

## **IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **January 2019**

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) update provides a summary of significant activities of State Water Board from December 15, 2018 to January 15, 2019, and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board from November 15, 2018 to January 15, 2019. Next month's report will present activities of the North Coast, San Francisco Bay, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Colorado River Basin, Santa Ana, and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's Program and cover the period between from December 15, 2018 to February 15, 2019.

### **STATE WATER BOARD**

ILRP staff (staff) met with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) staff on December 18, 2018, to discuss Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans (INMP) and certification development. This meeting was a follow up to the Western Regional Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) Board meeting at which the board approved moving forward with a transition of the Nitrogen Management Plan Certification to include more California-specific requirements. The certification program was previously funded through a CDFA grant; however, the funding mechanism is exhausted. Incorporating the INMP requirements in the Certification training is vital to assist growers comply with ILRP requirements. Additional discussion will focus on the exam format and the agency responsible for tracking successful completion of the exam.

On December 21, 2018, staff met with Leafy Green Marketing Agreement staff to discuss food safety and water quality co-management. The meeting discussion included an update on the May 2018 E. coli outbreak in romaine lettuce. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) found 3 positives of the same bacterial strain in the canal that runs adjacent to the feedlot of the romaine lettuce. The FDA believes the outbreak was due to contaminated water from the canal. One hypothesis is that this contaminated water was used to apply fungicide to the produce. The FDA believes this could account for the wide distribution. An alternative hypothesis is that increased weather events transferred the pathogens to the produce. As a result of the outbreak, a leafy greens task force was formed to investigate the event. The task force explored causes, mitigation, and better practices.

On January 7, 2019, staff participated in the Farm Food Safety & Conservation Network (FFSCN) Steering Committee meeting. Topics included the E. coli outbreak in romaine lettuce, water recycling and reuse, and issues related to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) work in supporting conservation on produce farms.

On January 9, 2019, staff attended the Central Valley Regional Water Board Stakeholder meeting in Merced. Discussion focused on the new on-farm drinking water

well monitoring requirement from the East San Joaquin Petition Order. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board update provides more details on this meeting.

Additionally, on January 9, 2019, staff attended the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Healthy Soil Meeting. The University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources presented research results on improving agricultural fertilizer management in industrialized agricultural systems. The focus of the study was to meet multiple goals of improved water quality, improved public health, and decreased greenhouse gas emissions while still maintaining economically viable and productive food systems. This improvement will require innovation by the governing institutions managing shared resources and behavior change among individual farmers on their private lands. The research is based on California agriculture, where the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program is implemented through collaborative watershed groups that monitor and regulate agricultural non-point source pollution.

On January 15, staff attended a quarterly roundtable meeting with staff throughout the state as well as staff from CDFA to discuss implementation of the program, and statewide consistency. The meeting was held in San Diego and was followed by a field trip to local farms.

## **CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

Program staff released proposed revisions to seven General Orders for Growers within the Central Valley that are Members of a Third-Party Group on November 6, 2018. The Central Valley Water Board will consider adoption of the revisions at the February 7-8, 2019 Board Meeting. Written comments were due on December 21, 2018. Orders with proposed revisions include Sacramento River Watershed, Sacramento Valley Rice Growers, San Joaquin County and Delta, Western San Joaquin River Watershed, Grasslands Drainage Area, Western Tulare Lake Basin, and Tulare Lake Basin.

Central Valley Water Board staff hold quarterly stakeholder meetings to provide an open forum for communication between staff, agricultural coalitions, environmental justice groups, and other interested parties in the Central Valley Region. The January 9, 2019, stakeholder meeting was held at the Merced County Farm Bureau, with a focused discussion on the new on-farm drinking water well monitoring requirement from the precedential East San Joaquin Petition Order.

Implementation of this new monitoring program has started within the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition.

Central Valley Water Board staff continues to concentrate on compliance, outreach, and enforcement efforts, mostly in agricultural parcel inspections, Water Code section 13260 Directives, Notices of Violation for failure to respond to a Water Code section 13260 Directive and failure to comply with Orders, and Administrative Civil Liability Complaints. From November to December 2018, Central Valley Water Board staff conducted 138

parcel inspections to assess the need for ILRP enrollment and 5 on-farm inspections to evaluate General Order compliance; and issued 61 directives and 236 Notices of Violation.

Additional information can be found on the [Regional Board website](#).