

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND STIPULATION FOR ENTRY OF
ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY ORDER R5-2016-0533
IN THE MATTER OF
GURCHARAN S. RAKKAR AND BALWINDER K. RAKKAR,
AS INDIVIDUALS AND IN THEIR REPRESENTATIVE
CAPACITY AS TRUSTEES FOR THE
GURCHARAN & BALWINDER RAKKAR TRUST,
AND RAKKAR PROPERTIES LP,
MADERA COUNTY

This Settlement Agreement and Stipulation for Entry of Administrative Civil Liability Order (Stipulated Order or Order) is entered into by and between the Assistant Executive Officer of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board or Regional Board), on behalf of the Central Valley Water Board Prosecution Team (Prosecution Team), and Gurcharan & Balwinder Rakkar as individuals and in their representative capacity as trustees for the Gurcharan & Balwinder Rakkar Trust, and Rakkar Properties LP (Discharger)(collectively known as the Parties) and is presented to the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee, for adoption as an order by settlement, pursuant to Government Code section 11415.60.

Recitals

1. On 21 June 2013, the Assistant Executive Officer of the Central Valley Water Board issued a Water Code section 13260 Directive Letter (hereafter Directive) to the Discharger. The Directive required the Discharger to obtain regulatory coverage for its irrigated agricultural parcels within 15 calendar days of receipt of the Directive. As detailed in the Directive, the Discharger could obtain coverage by joining the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (“Coalition” or “ESJ Coalition”), or by submitting a Report of Waste Discharge (RoWD). The Discharger did not obtain regulatory coverage by 9 July 2013.
2. Because the Discharger failed to respond by the deadline specified in the Directive, a Notice of Violation (NOV) was sent via certified mail to the Discharger on 17 July 2013. On 1 August 2013, the discharger contacted the Central Valley Water Board and submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to join a grower coalition on 12 August 2013. However, the Discharger did not complete the process and obtain regulatory coverage by joining a coalition or through individual coverage.
3. Subsequently, on 6 June 2014, staff sent an “Incomplete NOI” letter notifying the Discharger that the Notice of Intent to join a coalition was received, but that further action was required to obtain regulatory coverage (i.e., the Dischargers must join a coalition).

4. On 17 July 2014, the Discharger contacted staff regarding the Incomplete NOI letter. Board staff and the Discharger discussed the letter, the requirement to join the coalition, and staff provided the coalition's phone number. The Discharger did not obtain coalition membership in response to this phone call.
5. On 30 September 2015, staff sent the Discharger a notification letter via certified mail that an Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (Complaint) would be issued if the Discharger did not obtain regulatory coverage, and then initiate settlement discussions regarding the proposed Administrative Civil Liability (ACL) fine by 16 October 2015. The Discharger did not contact Board staff in response to the pre-ACL letter.
6. On 25 January 2016, staff issued a Complaint to the Discharger. Upon receiving the Complaint, the Discharger submitted a hearing waiver and requested a settlement meeting with the Prosecution Team.
7. The Discharger joined the Coalition in February 2016. Board records indicate that the Discharger enrolled 17 parcels comprised of 1,545 acres in the Coalition.
8. A settlement meeting between the Discharger and the Prosecution Team was held on 24 March 2016. These parties agreed to settle the alleged violations without administrative or civil litigation by presenting this Stipulated Order to the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee, for adoption as an order by settlement pursuant to Government Code section 11415.60. Whereas the Discharger has subsequently obtained regulatory coverage by enrolling in the Coalition.

Regulatory Considerations

9. The Discharger violated Water Code section 13260 by failing to obtain regulatory coverage for a period of 929 days. The Central Valley Water Board may assess an ACL based on Water Code section 13261 for that violation.
10. Water Code section 13260, subdivision (a), requires that any person discharging waste or proposing to discharge waste within any region that could affect the quality of the waters of the State, other than into a community sewer system, shall file with the appropriate Regional Board a RoWD containing such information and data as may be required by the Regional Board, unless the Regional Board waives such requirement.
11. Pursuant to Water Code section 13261, subdivision (a), a person who fails to furnish a report or pay a fee under Section 13260 when so requested by a regional board is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be liable civilly in accordance with subdivision (b).
12. Water Code section 13261, subdivision (b)(1), states that civil liability may be administratively imposed by a regional board or the state board in accordance with Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 13323) of Chapter 5 for a violation of subdivision

(a) in an amount not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each day in which the violation occurs. Civil liability shall not be imposed by the regional board pursuant to this section if the state board has imposed liability against the same person for the same violation.

