

## **IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **July 2019**

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program update provides a summary of significant activities of State Water Board from June 15, 2019 to July 15, 2019 and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board from May 15, 2019 to July 15, 2019. Next month's report will present activities of the North Coast, San Francisco Bay, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Lahontan, Colorado River Basin, Santa Ana, and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's Program and cover the period between from June 15, 2019 to August 15, 2019.

### **STATE WATER BOARD**

On June 17, 2019, State Water Board staff (staff) participated in a National Water Quality Initiative meeting to discuss future project readiness criteria and timelines for the 2019-20 project proposals.

On June 18, 2019, staff attended the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE) meeting in Sacramento, which included a discussion with members of the California Roundtable for Water and Food Supply (CRWFS). At this meeting, the group discussed the work of CRWFS, discussed the opportunities presented by a potential integration of CRAE and CRWFS, and worked to identify an objective for recent CRAE work on scenario planning. The last part of the meeting was dedicated to an optional discussion exploring the possibility of merging CRAE and CRWFS.

On June 19, 2019, staff traveled to the North Coast Region to tour the Salt River ecosystem restoration project. The Regional Water Board, in coordination with other government and nonprofit organizations, have begun restoration of the Salt River. Due to logging and agriculturally driven siltation, the Salt River is no longer a navigable body of water. Permits and construction for the river's restoration began in 2012 and is still in progress.

Staff attended a Surface Water Advisory Group Panel meeting on June 19, 2019. This panel was assembled in response to direction from the State Water Board to the Central Valley Regional Water Board to convene a panel to independently review the adequacy of the surface water monitoring program in the Eastern San Joaquin Coalition area. At that meeting, recommendations for the Surface Water Expert Panel were considered and an agenda for the first meeting of the Expert Panel was initiated. The first meeting of the Expert Panel is anticipated to occur in January 2020.

On June 21, 2019, the State Board held a stakeholder meeting to discuss potential fee schedule changes to the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. Staff presented four fee schedule options for consideration. Comments heard from stakeholders ranged from

wanting to pursue an alternate fee structure with some clarifications in the definitions to believing it is too premature to pursue an alternate fee structure to favoring the current fee structure. The next fee structure meeting for the agriculture program will be held July 22, 2019. The fee structures will be considered for adoption by the State Board in September 2019.

On June 24, 2019, staff met with representatives from the California Rice Commission and the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition to further discuss potential fee schedule changes. Both groups would like to see a change in the current fee structure.

Additionally, on June 24, 2019, staff attended the California Association of Pest Control Advisors' (CAPCA) meeting to discuss the next Certified Crop Advisor exam and to finalize locations and proctors.

Staff attended a webinar on June 25, 2019, discussing the collaboration between the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and agricultural partners to protect drinking water sources. The purpose of the webinar was to encourage and promote partnerships between NRCS, state water programs, water utilities, and other stakeholders to implement conservation and best practices that protect drinking water.

On June 26, 2019, staff participated the California Agricultural Partnership Forum (CAPF) monthly meeting. The meeting objective was to begin gathering information for the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) application process. The application deadline is in September 2019. NRCS-Davis is the lead for submitting the application for the Salt River, in collaboration with local partners and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Staff attended the California Water Data Science Symposium on July 1 and July 2, 2019. The symposium is an annual event that aims to enhance how water quality monitoring generates meaningful data that informs water quality management decisions. This year's event focused on innovation that expands the water data community and increases the amount of open data.

On July 1, 2019, staff participated in the Farm, Food Safety, & Conservation Network (FFSCN) meeting. Discussion centered on the accomplishments of the FFSCN, the changing role of individuals to encourage co-management of water quality protection and food safety practices, and the shifting paradigm regarding how to best co-manage farming in an open environment where complete isolation and sterility is not possible.

On July 8, 2019, staff attended a Certified Crop Advisors (CCA) meeting. Staff discussed the irrigation and nitrogen management plan criteria for the future certification exam. State Water Board, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the UC-Davis Agriculture and Natural Resources staff are finalizing the exam criteria to assist growers in complying with Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program requirements.

Staff met with the California Bioresources Alliance (CBA) on July 10, 2019 to discuss

the 2019 workshop symposium. The steering committee is finalizing the agenda for the 2019 CBA Annual Symposium to be held in November 2019.

Staff traveled to the Colorado River Basin Region to attend a board meeting on July 11, 2019. The Colorado River Basin Regional Water Board considered and adopted Waste Discharge Requirements for growers in the Bard area.

On July 11, 2019, staff attended another CAPF meeting to discuss the Salt River project. The application for NWQI is a commitment to complete a watershed assessment, typically completed by the NRCS. The group plans to have the draft application ready by September 1, 2019. The watershed assessment will require identifying what information is already available, where data gaps exist, and determining the time and money needed to complete the document. The next meeting will focus on watershed assessment development.

## **CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control 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 July 10, 2019 stakeholder meeting was held at the Merced County Farm Bureau, with a focused discussion on the use of the CV-SALTS Basin Plan Amendments. Other topics of discussion included Water Board website accessibility and potential State Water Board fee alternatives.

As discussed in the State Water Board updates above, State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ-2018-0002 directs the Central Valley Water Board to convene an external expert review of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's surface water monitoring framework. The review will be conducted as a public process by neutral experts. Steve Weisberg of the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project is contracted to manage the review, including a process for selecting external expert review panel members and facilitating all meetings. A nine-member Advisory Group consisting of 3 agricultural representatives, 3 environmental protection representatives, and 3 Water Boards representatives, was formed and a five-member panel was selected on June 19, 2019. The first panel meeting is tentative scheduled for January 2020.

State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ-2018-0002 also directs the Central Valley Water Board to develop an on-farm drinking water well monitoring program. This program was initiated in the East San Joaquin Coalition, and hundreds of groundwater sample results are uploaded into GeoTracker. When the GeoTracker data are available to public review, an Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program automated email is sent to interested parties.

Central Valley Water Board staff continues to concentrate on compliance, outreach,

and enforcement efforts in the following areas: agricultural parcel inspections; Water Code section 13260 Directives; and Notices of Violation for failure to respond to a Water Code section 13260 Directive and failure to comply with Orders.

Additional information can be found at the [Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board](#)'s website.