access to clean drinking water sooner rather than later.

At this time, the Ag Partners are willing to support development of an interim (i.e., short-term) program for up to ten years that provides access to clean drinking water to those that rely on domestic wells that exceed the nitrate drinking water standard. The Ag Partners are also open to discussing development of a schedule for developing principles related to long-term solutions. More importantly, the Ag Partners believe that their assistance should be focused on those that rely on domestic wells and have exceedances of the nitrate drinking water standard because it helps to fill a long-neglected gap. For other types of systems and contaminants, there are various state and federal programs that may be sought after or relied on for assistance.

Defined Financial Contribution of Dischargers

Staff indicated support for establishing a financial contribution cap during the interim drinking water program's initial phase (or alternative specified timeframe), with fees structured to meet an agreed-upon percentage of the total estimated need, an approach the Ag Partners welcome.

Ag Partners Response: The Ag Partners have initiated a comprehensive analysis to establish the interim drinking water program's parameters, encompassing third-party

administration, management oversight, database development, service area delineation, well sampling as necessary, replacement water delivery vendor coordination, website administration, and community outreach activities.

To complete the analysis, the Ag Partners anxiously await the Central Coast Water Board's "Assessment of Interim Drinking Water Needs and Costs in Central Coast Areas Affected by Agricultural Nitrate Groundwater Contamination" to conduct a comparison between the Ag Partners' estimated costs and those previously provided by staff. Upon receipt and comprehensive review of this information, the Ag Partners anticipate further conversations with the Central Coast Water Board, and the ability to provide additional details related to cost estimates and corresponding financial contribution commitments from third-party group members participating in the interim drinking water program. Notably, the defined financial contribution Ag Partners first proposed appears to support the cost analysis conducted by Ag Partners to date. Additional updates will be provided once the Central Coast Water Board's Needs Assessment is released.

Nitrogen Target Revisions

In our March 2025 communication to staff, the Ag Partners requested specific changes to the compliance schedule for Fertilizer Nitrogen Application targets in Ag Order Table C.2-1. Staff responded that in accordance with the Order WQ 2023-0081, the fertilizer nitrogen application targets are only applicable to growers who are not yet reporting nitrogen removed, and therefore this schedule change would not provide incentives for growers to participate in the AWS program. Staff further note that by March 1, 2028, all growers will be reporting nitrogen removed and the Fertilizer Nitrogen Application targets will become obsolete.

Ag Partners Response: The Ag Partners appreciate the clarification. Based on this information, the Ag Partners would then recommend that the Fertilizer Application Targets be deleted in their entirety when Ag Order 4.0 is revised since they are becoming obsolete.

The Ag Partners also requested specific changes to the "final year 2028 nitrogen discharge target" (i.e., nitrogen applied minus nitrogen removed) and the associated compliance schedule in Ag Order Table C.2-2. Staff responded that they are open to discussing such modifications if supported by irrigation and nutrient management data or other relevant information.

Ag Partners Response: The Ag Partners welcome staff's expressed willingness to engage in additional discussions regarding the proposed nitrogen discharge values and target dates. Importantly, however, the Ag Partners see these revisions as necessary to provide growers with an incentive to participate in an interim/short-term program for up to 10 years. The proposed new compliance dates purposefully correspond with an interim program for 10-

years – assuming that Ag Order 4.0 is revised in 2026 to include an interim/short-term program. Moreover, the Ag Partners find these revisions necessary in light of Order WQ 2023-0081 and its direction to the Central Coast Water Board to remove certain elements from the A-R calculation that was part of Ag Order 4.0 when adopted in 2021. Without these revisions, many growers will be unable to comply with the targets in Ag Order 4.0 as they currently exist. Ag Partners appreciate the opportunity to move forward with a productive dialogue on these A-R targets, drawing from current applied-minus-removed (A-R) reported data, available research, and other relevant sources, as long as it is understood and part of an incentive for an interim/short-term program.

The revisions requested to Table C. 2-2 were as follows:

Compliance Date and A-R Target			
Target	A-R Result in lbs/acre per year	Current Compliance Date	Potential New Compliance Date
Target	500	12/31/2023	12/31/2028
Target	450	12/31/2026	12/31/2031
Target	400	12/31/2028	12/31/2036

Flexibility in Third-Party Alternative Compliance Pathway

Staff indicate that they believe Ag Order 4.0 already provides flexibility within the 3P-ACP framework to develop and substantiate formulas, values, targets, and compliance schedules that address our concerns. They also indicated a willingness to revise Ag Order 4.0 to further clarify the flexibility.

Ag Partners Response: Ag Partners appreciate the willingness to have such discussions on potential Ag Order revisions to clarify this flexibility, which we believe may serve as a meaningful participation incentive for the interim drinking water program. Such discussions will need to include realities associated with interim and final target dates, including realities associated with agronomics and marketable and sustainable crop yields, and crop rotations on the Central Coast.

Other Incentives and Proposals

We look forward to discussing further incentives and recommendations with staff as discussions continue with respect to an interim/short-term program. Notably, administration of the interim/short-term program by those that pay for the program will be critical for the willingness of growers in the Central Coast to reach an agreement. Ag Partners recognize that the Central Coast Water Board will maintain a certain level of oversight as it is connected to compliance with Ag Order 4.0. However, such oversight

cannot substitute for direct administration of the program by an organization that has the trust of the growers.

PART 4 PROCEDURAL REQUESTS & NEXT STEPS

The Ag Partners and staff have scheduled a meeting prior to the August 21 workshop to advance interim drinking water program discussions. As we begin these conversations, our fundamental requirements include:

1. The program must be administered and directed by the third-party members that pay for it
2. Expectations of the program must be well-defined, be reasonable, and be part of an interim/short-term program for a period of time up to 10 years
3. The program must be attached to Ag Order revisions that include extended timelines for compliance with reasonable provisions such as nitrogen discharge targets

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Ag Partners look forward to continued discussions with staff to develop an interim drinking water program. The Ag Partners remain committed to working together on Central Coast drinking water solutions and we ask the Central Coast Water Board to focus attention reaching an agreement that can be incorporated into the Ag Order.

Thank you for the opportunity for continued discussion and engagement. Please contact Theresa Dunham at tdunham@ksclawyers.com if there are questions on the comments provided.

Sincerely,




Christopher Valadez, President
Grower-Shipper Association of Central
California



Norman C. Groot, Executive Director
Monterey County Farm Bureau



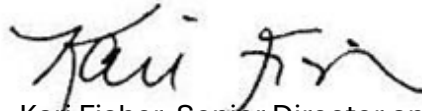
Claire Wineman, President
Grower-Shipper Association of Santa
Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties



Gail Delihant, Director,
Government Affairs
Western Growers Association



Renee Pinel, President/CEO
Western Plant Health Association



Karl Fisher, Senior Director and Counsel,
Legal Advocacy
California Farm Bureau Federation

cc: Jane Gray, Chair, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board,
Jane.Gray@Waterboards.ca.gov
Sean Maguire, State Water Board Member Liaison to the Central Coast Regional
Water Quality Control Board, Sean.Maguire@waterboards.ca.gov
James Bishop, James.Bishop@waterboards.ca.gov
Mary Hamilton, Mary.Hamilton@waterboards.ca.gov
Angela Schroeter, Angela.Schroeter@waterboards.ca.gov
Julie Macedo, Julie.Macedo@waterboards.ca.gov
Sophie Froelich, Sophie.Froelich@waterboards.ca.gov