13. Pursuant to Water Code section 13327, in determining the amount of civil liability, the Central Valley Water Board is required to take into consideration the nature, circumstance, extent, and gravity of the violation or violations, whether the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement, the degree of toxicity of the discharge, and, with respect to the violator, the ability to pay, the effect on ability to continue in business, any voluntary cleanup efforts undertaken, any prior history of violations, the degree of culpability, economic benefit or savings, if any, resulting from the violation, and other matters as justice may require. Attachment A, which is hereby fully incorporated into this Order by reference, describes the penalty calculation.

Settlement

14. The Parties have engaged in confidential settlement negotiations and agree to settle the matter without administrative or civil litigation and by presenting this Stipulated Order to the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee, for adoption as an order by settlement pursuant to Government Code section 11415.60. The Central Valley Water Board Prosecution Team believes that the resolution of the alleged violations is fair and reasonable and fulfills its enforcement objectives, that no further action is warranted concerning the violations alleged herein and that this Stipulated Order is in the best interest of the public.
15. To resolve the violation by consent and without further administrative proceedings the Parties have agreed to the imposition of sixty four thousand six hundred and fifty-five dollars \$64,655 against the Discharger, as described in Stipulations 1 and 2.

Stipulations

The Parties stipulate to the following:

1. Administrative Civil Liability: The Discharger hereby agrees to the imposition of administrative civil liability totaling **sixty-three thousand seven hundred dollars (\$63,700)** to the Central Valley Water Board to resolve the alleged Water Code violations, specifically:
 - a. **Thirty-four thousand eighty one dollars (\$34,081)** shall be paid to the State Water Board *Cleanup and Abatement Account*. Payment shall be made no later than thirty (30) days after the entry of an Order approving this Settlement Agreement by the Central Valley Water Board, by check payable to the State Water Board *Cleanup and Abatement Account*. The Discharger shall indicate on the check the number of this Order. The Discharger shall send the original signed check to the

Accounting Office, Attn: ACL Payment, P.O. Box 1888, Sacramento, CA 95812-1888. Copies of the check shall be sent to Brett Stevens, Central Valley Water Quality Control Board, 11020 Sun Center Drive, Suite 200, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670.

- b. **Twenty-nine thousand six hundred and nineteen dollars (\$29,619)** shall be paid to the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment (“Rose Foundation”). Out of that amount, \$29,619 shall be distributed in its entirety to Self-Help Enterprises solely for use as part of the disadvantaged communities (DAC) Engagement in Regional Water Planning for Madera County area of San Joaquin River Basin Region Project. This Project is intended to improve DAC participation in Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) activities by working directly with DACs and IRWM to build capacity, foster relationships, address current barriers, and minimize future barriers and support development of ground water sustainability projects.

Payment shall be made no later than thirty (30) days after the entry of an Order approving this Settlement Agreement by the Central Valley Water Board. Payment shall be provided to the Rose Foundation in the form of a single check payable to the “Rose Foundation.” Payment shall be sent to the following address: Rose Foundation, 1970 Broadway, Suite 600, Oakland, CA 94612-2218, Attn: Tim Little. A copy of the check shall be sent to Brett Stevens at the address set forth above.

2. Oversight Payment: In addition to the administrative civil liability in Stipulation 1, the Discharger hereby agrees to pay **nine hundred and fifty-five dollars (\$955)** to the Rose Foundation for Supplemental Environmental Project (“SEP”) oversight for the specific SEP described in Stipulation 3. Attachment B, which is hereby incorporated into this Order by reference, describes the Rose Foundation’s SEP Development and SEP Oversight activities in detail.
3. Supplemental Environmental Project: The Discharger and the Central Valley Water Board agree that the payment specified in Section 1.b of the Stipulation is a SEP, and that the amount specified (hereafter SEP amount) will be treated as a Suspended Administrative Civil Liability for purposes of this Stipulated Order. Upon the Discharger’s payment of its SEP obligations under this Stipulation, Central Valley Water Board staff shall send the Discharger a letter recognizing the satisfactory completion of its SEP obligations. This letter shall terminate any further SEP obligations of Discharger and result in the permanent waiver of the SEP suspended liability.
 - a. Using the grant funds, Self-Help Enterprises will conduct a 14 month project which will facilitate DAC participation in IRWM activities by working directly with DACs and IRWM to build capacity, foster relationships, address current barriers, minimize future barriers, and support development of ground water sustainability projects. A full Proposal for the Project—including a list of deliverables and timeline—is

included as Attachment C, which is hereby incorporated into this Order.

- 4. Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulatory Changes:** The Dischargers understand that payment of administrative civil liability in accordance with the terms of this Stipulated Order and or compliance with the terms of this Stipulated Order is not a substitute for compliance with applicable laws, and that continuing violations of the type alleged in the Complaint may subject it to further enforcement, including additional ACLs. Nothing in this Stipulated Order shall excuse Discharger from meeting any more stringent requirements which may be imposed hereafter by changes in applicable and legally binding legislation or regulations.

- 5. Party Contacts for Communications Related to Stipulated Order:**

For the Central Valley Water Board:

Andrew Altevogt - Assistant Executive Officer
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
11020 Sun Center Drive, Suite 200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670
(916) 464-4656

Naomi Kaplowitz - Attorney
Office of Enforcement, State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 16th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95812
(916) 341-5677

For the Discharger:

Daljit Rakkar
Representative for Gurcharan S. and Balwinder K. Rakkar & Rakkar Properties
Law Men Office
2300 Tulare St., Suite 240
Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 442-8000
Email: daljitrakkar@yahoo.com

- 6. Attorney's Fees and Costs:** Except as otherwise provided herein, each Party shall bear all attorneys' fees and costs arising from the Party's own counsel in connection with the matters set forth herein.
- 7. Matters Addressed by Stipulation:** Upon adoption by the Regional Board, or its delegee, this Stipulated Order represents a final and binding resolution and settlement of all claims, violations, or causes of action alleged in this Order or which could have been asserted based on the specific facts alleged in this Stipulated Order against Dischargers as of the effective date of this Stipulated Order. The provisions of this Paragraph are expressly conditioned on Discharger's full payment of the ACL by the deadline specified

in Stipulation 1.

8. **Public Notice:** The Discharger understands that this Stipulated Order will be noticed for a 30-day public review and comment period prior to consideration by the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee. If significant new information is received that reasonably affects the propriety of presenting this Stipulated Order to the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee, for adoption, the Assistant Executive Officer may unilaterally declare this Stipulated Order void and decide not to present it to the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee. The Dischargers agree that they may not rescind or otherwise withdraw their approval of this proposed Stipulated Order.
9. **Procedure:** The Parties agree that the procedure that has been adopted for the approval of the settlement by the Parties and review by the public, as reflected in this Order, will be adequate. In the event procedural objections are raised prior to this Stipulated Order becoming effective, the Parties agree to meet and confer concerning any such objections, and may agree to revise or adjust the procedure as necessary or advisable under the circumstances.
10. **No Waiver of Right to Enforce:** The failure of the Prosecution Team or Regional Board to enforce any provision of this Stipulated Order shall in no way be deemed a waiver of such provision, or in any way affect the validity of this Stipulated Order. The failure of the Prosecution Team or Regional Board to enforce any such provision shall not preclude it from later enforcing the same or any other provision of this Stipulated Order. No oral advice, guidance, suggestions or comments by employees or officials of any Party regarding matters covered under this Stipulated Order shall be construed to relieve any Party regarding matters covered in this Stipulated Order. The Regional Board reserves all rights to take additional enforcement actions, including without limitation the issuance of ACL complaints or orders for violations other than those addressed by this Order.
11. **Interpretation:** This Stipulated Order shall not be construed against the party preparing it, but shall be construed as if the Parties jointly prepared it and any uncertainty and ambiguity shall not be interpreted against any one party.
12. **Modification:** This Order shall not be modified by any of the Parties by oral representation whether made before or after the execution of this Order. All modifications must be made in writing and approved by the Regional Board or its delegee.
13. **If Order Does Not Take Effect:** In the event that this Stipulated Order does not take effect because it is not approved by the Regional Board, or its delegee, or is vacated in whole or in part by the State Water Resources Control Board or a court, the Parties acknowledge that the Prosecution Team may proceed to a contested evidentiary hearing before the Regional Board to determine whether to assess an ACL for the underlying alleged violations, or may continue to pursue settlement. The Parties agree that all oral and written statements and agreements made during the course of settlement discussions will not be admissible as evidence in any subsequent administrative or

judicial proceeding or hearing and will be fully protected by California Evidence Code sections 1152 and 1154; California Government Code section 11415.60; Rule 408, Federal Rules of Evidence; and any other applicable privilege under federal and/or state law. The Parties also agree to waive any and all objections related to their efforts to settle this matter, including, but not limited to:

