



((Summer 2013))

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An informational newsletter for water users and landowners in the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors' service area.

EXCHANGE

perspective

July 2013

PROPOSED WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS RELEASED FOR WESTSIDE

The Regional Water Quality Control Board in mid-June released an administrative draft of the Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) for the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed. The Board will hold a public workshop at the O'Banion Building of the Los Banos Fairgrounds on July 30 at 9 a.m. to present the draft and receive public comments on the draft order.

The Board is expected to adopt the final Westside WDRs in January 2014, though that schedule is subject to change. The overall intent of the WDR is to induce growers to implement applicable management practices to protect both surface and ground water.

Following is a summary of the key provisions of the draft WDR. The Regional Board will likely make some changes to the WDR before it is adopted early next year.

All landowners or operators will be required to be a member of the coalition group unless the farm enrolls directly with the Regional Board under its individual WDR program, which would be much more costly and cumbersome. By Dec. 2014, all existing coalition members must submit a notice that they intend to continue to be represented by the coalition. Non-coalition members must join the coalition or enroll in the individual WDR program within 90 days of the adoption of the Westside WDR.

Much of the proposed WDR's model similar requirements recently approved for the East San Joaquin Coalition. Farms within Low Vulnerability areas will have slightly relaxed requirements as compared to farms in High Vulnerability

areas and small farms of less than 60 acres will have more time to comply with some provisions.

Large farms (60 acres and over) and all farms in High Vulnerability areas must submit to the coalition a Farm Evaluation Plan by December 15, 2014. Nearly all farms in the Westside Coalition will likely fall in the High Vulnerability category. Small farms within Low Vulnerability areas will have until March 2017 to submit Farm Evaluation Plans. Farm evaluation plans must be updated annually in High Vulnerability areas. Farms in Low Vulnerability areas must update their plans every 5 years.

Annually, each coalition member within a High Vulnerability area shall attend an education/outreach event and provide confirmation to the coalition that they both attended the event and reviewed the educational materials.

In addition, all growers must prepare a Nitrogen

Management Plan for the upcoming year based on a Nitrogen Management Plan Template developed by the coalition and approved by the Regional Board with input from other stakeholders. In High Vulnerability areas, these nitrogen plans must be submitted to the coalition by March 2015.

In March 2016 and annually thereafter, growers within High Vulnerability areas must also submit Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Reports to the coalition and all Nitrogen Management Plans must be certified by a certified nutrient management plan specialist such as a Certified Crop Advisor. Growers who meet certain training requirements can self-certify their own plans.

PROGRESS ON LOS BANOS CREEK RESOURCE PLAN

Work is proceeding on the Los Banos Creek Water Resource Management Plan, with construction on several components of the plan expected to begin this fall. The Los Banos Creek Water Resource Plan is expected to provide significant benefits including, among other things, improved water supply reliability, improved recharge of local runoff, groundwater level stability, recreational and environmental enhancements at and near the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam, and improvements in water supply and quality to the nearby community water system.

Initial projects being considered for Los Banos Creek are a project to monitor and analyze creek channel seepage loss and improvements to a proposed Los Banos Creek control weir and gravity inlet into the Delta-Mendota Canal.

In addition, the second phase of the plan includes a project to install about 3,000 feet of 36-inch pipeline and perhaps a

booster pump station to facilitate pumping into Los Banos Creek Detention Reservoir and release in August for recharge and delivery into the Delta-Mendota Canal.

Another proposed goal of the plan will be to create winter carryover storage for release in June for San Luis and Grassland Water Districts and enhance reservoir storage beyond flood control.

The goal of the Los Banos Creek Water Resource Management Plan is to find ways to re-operate the system to the mutual benefit of water users and communities while providing additional groundwater and surface water storage benefits.

Bidding for construction of the Los Banos Creek Weir and Delta Mendota Canal components will take place this summer with target construction on those projects by Fall 2013. Target construction on the Dam's pump-in facilities is targeted for Fall/Winter of 2014.



Among the components proposed in the Los Banos Creek Water Resource Management Plan are a project to monitor and analyze creek channel seepage near the Los Banos Creek Detention Dam area.