- a. Objections related to prejudice or bias of any of the Regional Board members or their advisors and any other objections to the extent that they are premised in whole or in part on the fact that the Regional Board members or their advisors were exposed to some of the material facts and the Parties settlement positions, and therefore may have formed impressions or conclusions, prior to conducting any contested evidentiary hearing in this matter; or
 - b. Laches or delay or other equitable defenses based on the time period that the order or decision by settlement may be subject to administrative or judicial review.
14. **No Admission of Liability:** Neither this Stipulated Order, nor any payment pursuant to the Order, shall constitute evidence of, or be construed as, a finding, adjudication, or acknowledgement of any fact, law, or liability, nor shall it be construed as an admission of violation of any law, rule, or regulation. However, this Order and/or any actions of payment pursuant to the Order may constitute evidence in actions seeking compliance with this Order. This Order may be used as evidence of a prior enforcement action in future actions by the Regional Board.
 15. **Waiver of Right to Petition:** The Discharger hereby waives the right to petition the Central Valley Water Board's adoption of the Stipulated Order as written for review by the State Water Board, and further waives the rights, if any, to appeal the same to a California Superior Court and/or any California appellate level court.
 16. **Covenant not to Sue:** Upon the effective date of this Stipulated Order, Discharger shall and does release, discharge, and covenant not to sue or pursue any civil or administrative claims against any State Agency or the State of California, its officers, agents, directors, employees, attorneys, representatives, for any and all claims or causes of action, which arise out of or are related to this action.
 17. **Water Boards not Liable:** Neither the Regional Board members nor the Central Valley Water Board staff, attorneys, or representatives shall be liable for any injury or damage to persons or property resulting from the negligent or intentional acts or omissions by Discharger or its respective directors, officers, employees, agents, representatives or contractors in carrying out activities pursuant to this Order, nor shall the Regional Board, its members or staff be held as parties to or guarantors of any contract entered into by Respondent, or its directors, officers, employees, agents, representatives or contractors in carrying out activities pursuant to this Order.

18. **Authority to Enter Stipulated Order:** Each person executing this Stipulated Order in a representative capacity represents and warrants that he or she is authorized to execute this Order on behalf of and to bind the entity on whose behalf he or she executes the Order.
19. **No Third Party Beneficiaries:** This Stipulated Order is not intended to confer any rights or obligation on any third party or parties, and no third party or parties shall have any right of action under this Stipulated Order for any cause whatsoever.
20. **Effective Date:** This Stipulated Order shall be effective and binding on the Parties upon the date the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee, enters the Order.
21. **Counterpart Signatures:** This Order may be executed and delivered in any number of counterparts, each of which when executed and delivered shall be deemed to be an original, but such counterparts shall together constitute one document.

IT IS SO STIPULATED.

Original signed by

5/23/2016

Andrew Altevogt
Assistant Executive Officer
For the Regional Board Prosecution Team

Date

Original signed by

5/31/2016

Gurcharan Rakkar

Date

HAVING CONSIDERED THE PARTIES STIPULATIONS, THE CENTRAL VALLEY REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD, BY AND THROUGH ITS EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FINDS THAT:

1. This is an action to enforce the laws and regulations administered by the Central Valley Water Board. The method of compliance with this enforcement action consists entirely of payment of amounts for administrative civil liability. As such, the Central Valley Water Board finds that issuance of this Order is not considered subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and is not considered "project" (Public Resources Code 21065, 21080(a); 15060(c)(2),(3); 150378(a), Title 14, of the California Code of Regulations). In addition, issuance of this Stipulated Order is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.), in accordance with sections 15061(b)(3) and 15321(a)(2), of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.
2. The foregoing Stipulation is fully incorporated herein and made part of this Order.
3. In adopting this Stipulated Order, the Central Valley Water Board, or its delegee, has considered, where applicable, each of the factors prescribed in Water Code sections 13327, 13351, and 13385(e). The consideration of these factors is based upon information and comments obtained by the Central Valley Water Board's staff in investigating the allegations concerning the Discharger discussed herein or otherwise provided to the Central Valley Water Board or its delegee by the Parties and members of the public.

I, PAMELA C. CREEDON, Executive Officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, correct copy of an Order issued by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region.

Original signed by

6/20/2016

PAMELA C. CREEDON, Executive Officer

Date