PROPOSED WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS

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Small farms within High Vulnerability areas will be given until March 2017 to submit their first Nitrogen Management Plan and March 2018 to submit the first Nitrogen Summary Reports to the Coalition.

All Farm Evaluation and Nitrogen Management Plans must be maintained at the farm office for review by the Regional Board representatives upon request. In addition, all lands with the potential to discharge sediment offsite that may degrade surface waters must develop a sediment and erosion control plan.

The coalitions are also facing considerable changes in requirements under the new WDR's, which will increase the costs associated with belonging to a coalition. Among those new requirements, coalitions must: conduct education and outreach to inform growers of program requirements to protect water quality; prepare and implement Regional Water Quality Management Plans and Regional Water Quality Monitoring Plans for both surface and groundwater; report to the Regional Board on the results of the monitoring efforts and the effectiveness of the management plans and summarize farm evaluation plans and nitrogen budgets on a township basis for each 36 square miles; and, provide an annual list of coalition members to the Regional Board, as well as a list of growers who have failed to meet major requirements.

Please mark your calendars for July 30th at 9:00 a.m. to attend this important meeting. For more information, please call Mr. Joe McGahan at 559-582-9237.

UPDATES BEGIN ON GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PLANS

The Exchange Contractors this summer gave approval to revise their Groundwater Management Plan as required every five years under state law (AB 3030). Groundwater is becoming an increasingly prominent issue given the potential impacts of deep well pumping on subsidence, and focus on groundwater in the proposed Irrigated Lands Program.

Since 1997, state law AB3030 has required water agencies to monitor groundwater in their area and regularly update groundwater management plans. Since the plans were last updated five years ago, the member entities of the Exchange Contractors have actively assessed long-term trends on groundwater levels and quality in and around their area. Districts also use this information to help in their own long-term planning efforts.

QUESTIONS LINGER OVER BAY DELTA PLAN FUNDING

As Bay Delta Conservation Plan options for managing conveyance of state and federal surface water through the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta are considered, the Exchange Contractors are monitoring various proposals, including proposed tunnels, to better understand how projects would be operated and funded.

"We have been following this somewhat from a distance and are generally supportive of proposals to improve the reliability of regional water supplies," said Exchange Executive Director Steve Chedester. "One concern is, how will the operations of the CVP change in the future with and without new conveyance facilities, and who will be responsible for paying for the new conveyance and related programs?"

He said that while the Exchange Contractors are open to all ideas that improve water supply reliability and remove the regulatory

stranglehold on the CVP South of Delta deliveries, member agencies are concerned that financing may be attached to fees that impact ag water users rather than direct beneficiaries. Currently about a third of the water that is delivered South of the Delta to the CVP is delivered to the Exchange Contractors and the local wildlife refuges. All or a portion of these "Core"

deliveries would pass annually through the tunnel system, however, the Contractors or the refuges would not receive direct benefit.

"Clearly the current regulatory constraints the two projects are operating under are not sustainable. We need to get a better understanding on how the State Water Project, CVP Contractors and other

proponents who benefit from the project will be funding this," Chedester said. "We are working with water rights holders and other stakeholders to find solutions to the operations and funding questions."

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— Steve Chedester, Exchange Executive Director



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority continues to monitor a number of legislative activities both at the federal and state level to protect the long-term interests of members of the Exchange Contract.

Our team of staff, consultants and legislative committee members has been engaged in recent legislative issues that could have both small and significant impacts on members of the Exchange Contractors. We have spoken out in opposition to a recent misguided effort to change language on agricultural irrigation districts to require that board members live on land within the district. Obviously landowners who own the property absorb the risk associated with these assets and have a long-term view of what's best for

their properties. They therefore should have a voice on the irrigation district boards associated with that property.

In addition, we are supporting efforts to move legislation related to water transfers through the state senate and continue to work on finding equitable strategies for funding groundwater cleanup in disadvantaged communities.

At the federal level, we have been following a new bill drafted by Sen. Jim Costa that could relax environmental endangered species requirements for pumping during critical water situations such as those we are currently experiencing.

We will continue to keep our members informed of developments related to these and other legislative issues.

Sincerely,
Steve Chedester

Executive Director
San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority

