

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

**ORDER WQ 2018-0002**

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In the Matter of Review of  
Waste Discharge Requirements General Order No. R5-2012-0116  
for Growers Within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed  
that are Members of the Third-Party Group

Issued by the  
California Regional Water Quality Control Board,  
Central Valley Region

***SWRCB/OCC FILES A-2239(a)-(c)***

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BY THE BOARD:

In this order, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or Board) reviews on its own motion Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) General Order No. R5-2012-0116 issued by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of a Third-Party Group (hereinafter “Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs” or “General WDRs”). The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs authorize discharges from irrigated lands<sup>1</sup> operations to waters of the state within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed and set forth a number of requirements for monitoring and planning, for implementation and evaluation of management practices, and for participation in various education and outreach events. For the reasons discussed herein, the State Water Board generally upholds the structure and requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, but directs a number of revisions, primarily to add greater specificity and transparency in reporting of management practice implementation, to require reporting of certain nitrogen application-related data needed for management of excess nitrogen use, and to expand the surface water and groundwater quality monitoring programs of the General WDRs. Many of the revisions to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs implement the conclusions of an agricultural expert panel that made

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<sup>1</sup> Irrigated lands are lands irrigated to produce crops or pasture for commercial purposes, nurseries, and privately and publicly managed wetlands. (Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. E, Definitions, p.3.) In this order, we sometimes refer to irrigated lands regulatory programs as “agricultural regulatory programs.”

recommendations to the State Water Board on an appropriate regulatory program for irrigated lands in September 2014 (Agricultural Expert Panel)<sup>2</sup> while review of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs was pending before the State Water Board.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

California's agricultural industry produces more than 400 commodities at over 75,000 farms and ranches and is a significant part of the state's economy, providing a large percentage of fruits and vegetables for the nation. Agriculture is especially significant within the Central Valley, where it represents over seven million acres of irrigated lands, approximately one million of which are in the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed. The California grower community has a rich knowledge base of management and business practices, developed over several generations of farming. Because the vast majority of growers plan for the long term, they are naturally motivated to protect natural resources, through stewardship of the land. Over the last few decades, as the impacts of agricultural discharges on water quality have been further studied and understood, growers have collaborated with the regional water quality control boards and the State Water Board (collectively, "water boards"), most commonly through the mechanism of grower coalitions, to find shared solutions to address existing and potential water quality issues. At the same time, the water boards have acknowledged that growers have a legitimate interest in protecting confidential business practices and recognized the need to preserve the tradition of agriculture in California and the ongoing viability of agriculture as an essential driver of the state's economy.

Water quality impacts associated with agriculture are complex and addressing them requires pooling and focusing the knowledge, expertise, and resources of all concerned parties, including growers and their representatives, the regulatory agencies, and the environmental and environmental justice communities. The issues are especially complicated because the same activities that are essential to producing a crucial, reliable food supply – e.g. pesticide use to control pests, nitrogen to fertilize crops, irrigation to water crops – also underlie many of the critical impacts. Pesticide toxicity in surface water threatens the viability of the water bodies to support aquatic and other species. High levels of nitrates found in drinking water supply wells impact public health. Concentrated levels of salt resulting from long-term irrigation adversely

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<sup>2</sup> Conclusions of the Agricultural Expert Panel, Recommendations to the State Water Resources Control Board pertaining to the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (Sept. 9, 2014), available at [http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/agriculture/docs/ILRP\\_expert\\_panel\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/agriculture/docs/ILRP_expert_panel_final_report.pdf) (as of Jan. 31, 2018) (Agricultural Expert Panel Report). We take official notice of the Agricultural Expert Panel Report. (Cal. Code Reg., tit. 23, § 648.2.)

affect the quality of groundwater for irrigation, municipal, and other uses. Collectively, we have a responsibility to acknowledge these impacts and address them, but in a manner that preserves the economic viability of agriculture. In some cases, historic agricultural practices have resulted in the impacts we see today. Current practices are also, in some cases, causing impacts and although agricultural practices have generally improved over time, we have an obligation to continue to develop appropriate solutions. This is an ongoing process that requires a thorough understanding of the complex relationship between agricultural practices and water quality impacts gained through collecting and analyzing real-world data and responding to that data with innovations in practices. This data-driven analysis of the issues forms the foundation for fair, even-handed, and reasonable regulation of irrigated lands.

The Central Valley Water Board began engaging the grower community when it adopted its first regulatory program for irrigated lands in 1982. This initial regulatory program, structured as a waiver of waste discharge requirements under Water Code section 13269, conditionally waived the requirement for submittal of a report of waste discharge for irrigation return flow as long as the discharge did not cause toxicity or excess sediment discharges that would violate turbidity objectives. In 2003, in response to revisions to Water Code section 13269,<sup>3</sup> the Central Valley Water Board re-examined its original 1982 waiver and significantly changed its regulatory strategy for irrigated lands (2003 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver).<sup>4</sup> The 2003 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver required surface water quality monitoring of numerous parameters to begin identifying where irrigated lands might be contributing to water quality problems. To take advantage of local knowledge and resources, leverage limited regulatory resources, and minimize costs, the Central Valley Water Board allowed growers to form discharger coalitions, with a third-party representative responsible for grower outreach and education and for implementation of a number of the requirements of the regulatory program, including representative monitoring. In 2006, the Central Valley Water Board modified the 2003 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver, retaining the third-party structure, but now also requiring submission of management plans when water quality problems were identified

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<sup>3</sup> There were two relevant amendments to Water Code section 13269. The first amendment required the regional water boards to terminate or extend all existing waivers of WDRs on or before January 1, 2003. Thereafter, waivers of WDRs were not allowed to exceed five years in duration. (See Stats. 1999, ch. 686, § 2.) The second amendment required waivers of WDRs to contain monitoring provisions unless the regional water board determined that the discharge did not pose a significant threat to water quality. (See Stats. 2003, ch. 801, § 1.)

<sup>4</sup> Central Valley Water Board Resolution R5-2003-0105, Administrative Record (AR) 00001-00012. In addition to the 2003 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver, Resolution R5-2003-0105 adopted a second conditional waiver for individual dischargers that chose not to join a coalition.

(2006 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver).<sup>5</sup> The 2006 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver was renewed for an additional two years in 2011.

When the Central Valley Water Board issued the 2006 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver, the Board committed to preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that would comprehensively address discharges of waste from irrigated lands to all waters of the state, both surface water and ground water. The Draft Programmatic EIR was released in July 2010 and the Final Programmatic EIR was certified by the Central Valley Water Board on April 7, 2011.<sup>6</sup> The Programmatic EIR was challenged by numerous parties, including two of the petitioners in this proceeding. On May 21, 2013, the Sacramento County Superior Court issued a final ruling that rejected the challenges to the Programmatic EIR.<sup>7</sup> The final ruling was not appealed.

After certification of the Final Programmatic EIR, the Central Valley Water Board began working with a stakeholder advisory workgroup and a groundwater monitoring advisory workgroup to further develop its long-term irrigated lands regulatory program. The Central Valley Water Board set out to issue watershed-specific or commodity-specific WDRs instead of one region-wide waiver of WDRs like the 2006 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver. In April 2012, the Central Valley Water Board issued the first set of draft WDRs for the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, conducted several public workshops and multiple meetings with stakeholders and interested parties, and held a hearing in November 2012.

On December 7, 2012, the Central Valley Water Board adopted the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.<sup>8</sup> The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs

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<sup>5</sup> Central Valley Water Board Order No. R5-2006-0053, AR 01037-01069. As in 2003, the Central Valley Water Board also adopted a separate conditional waiver for individual dischargers not joining a coalition. (Central Valley Water Board Order No. R5-2003-0054.)

<sup>6</sup> Central Valley Water Board Resolution No. R5-2011-0017, AR 03720-03721.

<sup>7</sup> *San Joaquin County Resource Conservation Dist., et al. v. Cal. Regional Water Quality Control Bd., Central Valley Region, et al.* (Super. Ct. Sacramento County, 2013, No. 34-2012-80001186). We take official notice of the final ruling. (Cal. Code Reg., tit. 23, § 648.2.)

<sup>8</sup> The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs as adopted on December 7, 2012, are at AR 07712 et seq. of the administrative record. The Central Valley Water Board has since amended the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs five times. We take official notice of the amended versions of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. The Central Valley Water Board adopted amendments to the General WDRs on October 3, 2013, on March 27, 2014, on April 17, 2015, on October 2, 2015, and on February 19, 2016. Our references and citations to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs is to the version effective on October 2, 2015. The amendments on February 19, 2016, are not reflected in this order or its attachments, but those amendments relate only to managed wetlands and irrigated pasture with no external nitrogen inputs and are therefore not affected by our order. The October 2, 2015 version was not submitted as part of the administrative record prepared by the Central Valley Water Board, but is available at [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/general\\_orders/r5-2012-0116-r3.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/general_orders/r5-2012-0116-r3.pdf) (as of Jan.31, 2018). We also note that the October 3, 2013, amendment clarified that any reports approved by or determinations made by the Executive Officer of the Central Valley Water Board in accordance with the terms of the (Continued)

regulate discharges to groundwater from irrigated lands as well as surface water discharges. The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs carry forward many of the program elements from the 2006 Central Valley Agricultural General Waiver. These elements include allowance of a third party to represent the growers, outreach and education requirements, representative monitoring of receiving waters (as opposed to farm discharge monitoring), annual reporting, requirements to implement and evaluate management practices, and receiving water limitations. The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs add programs for groundwater monitoring and groundwater protection, including implementation of groundwater management plans.

The requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow. In brief summary, the General WDRs assign certain requirements to the individual growers (Members) and certain requirements to the coalition (Third Party).<sup>9</sup> Each Member must meet receiving water limitations (except where the Third Party is implementing a management plan to address known exceedances caused by agricultural discharges), which prohibit the Member from causing or contributing to exceedances of applicable water quality objectives in surface water and groundwater. Each Member must also implement management practices that minimize waste discharge to surface water and groundwater and protect wellheads from surface water intrusion. Each Member is responsible for conducting farm evaluations, which must document the Member's management practices. Each Member is required to prepare and implement a nitrogen management plan that meets the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs' requirement to minimize nutrient application relative to crop need. Members in areas susceptible to erosion must prepare and implement sediment and erosion control plans.

The Third Party, in turn, must conduct education and outreach activities, collect data from Members regarding management practice implementation and nitrogen application and analyze and report aggregated information on such implementation to the Central Valley Water Board. The Third Party is also responsible for maintaining the collected data and submitting the data to the Regional Board upon request. The Third Party must conduct surface water and groundwater quality monitoring. In response to certain triggers, including exceedances of water quality objectives in surface water or groundwater, the Third Party must prepare and submit to the

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General WDRs are reviewable by the Board itself upon request. (Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. A, Information Sheet, p.27.) As a result, we do not take up the argument made by Environmental Petitioners regarding improper delegation of certain review and approvals to the Executive Officer.

<sup>9</sup> Throughout this order, references to the "Third Party" are to the third-party group referenced in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs; references to a "third party," "third-party group," or "third-party approach/structure" are to agricultural coalitions generally.

Central Valley Water Board management plans to address water quality issues in a given area and implement those plans in accordance with a specific schedule for implementation of improved or additional management practices and other tasks by Members. The Third Party that has taken on this responsibility under the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs is the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition.

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs assign some of the above requirements based on threat to water quality: regulatory requirements are heightened in higher threat geographic areas (called “high vulnerability areas”), whereas lower threat geographic areas have fewer requirements (called “low vulnerability areas”).

In response to the Central Valley Water Board’s adoption of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, three timely petitions for review were filed with the State Water Board by Asociación de Gente Unida por el Agua, et al. (AGUA), by the California Sportfishing Alliance and California Water Impact Network (CSPA), and by San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District, et al. (SJCRCD) (collectively “Petitioners”). After deeming the petitions complete, consolidating them for review, receiving a response to the petitions and the administrative record<sup>10</sup> from the Central Valley Water Board, and responses to the petitions from

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<sup>10</sup> The administrative record for these proceedings consists of the record prepared by the Central Valley Water Board on the adoption of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs and certain additional documents that post-date the adoption of the General WDRs, but we determined would aid our review. We posted the additional record documents on the petition web site at [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public\\_notices/petitions/water\\_quality/a2239\\_sanjoaquin\\_ag3.shtml](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality/a2239_sanjoaquin_ag3.shtml) (as of Jan. 31, 2018) and provided notice to interested persons that the documents would be made part of the administrative record. We also considered requests to consider supplemental evidence submitted by parties and interested persons. We received a formal request to consider supplemental evidence by the California Rice Commission on December 5, 2017. We decline to admit the Rice Commission-specific evidence provided with that request, as it is beyond the scope of the record for the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. We received two formal requests to consider supplemental evidence from the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, dated June 1, 2016 and December 22, 2017. The first of these requests was largely rendered moot by our own determination to add most of the requested documents to the administrative record prior to ruling on the motion. We have not, however, incorporated the remaining document in the first request, which is related to the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS), into the record because we find it is premature to consider the draft proposals associated with the CV-SALTS program in these proceedings. With the second request, the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition asked us to supplement the record with an evaluation of the coalition’s surface water quality monitoring program. A competing evaluation of the surface water quality monitoring program was also submitted to us with the December 22, 2017, comment letter from California Coastkeeper Alliance et al., but without a formal request to supplement the record. In most petition proceedings, any extra-record evidence submitted with comment letters or with ex parte disclosures are not part of the administrative record for a proceeding unless accompanied by a formal request for consideration of supplemental evidence and affirmatively accepted by the Board, in accordance with our regulations. (Non-evidentiary attachments to comment letters and ex parte disclosures, including draft proposed language, concept proposals, and information submitted for demonstrative purposes, are generally incorporated into the record without the need for a formal request.) However, in this case, the evaluations of the surface water quality monitoring program are closer in nature to comments on general policy issues in the proceeding than to new evidence regarding disputed facts in a more traditional adjudicatory proceeding. Especially in light of the fact that the State Water Board itself added the Eastern San Joaquin surface water quality monitoring reports to the record -- which rely on the same or similar data -- we will allow both evaluations, including an errata sheet to the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition’s evaluation, into the record. We have reviewed other documents attached to the petitions, comment letters, and ex parte disclosures by various parties that were also not accompanied by formal  
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interested persons, we adopted Order WQ 2014-0135 on August 5, 2014, taking this matter up on our own motion. We granted own motion review in order to have sufficient time to adequately review the submissions and to allow for completion of a report by the Agricultural Expert Panel (Agricultural Expert Panel Report) prior to making decisions on related issues raised in the petitions.

The Agricultural Expert Panel Report grew out of a legislative effort to address nitrate in groundwater. In 2008, the Legislature added section 83002.5<sup>11</sup> to the Water Code requiring the State Water Board to develop pilot projects focusing on nitrate in groundwater in the Tulare Lake Basin and the Salinas Valley, and to submit a report to the Legislature. In its report, the State Water Board made fifteen recommendations including Recommendation #11, calling for a task force to identify intended outcomes and expected benefits of a nitrogen mass balance tracking system, and Recommendation #14, calling for a panel of experts to assess existing agricultural nitrate control programs and develop recommendations to ensure that ongoing efforts are protective of groundwater quality.

The task force (Nitrogen Tracking Task Force) was convened by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), in coordination with the water boards and with participation by stakeholders and experts from agricultural organizations, academia, and the environmental advocacy community. The Nitrogen Tracking Task Force issued its final report in December of 2013. The report made recommendations on the appropriate components of an effective nitrogen tracking and reporting system, including data elements that should be tracked and reported.<sup>12</sup> We consider those recommendations in this order.

The panel of experts (Agricultural Expert Panel) was convened by the State Water Board, in coordination with CDFA, and considered all existing studies, programs, and efforts for agricultural nitrate control, including the recommendations of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force.

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requests to consider supplemental evidence, and will consider these documents to be part of the administrative record as well. Consistent with our regulations, we generally limit a petition's administrative record to those records that were before the regional water board at the time of the board's action. However, in these proceedings, we find it appropriate to allow interested persons greater leeway in submission of the attachments both because of the more generalized nature of this proceeding and because the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs and the Central Valley Water Board irrigated lands program, as well as the data and science related to the WDRs and the irrigated lands program, have continued to evolve in the lengthy time period of our review.

<sup>11</sup> Added by Stats. 2007-2008, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ex.Sess., ch. 1 (S.B.1), § 6, eff. March 1, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> The Nitrogen Tracking Task Force's final report is available at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/environmentalstewardship/PDFs/NTRSTFFinalReport122013.pdf> (as of Jan. 31, 2018) (Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting Task Force, Final Report (Dec. 2013)) (Nitrogen Tracking Task Force Report). We take official notice of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force Report. (Cal. Code Reg., tit. 23, § 648.2.)

On September 24, 2013, concurrent with the proceedings of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force, but prior to convening the Agricultural Expert Panel, the State Water Board adopted Order WQ 2013-0101, reviewing the Central Coast Regional Water Board's (Central Coast Water Board) waiver of WDRs for irrigated lands (Central Coast Agricultural Order). We stated in that order that many of our conclusions represented an interim approach to regulation of agriculture, pending further consideration by the Agricultural Expert Panel. As we laid out in Order WQ 2013-0101, we referred a number of additional questions regarding the development of an appropriate agricultural regulatory program to the Agricultural Expert Panel for consideration, primarily questions specific to agricultural nitrate control programs, but also questions regarding appropriate risk or vulnerability determinations for purposes of tiering requirements and regarding effective surface water quality monitoring.<sup>13</sup> Many of these questions are relevant to the current proceedings.

The Agricultural Expert Panel held multiple public meetings over a six-month period in Tulare, San Luis Obispo, and Sacramento, to consider the questions posed by the State Water Board. The Agricultural Expert Panel consisted of eight members with various areas of specialization including: an irrigation specialist/agricultural engineer, a soil scientist, a hydrogeologist, an agronomist, a certified crop advisor, a University of California Cooperative Extension farm advisor, a Central Coast grower, and a Central Valley grower. The Agricultural Expert Panel released a draft report in July 2014 considering and answering the questions posed, took written public comment on the draft report, and issued the Agricultural Expert Panel Report on September 9, 2014. The Agricultural Expert Panel Report was presented to us on September

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<sup>13</sup> The following questions were posed to the Agricultural Expert Panel: "1. How can risk to or vulnerability of groundwater best be determined in the context of a regulatory program such as the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP)? 2. Evaluate and develop recommendations for the current approaches taken to assessing risk to or vulnerability of groundwater. 3. How can risk to or vulnerability of surface water best be determined in the context of a regulatory program such as the ILRP? 4. Evaluate and develop recommendations for the current approaches taken to assessing risk to or vulnerability of surface water. 5. What management practices are expected to be implemented and under what circumstances for the control of nitrogen? 6. What management practices are recommended for consideration by growers when they are selecting practices to put in place for the control of nitrogen? 7. Evaluate and make recommendations regarding the usage of various nitrogen management and accounting practices. 8. Evaluate and make recommendations regarding the most effective methods for ensuring growers have the knowledge required for effectively implementing recommended management practices. 9. What measurements can be used to verify that the implementations of management practices for nitrogen are as effective as possible? 10. Evaluate and make recommendations regarding the usage of various verification measurements of nitrogen control. 11. Evaluate the relative merits, and make recommendations regarding the usage of, surface water measurement systems derived from either receiving water or a discharge monitoring approach to identify problem discharges. 12. Evaluate and make recommendations on how best to integrate the results of the Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting System Task Force with any above recommendation regarding management practices and verification measures. 13. Evaluate and make recommendations on the reporting requirements to report budgeting and recording of nitrogen application on a management block basis versus reporting aggregated numbers on a nitrate loading risk unit level." (Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. i.) Upon request from the Agricultural Expert Panel, the State Water Board provided additional clarification on several of the questions. (See Agricultural Expert Panel Report, Appen. C.)



23, 2014, and made a number of recommendations for the regulation of irrigated lands.<sup>14</sup> In this order, we consider and incorporate a number of those recommendations.

Many of the findings and directions of this order are appropriate not only for the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, but also for the subsequent generations of regional water quality control board (regional water board) irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide. In the sections that follow, we indicate which of our conclusions have precedential effect and will guide irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide.<sup>15</sup> Our precedential direction is intended to guide all irrigated lands regulatory programs, including programs that directly regulate growers as individuals without a third-party intermediary and programs that regulate growers that are members of a third-party intermediary, except where specifically noted. We direct the regional water boards to revise their irrigated lands regulatory programs within the next five years to be consistent with our precedential direction in this order.

The specific recommendations made by the Agricultural Expert Panel and endorsed by us in this order are discussed under the appropriate topics in the next section.<sup>16</sup>

## **II. ISSUES AND FINDINGS**

The three petitions raise a number of issues concerning the Central Valley Water Board's adoption of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. To the extent

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<sup>14</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel proceedings are detailed at [http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/agriculture/](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/agriculture/) (as of Jan. 31, 2018). In addition to the Agricultural Expert Panel Report, we take official notice of the proceedings of the Agricultural Expert Panel. (Cal. Code Reg., tit. 23, § 648.2.)

<sup>15</sup> Generally, State Water Board petition orders are precedential unless otherwise designated. (State Board Order WR 96-1 (Lagunitas Creek), at fn. 11.) Here, because of the significant variation in agricultural practices statewide, automatic application of all requirements endorsed in this order to all of the agricultural discharge programs statewide is inappropriate.

<sup>16</sup> In reviewing the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, we also take into account some of our precedential determinations in State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101. While the Central Coast Water Board's approach to regulating irrigated lands has significant differences when compared to the Central Valley Water Board's approach, there are a number of overlapping issues raised by both sets of petitions for review. However, State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101 is the subject of current litigation. On September 30, 2015, the County of Sacramento Superior Court issued a judgment and peremptory writ of mandate compelling the State Water Board to set aside Order WQ 2013-0101 and reconsider the Central Coast Agricultural Order. The judgment and writ issued in accordance with a Ruling on Submitted Matter, dated August 10, 2015 (*Monterey Coastkeeper et al. v. State Water Resources Control Bd.* (Super Ct. Sacramento County, 2015, No. 34-2012-80001324) (Sacramento Superior Court Ruling) in which the court considered a number of the issues decided in Order WQ-2013-0101. Our appeal of the judgment and writ is currently pending. (*Monterey Coastkeeper et al. v. State Water Resources Control Bd.*, app. pending.) Accordingly, we reference our findings and conclusions in Order WQ-2013-0101 in this order only where those findings and conclusions have not been specifically called into question by the Sacramento Superior Court Ruling. We also discuss and reference conclusions of the Sacramento Superior Court Ruling where relevant.

petitioners or other commenters raise issues that are not discussed in this order, either in whole or in part, such issues are dismissed as not raising substantial issues appropriate for our review.<sup>17</sup>

In particular, although we have carefully reviewed the petition filed by SJCRCD, we have not taken up the issues raised in that petition, primarily because the issues have already been resolved through a court ruling and through our precedential order WQ 2013-0101 issued since SJCRCD filed its petition. The majority of SJCRCD's arguments relate to the CEQA documents supporting the General WDRs and some of those arguments were resolved by the Superior Court's May 21, 2013, ruling upholding the Programmatic EIR.<sup>18</sup> SJCRCD noted in its petition that its CEQA challenges related to the EIR were already properly pending in the litigation challenging the Programmatic EIR and were only being repeated in the petition in the event that any party or a court disagreed.<sup>19</sup> We agree with SJCRCD that it properly raised those issues in the litigation, and we do not address them again here. SJCRCD also argues that the Central Valley Water Board was required under Water Code 13141 to incorporate an economic analysis on the costs to agriculture of the General WDRs into the relevant water quality control plans. We resolved that question in Order WQ-2013-0101 by finding that section 13141 only applies to an agricultural water quality control program that is adopted within a water quality control plan, not through a permitting action, like the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, it is important for the regional water boards to consider costs when adopting irrigated lands regulatory programs.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the Central Valley Water Board incorporated an analysis of costs in the information sheet.<sup>22</sup> We also note that the Central Valley Water Board's Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins includes an

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<sup>17</sup> *People v. Barry* (1987) 194 Cal.App.3d 158, 175-177; *Johnson v. State Water Resources Control Bd.* (2004) 123 Cal.App.4th 1107, 1114; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, § 2052, subd. (a)(1). Additionally, subsequent to the filing of the petitions, several interested persons raised new issues that were not directly related to revisions to the General WDRs contained in this order. Two examples are arguments related to the reasonable use doctrine and arguments related to the public trust doctrine. These issues were not timely raised and have not been addressed in this order.

<sup>18</sup> *San Joaquin County Resource Conservation Dist.*, *supra* (Super. Ct. Sacramento County, 2013, No. 34-2012-80001186).

<sup>19</sup> SJCRCD Petition, page 2.

<sup>20</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Under Water Code 13263 and 13241, "economic considerations" is one of the factors a regional water board must take into account in issuing waste discharge requirements. Additionally, section 13267 requires the regional water board to ensure that "the burden, including costs, of [monitoring] reports shall bear a reasonable relationship to the need for the report and the benefits to be obtained from the reports."

<sup>22</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. A, pp. 44-48. The analysis is based on an economic study conducted for the Central Valley Water Board in support of its long-term irrigated lands regulatory program for the region. (AR 31796- 32232.)

estimate of potential costs and sources of financing for the Central Valley Water Board's long-term irrigated lands regulatory program at pages IV.38-IV.39.<sup>23</sup>

We have taken up some of the issues raised by AGUA and CSPA. Because the issues raised by AGUA and CSPA are generally related and appropriate for consideration together, we refer hereinafter to arguments raised by AGUA and CSPA jointly as raised by the "Environmental Petitioners."

We have organized our discussion in this order to correspond to the different categories of requirements set up in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. We address the Environmental Petitioners' arguments as well as related recommendations of the Agricultural Expert Panel Report (and, where applicable, the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force Report) under each category.

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs were issued under authority of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act), specifically Water Code sections 13263 and 13267. Among other mandates, section 13263 requires the Central Valley Water Board to set waste discharge requirements that implement relevant water quality control plans.<sup>24</sup> The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs must primarily implement the Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins (Basin Plan)<sup>25</sup> which sets the beneficial uses of the surface water bodies and groundwater in the region and sets water quality objectives to be achieved in those waters. The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs must also conform to State Water Board policies.<sup>26</sup> Of relevance here are our Policy for the Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program<sup>27</sup> (Nonpoint Source Policy) and our Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High

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<sup>23</sup> See Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, finding 37, pp. 10-11. SJCRCD also argues that the General WDRs improperly treat crop irrigation water as a discharge of waste. To the contrary, the General WDRs specifically state that "irrigation water, the act of irrigating cropland, and the discharge of irrigation water unto itself is not 'waste' as defined by the Water Code, but . . . irrigation water may contain constituents that are considered to be 'waste' as defined by Water Code section 13050(d)." (*Id.*, p. 1, fn. 1.) We also note that groundwater recharge through irrigation is often desirable, and groundwater impacts from planned recharge needs to be balanced with long-term water supply considerations.

<sup>24</sup> Wat. Code, §13263, subd. (a).

<sup>25</sup> Available at <[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water\\_issues/basin\\_plans/sacsjr.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/sacsjr.pdf)> (as of Jan. 31, 2018), AR 33039-33339. In addition, the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs must implement applicable statewide water quality control plans.

<sup>26</sup> Wat. Code, §13146.

<sup>27</sup> Available at <[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/nps/docs/plans\\_policies/nps\\_iepolicy.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/nps/docs/plans_policies/nps_iepolicy.pdf)> (as of Jan. 31, 2018), AR 36138-36157.

Quality Waters, State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16<sup>28</sup> (Antidegradation Policy). Water Code section 13267 grants the Central Valley Water Board authority to require monitoring and reporting as a component of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. The Nonpoint Source Policy additionally directs that any nonpoint source program incorporate monitoring and reporting requirements.

We begin our review of the petitions in Section A with consideration of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs' consistency with the Water Code in light of the direction provided in the Nonpoint Source Policy as to how to effectuate Water Code requirements in the context of control of nonpoint source discharges. We focus in particular on the Nonpoint Source Policy's direction to require management practices with a high likelihood of leading to attainment of water quality requirements and direction to incorporate sufficient feedback mechanisms to determine if, in fact, the program is meeting its stated purposes. Some of the arguments raised by Environmental Petitioners under the umbrella of compliance with the Antidegradation Policy concern the mandates under that policy for discharges not to unreasonably affect beneficial uses, not to result in water quality less than the quality specified by water quality objectives, and not cause a pollution or nuisance; these arguments are more appropriately considered under compliance with the Water Code and Nonpoint Source Policy and are addressed in Section A. In Section B, we separately consider the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs' compliance with the Antidegradation Policy's mandate to maintain high quality waters except as allowed under the Policy.

#### **A. Compliance with the Water Code and the Nonpoint Source Policy**

Agricultural discharges, including both irrigation water and storm water running off of agricultural fields into surface waters or percolating to groundwater, may carry constituents considered to be waste as defined under Water Code section 13050(d).<sup>29</sup> Water Code section 13260 requires persons "discharging waste, or proposing to discharge waste . . . that could affect the quality of the waters of the state" to file a report of waste discharge. Water Code section 13263 in turn directs a regional water board to prescribe requirements for the discharge that "implement any relevant water quality control plans that have been adopted, and that . . . take into

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<sup>28</sup> Available at <[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/resolutions/1968/rs68\\_016.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/1968/rs68_016.pdf)> (as of Jan. 31, 2018), AR 35945-35946.

<sup>29</sup> "Waste" includes sewage and any and all other waste substances, liquid, solid, gaseous, or radioactive, associated with human habitation, or of human or animal origin, or from any producing, manufacturing, or processing operation, including waste placed within containers of whatever nature prior to, and for purposes, of disposal." (Wat. Code, §13050, subd. (b).)

consideration beneficial uses to be protected, the water quality objectives reasonably required for that purpose, other waste discharges, and the need to prevent nuisance,” as well as certain additional factors, including economic considerations.<sup>30</sup> A regional water board may prescribe general waste discharge requirements to a category of discharges, such as agricultural discharges, rather than issue individual waste discharge requirements to separate operations.<sup>31</sup>

While waste discharge requirements require compliance with the water quality objectives specified in the water quality control plans, such compliance need not be achieved immediately. A time schedule for compliance with water quality requirements is explicitly permitted by Water Code section 13263, which states that WDRs “may contain a time schedule subject to revision in the discretion of the [regional water] board.”<sup>32</sup> Further, consistent with Water Code section 13263’s requirement to consider the water quality objectives “reasonably required” to protect beneficial uses, a regional water board has some discretion to determine where and how compliance with a water quality objective must be demonstrated. It is not always necessary for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses that each water quality objective be met at each discrete point in time and space. For example, in determining compliance with water quality objectives in groundwater to protect drinking water beneficial uses, the regional water board may take into consideration the fact that many groundwater wells are screened so that they extract groundwater from multiple aquifer levels. Because the different aquifer levels are recharged from different areas over different time intervals, different aquifer levels will have different concentrations of pollutants. Thus, many groundwater wells necessarily induce some mixing of the groundwater they extract. Similarly, the regional water board may determine appropriate averaging periods for surface waters, or rely on monitoring for general surface water quality compliance at a point downstream of multiple discharge points, rather than at each and every discharge point.

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<sup>30</sup> In issuing waste discharge requirements, the Water Code requires the Central Valley Water Board to take the factors listed in Water Code section 13241 into consideration, including, but not limited to, “(a) past, present, and probable future beneficial uses of water; (b) Environmental characteristics of the hydrographic unit under consideration, including the quality of water available thereto; (c) Water quality conditions that could reasonably be achieved through the coordinated control of all factors which affect water quality in the area; (d) Economic considerations; (e) The need for developing housing within the region; (f) The need to develop and use recycled water.” See *City of Burbank v. State Water Resources Control Bd.* (2005) 35 Cal.4th 613. As we have already discussed above, the Central Valley Water Board included a thorough discussion of economic considerations in an economic study conducted in support of its long-term irrigated lands regulatory program for the region (AR 31796-32232) and at pages 44 through 48 of Attachment A to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. While petitioners complained generally about the breadth of the economic analysis, the record does not establish that the costs of complying with the requirements contained in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, including the additional costs to comply with the requirements added by this order, warrant relaxation of those requirements.

<sup>31</sup> Wat. Code, §13263, subd. (i).

<sup>32</sup> Wat. Code, §13263, subd. (c).

Specifically, with regard to implementation consistent with the water quality control plans within the Central Valley region, the State Water Board recognizes that considerations regarding mixing, averaging periods, time schedules, and the implementation of cooperative monitoring and compliance strategies are currently being considered as part of the effort to address salt and nitrate impacts through the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-term Sustainability Initiative (CV-SALTS), a collaborative, stakeholder process initiated by the Central Valley Water Board. This initiative, which is in the final phases of development, is intended to establish a Central Valley-wide salt and nitrate control program based on recommendations from the CV-SALTS-developed Salt and Nitrate Management Plan (SNMP). To implement the SNMP, the Central Valley Water Board is considering amendments to the Water Quality Control Plans for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins and the Tulare Lake Basin. These amendments, as currently contemplated, would incorporate new implementation plans, strategies, policies and guidance into the water quality control plans. Because the State Water Board has not yet been presented the CV-SALTS-driven water quality control plan amendments for review, it is premature for us in this order to opine on how any approved new direction may affect implementation of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs or the remainder of the Central Valley Regional Board irrigated lands regulatory program. However, the State Water Board acknowledges the extensive effort by the Central Valley Water Board and stakeholders to study and develop alternatives to address existing groundwater salinity problems in the Central Valley.<sup>33</sup>

The Nonpoint Source Policy further guides our interpretation and implementation of Water Code requirements, including Water Code sections 13263 and 13267, in the context of regulating nonpoint source discharges. Nonpoint source discharges, such as irrigated lands discharges, pose unique challenges that are not easily addressed by strategies designed to address point source pollution. The Nonpoint Source Policy explains that nonpoint source discharges typically occur as a result of contact between pollutants and land runoff, precipitation,

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<sup>33</sup> It is important for us to note that the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs regulate current discharges that may be causing or contributing to exceedances of the limitations imposed under the Water Code. Where water bodies already have pollutant levels detrimental to beneficial uses due to historic discharges, the regional water board may rely on other authority, including but not limited to the authority to require cleanup and abatement under Water Code 13304, to address the issue. . We will, of course, be paying close attention to the CV-SALTS initiative, the substantial work required under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014. (Wat. Code., § 10720, et seq.), and other efforts to manage existing groundwater quality and quantity problems. In the meantime, we will continue to work diligently with communities, especially disadvantaged communities that are disproportionately impacted by poor drinking water supplies, to find appropriate solutions. We have focused many of our grant and loan programs to provide them with needed assistance while longer term approaches continue to evolve.

atmospheric deposition, drainage, seepage, or hydrologic modification.<sup>34</sup> Nonpoint sources are thus diffuse and are most effectively addressed by control of the sources of pollution, typically with implementation of management practices, rather than by attempts to treat the discharge at the multiple, and often indeterminate, number of discharge points. The Nonpoint Source Policy further recognizes that, “given the extent and diversity” of nonpoint source discharges, the regional water boards must be creative and efficient in addressing nonpoint source pollution and may rely on third-party programs that are effective in reaching a large number of dischargers.<sup>35</sup>

The Nonpoint Source Policy requires that any nonpoint source pollution control implementation program, including one primarily administered by a third-party group, incorporate several key elements.<sup>36</sup> Key Element 1 states as follows:<sup>37</sup>

1. A nonpoint source control implementation program’s ultimate purpose shall be explicitly stated. Implementation programs must, at a minimum, address nonpoint source pollution in a manner that achieves and maintains water quality objectives and beneficial uses, including any applicable antidegradation requirements.<sup>38</sup>

In compliance with Water Code section 13263 and with Key Element 1, the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs set out their ultimate purpose by establishing water quality requirements in Section III. Receiving Water Limitations:

A. Surface Water Limitations

1. Wastes discharged from Member operations shall not cause or contribute to an exceedance of applicable water quality objectives in

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<sup>34</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, p. 7, AR 36146.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*, p. 9, AR 36148.

<sup>36</sup> The Nonpoint Source Policy uses several acronyms that we have spelled out in this order. These include “NPS” for “nonpoint source,” “MP” for “management practice,” “SWRCB” for “State Water Board,” and “RWQCB” for “regional water board.”

<sup>37</sup> The Nonpoint Source Policy establishes five key elements. Four are discussed here. The fifth key element states: “Each regional water board shall make clear, in advance, the potential consequences for failure to achieve a nonpoint source control implementation program’s stated purposes.” (Nonpoint Source Policy, pp. 14-15, AR 36153-36154.) The Nonpoint Source Policy further explains that a regional water board’s “action to approve or endorse a[] [nonpoint source] control implementation program shall contain a general description of the course of action or actions to be taken if verification/feedback mechanisms indicate or demonstrate that the program is failing to achieve its stated objectives.” (*Id.*) The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs Information Sheet summarizes the following consequences where requirements are not met: “The third-party or Members will be required, in an iterative process, to conduct additional monitoring and/or implement management practices where water quality objectives are not being met; (b) Appropriate Central Valley Water Board enforcement action where the iterative management practices process is unsuccessful, program requirements are not met, or time schedules are not met; (c) Require noncompliant Members, or all Members where the third-party fails to meet the requirements of this Order, to submit a report of waste discharge to obtain individual waste discharge requirements from the Central Valley Water Board (i.e., revoke coverage under this Order).” (AR 07778.) We add to this set of consequences the requirements for additional training or for professional assistance where a Member is shown to be an “outlier” for nitrogen application. This consequence is discussed in Section II.A.5.f.

<sup>38</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, pp. 11-12, AR 36150-36151. Key Element 1 is inclusive of antidegradation requirements. As previously stated, we discuss the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs’ compliance with antidegradation requirements separately in section II.B.

surface water, unreasonably affect applicable beneficial uses, or cause or contribute to a condition of pollution or nuisance.

B. Groundwater Limitations

1. Wastes discharged from Member operations shall not cause or contribute to an exceedance of applicable water quality objectives in the underlying groundwater, unreasonably affect applicable beneficial uses, or cause or contribute to a condition of pollution or nuisance.

The General WDRs state that these receiving water limitations are effective immediately except where Members are implementing an approved Surface Water Quality Management Plan (SQMP) or Groundwater Quality Management Plan (GQMP), with an approved timeline, as authorized by the General WDRs.<sup>39</sup> The SQMP and GQMP requirements are discussed in greater detail below; a primary purpose of the SQMP and GQMP provisions is to address water quality problems in areas where exceedances of water quality objectives have been detected. The Order allows Members that are part of the SQMP or GQMP plan area up to ten years for compliance with the Receiving Water Limitations.<sup>40</sup> This allowance does not run counter to the Water Code or the Nonpoint Source Policy. As we already stated, a time schedule for compliance with water quality requirements is explicitly permitted by the Water Code. Further, Key Element 3 of the Nonpoint Source Policy states that, where a regional water board finds that it is necessary to allow time for achievement of water quality requirements, an order implementing a nonpoint source program shall specify a time schedule and quantifiable milestones designed to measure progress toward achieving the water quality requirements.<sup>41</sup> Although a time schedule allowed in WDRs must not be any longer than necessary,<sup>42</sup> the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs comply with the Nonpoint Source Policy by setting ten years as the maximum time permitted for a time schedule and requiring the Third Party to propose a schedule that is “as short as practicable” and is supported by technical or economic justification as to why it is as short as practicable.<sup>43</sup> The General WDRs require the SQMP or GQMP to incorporate a specific schedule and milestones for the implementation of management practices and tasks and measurable performance goals.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § III, fns. 15-16, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*, § XII, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, p.13, AR 36152.

<sup>42</sup> Cal. Code of Regs, tit. 23, §2231.

<sup>43</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § XII, p. 37. The provisions allow the Central Valley Water Board to modify approved schedules where evidence is presented that the compliance date is technically or economically infeasible or where evidence shows that an earlier compliance date is feasible. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B., MRP, Appen. MRP-1, §§ I.C.d-e, p. 5.



Thus the General WDRs' receiving water limitations are consistent with the Water Code and the Nonpoint Source Policy.<sup>45</sup>

The receiving water limitations – to not cause or contribute to exceedances of water quality objectives, unreasonably affect beneficial uses, or cause or contribute to a condition of pollution or nuisance – establish clear water quality based requirements for the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.<sup>46</sup> But Key Element 1 also requires nonpoint source programs to address nonpoint source pollution “*in a manner* that achieves and maintains water quality objectives and beneficial uses (emphasis added).” A regional water board's obligation under the Water Code and the Nonpoint Source Policy does not terminate with establishing the appropriate water quality objectives; the regional water board must determine “that there is a high likelihood the implementation program will attain [the regional water board's] stated water quality objectives.”<sup>47</sup>

Yet a broad scale nonpoint source regulatory program does not necessarily generate the type of data that facilitates easy determination and enforcement of compliance with receiving water limitations. In a permit for a traditional point-source facility, the water boards set a water quality-based effluent limitation to be met at the discharge point and require monitoring of

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<sup>45</sup> Even where the maximum permitted time frame of ten years may be allowed by the Central Valley Water Board, the time schedule is not necessarily unreasonable. This order sets out a number of new metrics and approaches to measuring and reporting on management practices, particularly with regard to nitrogen application, and also requires revisions to both the surface water and groundwater monitoring provisions of the General WDRs. Our direction is intended to strengthen the link between management practice implementation and water quality outcomes so that we have the information needed to guide the program more quickly toward compliance. But development and implementation of the revised monitoring and reporting requires investment of time. And research to determine appropriate nitrogen application metrics is needed, along with correlation of practices with the data received through the monitoring and the reporting of the nitrogen application data. As a result, we cannot say that ten years is per se an unreasonable time frame for compliance with the receiving water limitations.

<sup>46</sup> In Order WQ 2013-0101, we added a provision to the Central Coast Agricultural Order to clarify that, in order to comply with the receiving water limitations, “Dischargers must (1) implement management practices that prevent or reduce discharges of waste that are causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality standards; and (2) to the extent practice effectiveness evaluation or reporting, monitoring data, or inspections indicate that the implemented management practices have not been effective in preventing the discharges from causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality standards, the Discharger must implement improved management practices.” (State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, p. 26.). The Sacramento Superior Court Ruling questioned whether the requirement to implement “improved” management practices, in the absence of additional standards and verification of what constitutes an improved management practice, would in fact ensure effective reduction of pollution. (Sacramento Superior Court Ruling, pp. 33-35.) The Sacramento Superior Court Ruling appears to read the revision as requiring only nominal improvements without a clear mandate to achieve the receiving water limitations over some defined timeframe. Although we disagree that the revision should be read in that manner, to the extent the Superior Court's interpretation is affirmed on appeal, we note that the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs are clearer in mandating that discharges may not cause or contribute to exceedances of water quality objectives except where a clearly articulated program of management practice implementation with a finite time schedule is established.

<sup>47</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, p.11, AR 36150. See also *Asociacion de Gente Unida por el Agua v. Central Valley Water Board* (2012) 210 Cal.App.4th 1255, 1260-61 (stating that “[t]he wish is not father to the action” and finding that a prohibition against water quality impacts is insufficient, in and of itself, to meet water quality requirements, in the absence of additional permit measures to implement and verify achievement of the prohibition).

the discharge to verify that the limitation is being met. As we will discuss in greater detail in the section on surface water and groundwater quality monitoring, in a landscape-based, nonpoint source program such as the irrigated lands regulatory program, monitoring the numerous and sometimes indeterminate set of all farm discharge points to surface water and groundwater is an impractical, prohibitively costly, and often ineffective method for compliance determination and the Nonpoint Source Policy accordingly does not mandate such monitoring. As a result, a nonpoint source regulatory program simply may not yield enough data to conclusively establish whether a specific individual discharger is in fact causing or contributing to exceedances. Recognizing this challenge, the Nonpoint Source Policy provides that, although management practice implementation is not a substitute for actual compliance with water quality requirements, a schedule of management practice implementation, assessment, and adaptive management may act as a proxy for assessing regulatory program progress.<sup>48</sup> This direction is captured in Key Elements 2 and 4:

2. A nonpoint source control implementation program shall include a description of the management practices and other program elements that are expected to be implemented to ensure attainment of the implementation program's stated purpose(s), the process to be used to select or develop management practices, and the process to be used to ensure and verify proper management practice implementation.<sup>49</sup>
- ...
4. A nonpoint source control implementation program shall include sufficient feedback mechanisms so that the regional water board, dischargers, and the public can determine whether the program is achieving its stated purpose(s), or whether additional or different management practices or other actions are required.<sup>50</sup>

Accordingly, the management practice implementation requirements form the backbone of any nonpoint source regulatory framework.

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs state that Members "shall implement management practices, as necessary, to protect water quality and to achieve compliance with applicable water quality objectives."<sup>51</sup> Members are further required to implement management practices that 1) minimize waste discharge offsite in surface water; 2) minimize percolation of waste to groundwater; and 3) protect wellheads from surface water intrusion.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, p.12, AR 36151.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*, pp. 13-14, AR 36152-36153.

<sup>51</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § IV.A.3, p.18.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*, § IV.B.20, p.20. Under Water Code section 13360, the Central Valley Water Board generally may not specify "the design, location, type of construction, or particular manner in which compliance may be had with" waste discharge requirements. For structural management practices, the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs (*Continued*)

Members prepare Farm Evaluations to document implemented management practices.<sup>53</sup>

Members also propose and implement management practices to minimize excess nutrient application relative to crop need as specified in a Nitrogen Management Plan.<sup>54</sup> Members with potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters propose and implement sediment discharge and erosion prevention practices to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels consistent with a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.<sup>55</sup> Where the Third Party is required to prepare a SQMP or GQMP, specifying additional or improved management practices to address detected exceedances in a given area, Members also implement management practices in accordance with that plan.<sup>56</sup>

Of course, a management practice-based nonpoint source regulatory program will succeed in its ultimate purpose of “achiev[ing] and maintain[ing] water quality objectives and beneficial uses” only to the extent it facilitates implementation of *effective* management practices. Instituting effective management practices requires sufficient monitoring and reporting to determine if existing management practices are leading to compliance with water quality requirements and implementation of improved water quality practices where they are not. This feedback mechanism – that a nonpoint source discharge control program link its implementation requirements, with some level of confidence, to expected water quality outcomes, and incorporate monitoring and reporting sufficient to verify that link – is a fundamental tenet of the Nonpoint Source Policy, captured in Key Elements 1, 2, and 4. But the Nonpoint Source Policy does not specify a particular level of granularity in monitoring and reporting and therefore leaves significant discretion to the water boards to determine the appropriate level of data gathering and reporting for different programs and different program components. The water boards must strike a balance that, on the one hand, requires sufficient data collection and reporting to allow for meaningful feedback on the program, but, on the other hand, avoids extensive data requirements that demand excessive and unwarranted time and cost to produce and analyze by the growers, the third party, and water board staff. In striking that balance, the water boards also take into consideration grower concerns with disclosure of trade secrets, private economic and proprietary business information, and general concerns regarding privacy.

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must therefore strike a balance between setting standards that must be achieved and leaving Members flexibility as to the type of design and construction that may be used to meet those standards.

<sup>53</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § VII.B, pp. 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*, § IV.B.8, p.19.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*, § IV.B.7, p.19.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*, § IV.B.6, pp.18-19.

The particular balance struck on this issue in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs requires significant reliance on the Third Party. The Third Party fulfills the role of collecting data on the management practices that are implemented by the Members. The Farm Evaluation and a Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report are submitted by the Members to the Third Party.<sup>57</sup> The Third Party in turn reports the information in these plans to the Central Valley Water Board with the data identified or aggregated at a township level, without Member identification or location information.<sup>58</sup> The Third Party must submit a Management Plan Progress Report to the Central Valley Water Board each year reporting on the degree of implementation of management practices and evaluation of the effectiveness of the management practices with the data in aggregated form.<sup>59</sup> The Third Party also fulfills the role of monitoring surface water and groundwater quality. Such monitoring is regional in scale and all data is reported to the Central Valley Water Board.<sup>60</sup>

We continue to support third-party approaches to regulating agricultural discharges, as permitted by the Nonpoint Source Policy. We stated our reasons for supporting third-party approaches in Order WQ 2013-0101, in which we encouraged the Central Coast Water Board to consider the third-party structure in future iterations of the Central Coast Agricultural Order:

From a resource perspective, third parties allow a regional water board to leverage limited regulatory staff by acting as intermediaries between the regional water board staff and the growers, freeing regional water board resources to focus on problem areas or actors. Third parties also may have the expertise to provide technical assistance and training to growers at a scale that cannot be matched by regional water board staff resources, and, in many cases, third parties already have relationships in place with the dischargers.<sup>61</sup>

Because third parties build on relationships already in place with growers, third parties can engender a high level of trust and more effectively reach out to growers to increase understanding of the permit provisions and to facilitate management practice development and deployment, especially in cases where improved management practices are required of particular growers. In addition, there are a number of cost benefits to the growers enrolled in a third-party program. These include centralization of fee collection and the resulting reduction in the growers' annual water board fee, potentially reduced costs in management practice implementation facilitated by

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<sup>57</sup> *Id.*, §§ VII.B, p. 24-25, VII.D, pp. 26-27.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, § V.C., Report Components (17) & (18), pp.23-24.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, Appen. MRP-1, § I.F, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, §§ III & IV, pp. 3-20.

<sup>61</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, pp. 13-14.

access to management practice effectiveness information, significantly reduced monitoring costs due to allowance for regional and trend water quality monitoring by the third party in lieu of individual farm monitoring under an individual permit, and reduced reporting costs when the third party shoulders responsibility for data entry into systems such as CEDEN and GeoTracker.<sup>62</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel also endorsed the third-party based approach of the Central Valley Water Board irrigated lands regulatory program and recommended that other regional water boards follow a similar approach.<sup>63</sup> We take our support for third parties one step further in this order. We direct all of the regional water boards that currently have third party-based regulatory programs<sup>64</sup> to update their programs to be consistent with our description of the roles and responsibilities of a third party in this order within the next five years. The regional water boards should also continue to issue general waste discharge requirements or general waivers of waste discharge requirements for individual growers that choose not to form a third party or to join an existing third party. Those individual growers would have the same management and reporting obligations that are identified as precedential in this order, but would not, of course, receive the benefits associated with being a member of a third party.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that there are challenges associated with a third-party based approach to nonpoint source regulation. One such challenge is to ensure sufficient granularity to the data collected and reported to provide meaningful information on the performance of the program and on required improvements. Where a third party acts as an intermediary between the growers and the regional water board, the program's success depends not only on whether the third party is collecting appropriate and relevant data, but also on whether the third party is reporting that data to the regional water board with sufficient detail to allow appropriate regulatory oversight as well as transparency in implementation of the program and water quality results. In particular, concerns with privacy and protection of proprietary information may create strong incentives in support of a framework where the third party retains most

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<sup>62</sup> CEDEN is the State Water Board's data system for surface water quality in California. GeoTracker is a statewide database and geographic information system that provides online access to environmental data. The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require entry of surface water quality data collected under the General WDRs into CEDEN and groundwater quality data collected into GeoTracker.

<sup>63</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> The Central Coast Water Board agricultural regulatory program for individual growers provides an option for groups to perform a limited set of functions for the growers, rather than the full set of functions contemplated by this order. We continue to allow for third parties in the Central Coast region to take on a limited set of functions in this manner. However, aspects of this order that are precedential only for full third-party based programs are not applicable to the Central Coast agricultural regulatory program as it is currently structured. This order does not, of course, foreclose the option for Central Coast growers and the Central Coast Water Board to agree in the future on a program based on a third party group consistent with the precedential aspects of this order.

information on farm-level management practice and water quality performance rather than submitting that information to the regional water board and, by extension, making it available to the public.<sup>65</sup>

The Environmental Petitioners argue that the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require monitoring and reporting at a level of granularity too general to achieve the feedback mechanism the Nonpoint Source Policy requires: the adopted regulatory program cannot establish that the required management practices have a high likelihood of achieving the receiving water limitations because there is insufficient monitoring and reporting to verify that link or to require appropriate adaptive management to achieve progress. The Environmental Petitioners assert that the weaknesses of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs are two-fold: First, there is insufficient disclosure and transparency with regard to the management practices being implemented on the ground by the Members because only limited, aggregated data must be reported regarding such practices. Second, the representative and regional monitoring program does not produce specific enough data to determine if any of the implemented management practices are in fact leading to meeting water quality requirements. The Environmental Petitioners advocate for farm-level reporting of data, which, the Environmental Petitioners imply, would provide the necessary detail and accountability to tie management practices implemented by Members with their direct impact on water quality.

In the sections that follow, we review the core requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs to determine whether the required implementation of management practices have a high likelihood of leading to achievement of the water quality requirements of the General WDRs and, more specifically, whether the monitoring and reporting requirements constitute a sufficient feedback mechanism to verify that appropriate management practices are being proposed and implemented in pursuit of the water quality requirements. We find that the data required to be reported by the Members to the Third Party is generally appropriate, but direct several revisions, primarily with regard to nitrogen application reporting. With regard to reporting of the data from the Third Party to the Central Valley Water Board, we revise the General WDRs to require reporting of some of the data at a field level. We also revise elements of the water quality monitoring provisions. With regard to surface water quality monitoring, we direct the Central Valley Water Board staff to coordinate an external expert review of the program.

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<sup>65</sup> To the extent we recognize the incentive privacy provides growers to join coalitions, nothing in this order should be construed as recognizing any right to privacy of the specific field-level data and regional water boards retain flexibility provided by this order.

Our revisions are based on recommendations of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force Report, the Agricultural Expert Panel Report, and on our own review of the General WDRs. We also relied substantially on a proposal regarding data submission that a group of Central Valley agricultural third-party representatives and environmental justice organization representatives<sup>66</sup> jointly presented to Board members during the pendency of our own motion review. The directed revisions require more granular, field-level reporting of management practices and nitrogen application to the Central Valley Water Board, which will enhance their ability to correlate management practices implemented, the monitoring and reporting required, and the water quality requirements of the General WDRs. In particular, the automatic reporting of certain data to the Central Valley Water Board at the field level, rather than only in aggregated and summary form, is expected to lead to more effective oversight and management of the program by the Central Valley Water Board, as well as provide more transparency for the public as to the overall level of management practice implementation to determine whether the program is achieving its water quality goals, or whether additional regulatory actions are necessary.<sup>67</sup> We conclude that the General WDRs are consistent with the Water Code and with the Nonpoint Source Policy with the revisions that we direct.

Appendix A is a copy of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs with revisions directed by us shown in red in underline/strikeout format. We reference Appendix A throughout our discussion below and hereinafter refer to it as the “Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.” In addition to the revisions referenced specifically in this order, Appendix A contains a number of conforming revisions to make other sections of the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs consistent with the directed revisions (such as revisions to Attachment E, Definitions), as well as additional substantive and non-substantive minor revisions throughout.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The group included representatives of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition, Kings River Water Quality Coalition, Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition, Community Water Center, Clean Water Action, Leadership Counsel.

<sup>67</sup> As will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow, we have not required the initial reporting of field-level data with name or location identifiers. For the reasons discussed below, we find that the effective management of a nonpoint source program for agricultural discharges is not necessarily dependent on tying each data point to a discharger identified by name, or to a specific location. However, we find it is essential to continue to allow the Central Valley Water Board to require submittal of specific names or locations, or names or locations generally, should the Central Valley Water Board make a determination that it is necessary.

<sup>68</sup> We note that this order provides the rationale for the significant revisions to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. We have not updated all findings of the General WDRs and supporting documents, including in particular the Information Sheet, related to the revisions. Nor have we updated the findings of the General WDRs and supporting documents to reflect all new and changed information since the issuance of the General WDRs.

## 1. Vulnerability Determinations

Before we proceed with our step-by-step review of the core requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, we take up an issue that informs a number of the requirements. One premise of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs is that regulatory requirements, and limited resources for regulatory oversight, should be concentrated on those activities or conditions that constitute the highest risk to water quality. Throughout, the General WDRs impose requirements in part based on whether an operation is in an area that has high or low vulnerability for water quality impacts. The term “high vulnerability” is defined for surface water and groundwater (see discussion that follows);<sup>69</sup> the Third Party is tasked with designation of the areas, with review by the Executive Officer.<sup>70</sup>

The vulnerability approach of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs is similar to the risk-based tier designations of the Central Coast Agricultural Order that we reviewed in Order WQ-2013-0101. The Central Coast Agricultural Order assigns dischargers to one of the three tiers based on a number of criteria intended to capture the risk posed by the operation to water quality and imposes increasingly more stringent requirements from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3. The Central Coast Agricultural Order also requires determination of a nitrate loading risk level and uses that determination to further focus requirements. In Order WQ 2013-0101, we acknowledged that neither the tier determinations nor the nitrate loading risk level determinations were exact proxies for actual risk to water quality, but we found them to be reasonable and declined to substitute another imperfect but reasonable set of criteria for those chosen by the Central Coast Water Board. We tasked the Agricultural Expert Panel with evaluating methodologies for determining risk in the context of an agricultural regulatory program.<sup>71</sup>

In considering the appropriateness of risk-based tiering in agricultural regulatory programs, the Agricultural Expert Panel focused on the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs’ high vulnerability definition for groundwater. A high vulnerability groundwater area is an area identified by the Third Party “where known groundwater quality impacts exist for which irrigated agricultural operations are a potential contributor or where conditions make groundwater more vulnerable to impacts from irrigated agricultural activities.” Additionally, areas are

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<sup>69</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. E, Definitions, §§13-14, pp. 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*, finding 22, p. 6; see also *id.*, Att. B, MRP, §IV, pp. 12-13.

<sup>71</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, pp. 20, 43. In reviewing Order WQ 2013-0101, the Sacramento Superior Court Ruling stated that the fact that only a small number of growers are subject to Tier 3 was “a fundamental problem with the Waiver” (at 35); however, the court did not find issue generally with a risk-based tiering structure.



considered high vulnerability areas for groundwater if “(1) there is a confirmed exceedance (considering applicable averaging periods) of a water quality objective or applicable water quality trigger limit . . . in a groundwater well and irrigated agriculture may cause or contribute to the exceedance; (2) the Basin Plan requires development of a groundwater quality management plan for a constituent or constituents discharged by irrigated agriculture; or (3) the Executive Officer determines that irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to a trend of degradation of groundwater that may threaten applicable Basin Plan beneficial uses.”<sup>72</sup>

The Agricultural Expert Panel found that this definition of high vulnerability in the General WDRs was vague, ambiguous, circular, and not supported by a sound technical rationale. In particular, the Agricultural Expert Panel pointed to the difficulty of directly linking water supply well nitrate concentrations to above-ground practices. In many cases groundwater nitrate concentrations reflect a mixture of waters with wide-ranging spatial and temporal origins. Therefore, groundwater wells exhibiting exceedances of water quality standards may not provide the information needed to directly link groundwater conditions to land uses in the immediate area.<sup>73</sup>

More significantly, the Agricultural Expert Panel further found that good nitrogen management is essential in all areas, not just high vulnerability areas, and recommended against differential requirements for nitrogen management based on risk. The Agricultural Expert Panel Report stated:

Because deep percolation of nitrates is universal within irrigated agriculture, a good regulatory program must encompass all irrigated areas, not only lands directly above high nitrate aquifers, those previously identified to be in a high vulnerability area, or those with a certain farm or field size.<sup>74</sup>

The Agricultural Expert Panel thus effectively rejected risk categorization for groundwater requirements, recommending that uniform requirements apply to all dischargers.

We generally agree with the Agricultural Expert Panel’s conclusion that distinguishing between high vulnerability and low vulnerability areas for groundwater is at best an inexact science and that most groundwater protection requirements (inclusive, in our opinion, of reporting requirements designed to inform protection and track effectiveness and progress) should instead apply to most agricultural areas. In most instances, groundwater is vulnerable to

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<sup>72</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. E, Definitions, §13, pp. 2-3. Water quality trigger limits are limits developed by the Central Valley Water Board staff to implement narrative Basin Plan objectives. (*Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, § VIII, pp. 26-27.)

<sup>73</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.*, p. 26.

agricultural nitrate impacts, regardless of the time it takes for those impacts to appear in groundwater due to soil conditions, geologic conditions, and/or depth to groundwater. We will direct revisions to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs throughout this order to impose most of the requirements currently imposed only on Members in high vulnerability groundwater areas on all Members, with some limited exceptions. These revisions are discussed under the headings for each set of core requirements.

The Agricultural Expert Panel did not consider whether the terms high vulnerability and low vulnerability should continue to be used in the context of surface water requirements. The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs' determination of high vulnerability areas for surface water is based on exceedances of water quality objectives or water quality triggers twice in a three year period in the area, any Basin Plan requirements for development of a water quality management plan for an irrigated lands related constituent in the area, or an Executive Officer determination that discharges from irrigated lands may be causing or contributing to a trend of degradation of surface water in the area.<sup>75</sup> Determining whether an area is a high vulnerability area for surface water does not necessarily suffer from the same level of technical uncertainty as the determination of high vulnerability areas for groundwater. Nevertheless, we will not rely on that distinction in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs because, in light of our revisions to impose many of the same requirements in high and low vulnerability areas for groundwater, the categories for surface water are left with little utility in the General WDRs.<sup>76</sup> We note these revisions under the appropriate discussion.

The Agricultural Expert Panel Report left open the possibility that the concept of high vulnerability or similar risk-based category may be used for prioritization where requirements need to be phased in for sets of dischargers over time.<sup>77</sup> We are cognizant that much of the work to designate high and low vulnerability areas in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed has already been completed. We are also cognizant that the expanded reporting obligations will result in increased costs to the growers in low vulnerability areas and to the Third Party, which must now work with a larger set of growers to assist in form submission and must now collect and analyze a larger set of grower data. Accordingly, we will provide for additional time, as specified under each

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<sup>75</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. E., Definitions, §14, p.3.

<sup>76</sup> There are only two provisions where the distinction between high and low vulnerability areas for surface water are called out in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs – the requirement to participate annually in outreach events applies only to Members in high surface water or groundwater vulnerability areas (*id.*, § IV.B.4, p.18) and only Members in high surface water or groundwater vulnerability areas must update the Farm Evaluation annually (*id.*, § VII.B, pp.24-25.).

<sup>77</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, pp. 16-17.

relevant section below, for requirements currently imposed only in high vulnerability areas to also apply to low vulnerability areas. Additionally, under our revisions, the high/low vulnerability designations may continue to be used for prioritization in the context of some of the groundwater monitoring requirements, as we will discuss in section II.A.8 of this order.<sup>78</sup> Further, the criteria forming the definition of high vulnerability will continue to inform the requirement to prepare a water quality management plan for both surface water and groundwater.

In general, we support uniform requirements for groundwater protection for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide, except as specified in subsequent sections of this order. But we leave open the possibility that risk-based designations continue to be used for differentiating surface water protection requirements and for phasing in groundwater protection requirements. We also decline to direct a uniform set of criteria for risk designation and leave the regional water boards with considerable discretion to design reasonable frameworks for differentiation and prioritization. In addition to the high/low vulnerability approach of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, such criteria may, for example, include risk-based tier designations similar to those in the Central Coast irrigated lands regulatory programs or possibly categories based on farm-size.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, we acknowledge, as further discussed in section II.A.5 below, that there may be uniquely-situated categories of growers for whom the requirement for nitrogen reporting is inappropriate. Our order revisions allow a category of growers to be exempted from the nitrogen applied and removed reporting requirements subject to a demonstration that applied nitrogen is not expected to seep below the root zone in amounts that could impact groundwater, and is further not expected to discharge to surface water.

## **2. Requirement to Participate in Outreach Events**

Under the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, members in high vulnerability areas are required to participate in outreach events and review outreach materials to become informed of any known water quality problems and the management practices that are available to address those problems.<sup>80</sup> We extend the requirement to participate in outreach events to all Members. This is consistent with the direction of the Agricultural Expert Panel for the

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<sup>78</sup> The groundwater monitoring requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, discussed in section II.A.8, are carried out by the Third Party and implemented and phased in in part based on determinations of high and low vulnerability. Because of the time and resources that have already been invested by the Third Party and Central Valley Water Board in setting up the vulnerability-based framework for the groundwater monitoring programs, we continue to allow phasing based on vulnerability for those requirements.

<sup>79</sup> Phasing by farm size leads to initial compliance by a large number of acres represented by a small number of growers.

<sup>80</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs., § IV.B.4, p.18.

development of a “very strong, comprehensive, and sustained educational and outreach program.”<sup>81</sup> However, we recognize the additional burden on some Members and on the Third Party created by applying the outreach participation requirement uniformly. Because all Members must now participate in third-party outreach events, at least annually, we revise the provision to allow for the possibility of participation to occur without in-person attendance. We also phase in the requirement to participate in outreach events in low vulnerability areas by requiring participation beginning only in 2020. This delay will provide the Third Party an opportunity to increase staffing and funding for outreach events. Depending on the anticipated grower audience, we expect that the outreach events and outreach materials will be provided in appropriate languages.

The requirement for participation by all growers in outreach events shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide. The regional water boards have discretion over the precise form and frequency of the outreach events, as long as they are designed to reach all growers in the irrigated lands regulatory program.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section IV.B.4.

### **3. Farm Evaluation**

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require that all Members complete a Farm Evaluation describing management practices implemented to protect surface water and groundwater quality. The Farm Evaluations also include information such as the location of the farm, surface water discharge points, and the location of wells. Farm Evaluations are required of all Members, but only Members in high vulnerability areas must update the Farm Evaluation annually. The Farm Evaluation must be prepared by the Member and submitted to the Third Party. The Member must keep a copy and must produce it upon request by the Central Valley Water Board staff.<sup>82</sup> The Third Party aggregates and summarizes information collected from Farm Evaluations in the annual Monitoring Report submitted to the Central Valley Water Board.<sup>83</sup> We make several revisions to the Farm Evaluation provisions as laid out below.

#### **a. Farm Evaluation Update Frequency**

The Farm Evaluations are the mechanism for identification of the on-farm management practices implemented to achieve the General WDRs’ management practice

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<sup>81</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p.27.

<sup>82</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs., § VII.B, pp. 24-25.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, § V.C, Report Component (18), pp.23-24.

performance standards. As such, they constitute an essential component of the General WDRs. However, we find that annual submission of the Farm Evaluations is necessary only when water quality problems indicate the need for iterative updating of implemented management practices. Based on the experience of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition to date, most implemented management practices otherwise remain fairly stable from year to year.

For this reason, we require submission of the Farm Evaluations only every five years for Members in both high vulnerability areas and low vulnerability areas, except where the Executive Officer determines that more frequent reporting is warranted.<sup>84</sup> In turn, we strengthen the requirements for management practice implementation data reporting for fields covered by an SQMP or GQMP. As will be discussed under section II.A.9 below (Surface Water and Groundwater Quality Management Plans), we require submission of a separate Management Practice Implementation Report (MPIR) for Members in areas for which the third party is implementing a SQMP or GQMP. The Central Valley Water Board, with input from the Third Party, will have discretion to determine appropriate reporting frequency for the MPIR based on the life cycle of the management practices being implemented. We also move the reporting of irrigation practices and nitrogen application practices to the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Summary Report so that these practices continue to be reported on an annual basis.

The requirement for submission by all growers of management practice implementation information shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide, however, the regional water boards shall continue to have discretion as to the form and frequency of such submissions.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VII.B, section VII.G, Attachment B, MRP, section VI.B, INMP Components (4) and (5).

*b. Content of Farm Evaluation Template*

In terms of the content of the Farm Evaluation, we direct changes to the information fields of the template. The Central Valley Water Board has approved a template for the Farm Evaluation. The Farm Evaluation template lists management practices appropriate for pesticide application, irrigation, nitrogen management, and sediment and erosion management and directs Members to identify those management practices employed at their operations. We expand the list of management practices a Member should consider with the purpose of making

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<sup>84</sup> The Executive Officer may, for example, require more frequent update and submission of the Farm Evaluation where a Member is an outlier for nitrogen application.

the list more comprehensive. However, we also move questions regarding irrigation and nitrogen management to the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report, discussed in section II.A.5, since these management practices are most relevant in that context and should be reported annually along with nitrogen-related data on that form.

The Third Party and the Central Valley Water Board retain the flexibility to propose and approve any Farm Evaluation template that meets the minimum requirements specified in the General WDRs. The content specified for the Farm Evaluation template in this order is not intended to be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VIII.C.1, section VII.G, Attachment B, MRP, section VI.A, section VI.B, INMP Components (4) and (5), and Attachment B, MRP-1, section F.

*c. Submission of Farm Evaluations to the Central Valley Water Board*

As we have previously stated, the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require Members to implement management practices that minimize waste discharge offsite in surface water, minimize percolation of waste to groundwater, and protect wellheads from surface water intrusion.<sup>85</sup> The General WDRs require the Members to submit Farm Evaluations, which include implemented management practices, to the Third Party.

The Third Party summarizes and aggregates the data, conducts a quality assessment of the information, and submits the summary to the Central Valley Water Board. The Central Valley Water Board may, however, request the underlying data for a particular Member or area.<sup>86</sup> We generally affirm this framework for reporting of the Farm Evaluation data to the Central Valley Water Board, but require that individual data records also be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board associated with unique anonymous Member identifiers. The Third Party is directed to permanently associate each Member with a unique, anonymous identifier (Anonymous Member ID).<sup>87</sup> The Third Party is directed to submit the management practice implementation data from the Farm Evaluation to the Central Valley Water Board for each field,<sup>88</sup> linked with the

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<sup>85</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § IV.B.20, p.20.

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*, § X, p. 36. The Central Valley Water Board has the discretion to request underlying data for a specific area with or without the identification of the Members, depending on the purpose of the request.

<sup>87</sup> In Section II.A.5.e, we require nitrogen application data to be reported with an anonymous APN-based location identifier in addition to separately reporting nitrogen application data with an Anonymous Member ID, for the reasons discussed in that section. At this time, we are only requiring the management practice implementation data to be reported by an Anonymous Member ID. We may consider adding an APN-based location identifier in a separate table to the reporting requirements in the future if we determine that it is important for practices to be tied to a fixed location.

<sup>88</sup> We have clarified in the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs that, where the WDRs require reporting by field, Members may report data for a portion of a field or for multiple fields provided that the reported  
(Continued)

Anonymous Member ID. An example of a data set for management practice implementation is attached as sample data Table 1<sup>89</sup> and Figure 1, solely for illustrative purposes.

As discussed in the introduction to this section, waste discharge requirements must implement the relevant water quality control plans and consider the beneficial uses and water quality objectives specified in those plans. The Nonpoint Source Policy allows reliance on management practice implementation to control sources of pollution, but specifies that a nonpoint source program relying on management practice implementation must incorporate a feedback mechanism whereby a nonpoint source discharge control program links its implementation requirements, with a high level of confidence, to expected water quality outcomes, and adaptively manages the program to institute improved management practices where additional measures are needed to meet the water quality requirements. That feedback mechanism relies on the availability of information on the management practices currently being implemented. For the irrigated lands nonpoint source regulatory program where we are not requiring individual field water quality monitoring, the reporting of management practices being implemented by field is an important part of ensuring compliance with the Nonpoint Source Policy.

The aggregation and summary provided by the Third Party is a useful analysis for characterizing the trends in management practice implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed and we acknowledge the key role of the Third Party in facilitating and compiling the analysis. Availability of the underlying individual field-level data to the Central Valley Water Board is important for verification of the data and the analyses prepared by the Third Party as well as ensuring that the Third Party is following up appropriately with the Members that warrant additional assistance. The individual field-level data will also support Central Valley Water Board

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area has (1) the same crop type, (2) the same fertilizer inputs, (3) the same irrigation management, and (4) the same management practices. We are using the term “field” throughout this order to remain consistent with the terms used within the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, but other regions may use different terms to refer to the same concept. For reporting purposes in the Central Valley, the term “field” represents a convenient and appropriate reporting area such that the data reported is meaningful and the scale of reporting balances the level of detail with the reporting burden. Some growers in other regions engage in highly intensive cropping practices, including multiple rotations of different crops in the same location within a single year, unpredictable crop types and harvesting based on rapidly-shifting market demand, and variable management practices adjusting to weather and field conditions. The regional water boards have the flexibility to develop alternative reporting areas for these types of growers, as long as the regional water board determines that the alternative reporting area provides meaningful data and balances the level of detail with the reporting burden similar to the field approach. In no case should a reported area exceed a total size of 640 acres, and different crop types must always be reported separately even if they are within the same reporting area, to allow for evaluation of the effectiveness of management practices with regard to each individual crop type grown.

<sup>89</sup> Table 1 additionally illustrates the data sets to be obtained from the reporting of management practices associated with irrigation and nitrogen management, which are now reported with the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report as discussed above and from management practice implementation through SQMPs and GQMPs as will be discussed in section II.A.9 below.

analyses to identify effective and ineffective management practices. We recognize that this field-level data may not be required for all water quality programs, but believe it is necessary here due to the varied and complex nature of the irrigated lands regulatory program and the Third Party framework.

The requirement to submit grower-specific field-level management practice implementation data to the regional water board shall be precedential statewide. For third-party programs only, the data shall be submitted with Anonymous Member IDs. .

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VIII.D, Attachment B, MRP, section V.C, and section V.E, Report Component (18).

#### **4. Sediment and Erosion Control Plan**

Under the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Members with potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters must propose and implement sediment discharge and erosion prevention practices to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels, consistent with a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.<sup>90</sup> The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be prepared by the Member and must either conform to a site-specific recommendation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service or be certified. The Plan must be kept on site to be produced upon request by the Central Valley Water Board staff.<sup>91</sup>

Members with potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment must already report management practices implemented to minimize or eliminate sediment and erosion on the Farm Evaluation. We find that the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan requirements of General WDRs are appropriate as written and do not direct any revisions to the provisions.

The requirement for implementation of sediment and erosion control practices by growers with the potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide; however, the regional water boards shall continue to have discretion as to how these practices are documented and reported.

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<sup>90</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § IV.B.7, p.19.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.*, § VII.C, p.25.



## 5. Nitrogen Management Plans<sup>92</sup>

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require Members to “implement practices that minimize excess nutrient application relative to crop need.”<sup>93</sup> This requirement is implemented in part by preparation of a Nitrogen Management Plan. All Members must prepare a Nitrogen Management Plan and all Members must keep the Nitrogen Management Plan on site and make it available to Central Valley Water Board staff upon request. Members in high vulnerability groundwater areas have additional requirements for certification of the Nitrogen Management Plan and submittal to the Third Party of a Summary Report of the past year’s implementation of the Plan.<sup>94</sup> The Third Party in turn must report aggregated data to the Central Valley Water Board summarizing the range of nitrogen consumption ratios (i.e. nitrogen available for crop uptake divided by the estimated crop consumption of nitrogen) by crop types and soil conditions reported by the Members on the Summary Report. The data is aggregated at the township level and need not identify the Member and associated parcel for a particular nitrogen consumption ratio.<sup>95</sup> The Central Valley Water Board may, however, at any time request the underlying data for a particular Member or area.<sup>96</sup>

The nitrogen management provisions of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs are of particular significance because nitrate pollution in groundwater is a significant public health threat in parts of the Central Valley.<sup>97</sup> Nitrates consumed in water at a concentration above the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of nitrate+nitrite as N<sup>98</sup> pose serious risks to pregnant women and infants. Nitrate contamination in

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<sup>92</sup> In the Central Valley region, the rice growers are the only commodity group issued its own set of agricultural waste discharge requirements. (Central Valley Water Board Order No. R5-2014-0032, available at [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/general\\_orders/r5-2014-0032.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/general_orders/r5-2014-0032.pdf) (as of Jan. 31, 2018).) Those waste discharge requirements specify a rice-specific nitrogen management plan that takes into account the low potential for nitrogen discharges due to rice’s unique cultural growing practices. Review of the rice-specific nitrogen management plan is outside of the scope of these proceedings. The irrigation and nitrogen management requirements in this order accordingly are not precedential for rice growers.

<sup>93</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § IV.B.8, p.19.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.*, § VII.D, pp. 26-28.

<sup>95</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, § V.C, Report Component (17), p.23.

<sup>96</sup> *Id.*, § X, p. 36.

<sup>97</sup> Fertilizers may contain nitrogen in multiple forms (i.e. ammonia, nitrate, etc.), but the form of nitrogen that moves through the soil to groundwater is nitrate. (Nitrite may also be present but typically in very small quantities and is often discounted in general discussions.)

<sup>98</sup> The MCL is also expressed as 45 mg/L of nitrate as NO<sub>3</sub>. The authority to set the MCL for nitrate previously resided with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) (and the Department of Health Services prior to the establishment of CDPH), but the authority to set the MCL for nitrate is now within the purview of the State Water Board. The United States Environmental Protection Agency also has authority to set an MCL under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act that serves as a minimum standard nation-wide. The federal MCL for nitrate is also 10 mg/L nitrate as N.

groundwater in the Central Valley was extensively documented in the 2012 Report “Addressing Nitrate in California’s Drinking Water” (UCD Nitrate Report)<sup>99</sup> prepared for the Legislature. The Nitrogen Tracking Task Force and the Agricultural Expert Panel were proposed as recommendations in the State Water Board’s Report to the Legislature accompanying the UCD Nitrate Report. As discussed, the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force made recommendations for a nitrogen mass balance tracking system and the Agricultural Expert Panel addressed multiple questions posed to it regarding nitrogen management. We make revisions to the nitrogen planning and reporting requirements of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs as detailed below, primarily to address recommendations by the Agricultural Expert Panel. We have also carefully considered the recommendations of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force, in particular to ensure consistency generally with the recommended data tracking and reporting approach, although, as discussed below, we require more dis-aggregated data reporting than contemplated by the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force. We make some of these requirements precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide as specified in the sections that follow.

We recognize that there may be categories of uniquely-situated growers for whom the specific nitrogen management requirements made precedential in the following sections of this order are unnecessary because applied nitrogen<sup>100</sup> is not expected to seep below the root zone in amounts that could impact groundwater, and is further not expected to discharge to surface water. Any category of Members (such as growers of a particular crop or growers in a particular area) seeking to be exempted from the precedential nitrogen management requirements in the following sections of this order shall make a demonstration, for approval by the relevant regional water board, that nitrogen applied to the fields does not percolate below the root zone in an amount that could impact groundwater and does not migrate to surface water through discharges, including drainage, runoff, or sediment erosion.<sup>101</sup> These criteria for

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<sup>99</sup> Harter, T. et al. *Addressing Nitrate in California’s Drinking Water*. (UC Davis Groundwater Nitrate Project, March 2012) (Harter Report). The Harter Report is included in the administrative record of the proceedings to adopt the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, submitted to the State Water Board by the Central Valley Water Board. (AR 34141-35717.)

<sup>100</sup> Of course, these same nitrogen management requirements are also not precedential for categories of growers that never apply nitrogen to their fields. This order accordingly does not disturb the Central Valley Water Board’s determination in Order R5-2016-0015, adopted February 19, 2016, regarding exemptions from management and reporting requirements for irrigated pastures with no external nitrogen inputs and for managed wetlands.

<sup>101</sup> Based on written and verbal comments received on a February 8, 2016, draft of this order, we have been made aware that the San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition may have demonstrated that nitrogen applied to some of their growers’ fields does not percolate below the root zone. Because nitrogen management requirements are also instrumental in reducing nitrogen impacts to surface water, the Coalition must also demonstrate that the applied nitrogen does not migrate to surface water before the Central Valley Water Board can exempt those growers from the irrigation and nitrogen planning and reporting requirements.

determining categories of growers that may be exempted from the nitrogen management requirements shall also be precedential statewide.

In addition to growers that are exempt from all of the precedential nitrogen management requirements as stated above, there are categories of growers that the regional water boards may exempt from limited portions of the nitrogen management requirements or allow additional time to implement the requirements. We discuss these categories at the end of section II.A.5.c.

*a. Consideration of Irrigation Practices*

We first add several required planning elements to facilitate crop irrigation management planning, including consideration of irrigation method, crop evapotranspiration, and anticipated crop irrigation. The Agricultural Expert Panel emphasized that nitrogen management must be done hand-in-hand with irrigation management, pointing out that water movement through the soil is the mechanism for nitrate transport.<sup>102</sup> We will hereinafter refer to the plan as revised in the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs as the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan or “INMP,” and to the summary submitted to the Third Party as the “INMP Summary Report.” As stated under section 3 (Farm Evaluation), we also move reporting sections related to irrigation management and nitrogen management from the Farm Evaluation to the INMP Summary Report. Finally, we add a question inquiring whether the Member has been identified in the past year as an outlier for nitrogen application, a concept we discuss in greater detail below. The addition of this question assists in verifying that the Third Party and the Members are communicating effectively and alerts the Central Valley Water Board that the Member may have been required to update or improve management practices related to irrigation and nitrogen management.

The requirement for incorporation of irrigation management elements into nitrogen management planning shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attachment B, MPR, section VI.B.

*b. INMP Certification and Summary Reporting Requirements*

We next make revisions to the nitrogen management provisions of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs to remove some of the distinction in requirements between high and low vulnerability groundwater areas.

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<sup>102</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. ii.

We require all Members, including Members in low-vulnerability areas, to submit an INMP Summary Report to the Third Party. However, we allow Members in low vulnerability areas until March 1, 2021 to submit the INMP Summary Report. The phasing allows the Third Party additional time to expand its staffing and funding to accommodate outreach and processing for nitrogen application submissions.

We will not extend the INMP certification requirement to all Members in the low-vulnerability areas at this time. However, we add a certification requirement for Members in low-vulnerability areas determined to be outliers as described in section II.A.5.f below.

The requirement for all growers to submit summary data from the plans shall be precedential statewide. The regional water boards have discretion as to whether to require certification of all growers or just a subset of growers based on a risk categorization such as the low/high vulnerability distinction in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural WDRs. At a minimum, the certification requirement for all low-vulnerability growers that are determined to be outliers, consistent with the additional certification requirements stated in section II.A.5.f, is precedential statewide.

We have also specified certification language for the INMP that states that the preparer used sound irrigation and nitrogen management planning practices to develop irrigation and nitrogen application recommendations and that the recommendations are informed by applicable training for meeting the crop's agronomic needs while minimizing nitrogen loss to surface water and groundwater.<sup>103</sup> For those INMPs that the regional water boards require to be certified, the certification language shall be precedential statewide.

c. *New Metric for Nitrogen Application Management*

We make additional revisions to the nitrogen management provisions of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs in response to recommendations made by the Agricultural Expert Panel regarding methodologies for measuring appropriate nitrogen application and assessing nitrogen over-application. The purpose of the nitrogen management planning requirements in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs is two-fold. First, the INMP

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<sup>103</sup> We are sensitive to the concerns expressed by professionals certifying the INMP regarding potential liability for groundwater nitrate impacts, as well as the scope of their professional insurance coverage. With regard to liability under the Water Code, we note that consultants to dischargers are generally not considered to be dischargers of waste and therefore not liable for violations of the dischargers' waste discharge requirements. With regard to third-party liability, we direct the Central Valley Water Board and the Third Party to include specific language in the certification aimed to limit such liability. (See App. A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. B, MRP, § VI.B, INMP Component (26), Attach. E, Def., 7 & fn. 2.) The certification language additionally states that the certification does not create liability for environmental violations. We note also that the training for professionals certifying the INMP needs to continue to evolve to better incorporate the concepts related to irrigation and nitrogen management planning expressed in this order and recognized by the Expert Panel, as well as new research and innovation as appropriate.

aids Members in projecting the total nitrogen a given crop will require for a single cropping cycle. This is done by considering the nitrogen already available in soil and irrigation water, which allows a grower to plan for the appropriate amount of fertilizer to be applied to meet crop requirements. Such planning helps avoid over-application of nitrogen fertilizer that may lead to excess loss of nitrogen to groundwater or surface water. Second, the data made available to the Third Party and the Central Valley Water Board through the INMP Summary Report enables those entities to consider the range of nitrogen application values reported for similar crops and allows the Third Party to identify outliers for follow-up actions with the goal of reducing over-application.

We considered nitrogen application planning and reporting in the Central Coast Agricultural Order in Order WQ 2013-0101. In that case, we struck a requirement for Central Coast dischargers to “make progress toward” a target ratio of nitrogen application to nitrogen uptake in favor of requiring all Tier 2 and Tier 3 dischargers to report total nitrogen applied by fields or management blocks. We stated that the directed revisions “reflect[ed] our best judgment as to temporary measures required to keep work on this important public health and environmental issue moving forward” but that we would look to the Agricultural Expert Panel to “propose a comprehensive, consistent approach that will inform agricultural regulatory programs statewide.”<sup>104</sup> In reviewing the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, we now have the benefit of the Agricultural Expert Panel Report, and make revisions to the General WDRs consistent with the Panel’s recommendations on nitrogen management.

The Agricultural Expert Panel reviewed the crop uptake ratio we rejected in Order WQ 2013-0101 and the nitrogen consumption ratio in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, and considered the difficulties associated with determining field level nitrogen balances.<sup>105</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel additionally considered the recommendations of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force, including the recommendation that growers track values for total nitrogen applied to the field, actual yield, and nitrogen removed from the field through primary and secondary harvest yields.<sup>106</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel proposed a refinement on the nitrogen applied and nitrogen removed calculations as the simplest metric of good management – the multi-year ratio of nitrogen applied to the field (A) to nitrogen removed from the field (R), or the

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<sup>104</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, p. 42. The Sacramento Superior Court Ruling stated that the court “is not persuaded that an adequate Waiver necessarily must include nitrogen balancing ratios,” but questioned the State Water Board’s rationale in removing them as reportable milestones. (Sacramento Superior Court Ruling at 36.) As we discuss in this order, the Agricultural Expert Panel, building on work by the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force, proposed a metric for nitrogen balancing which we now direct all irrigated lands regulatory programs to adopt.

<sup>105</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, pp. 21-22.

<sup>106</sup> Nitrogen Tracking Task Force Report, p. 17.

A/R ratio. The nitrogen applied includes all nitrogen proactively added to a field from any source such as organic amendments, synthetic fertilizers, manure, and irrigation water). The nitrogen removed includes the nitrogen present in all harvested materials removed from the field (including any prunings, removed vegetation, etc.) plus, in the case of perennial crops, the nitrogen sequestered in the permanent wood.<sup>107</sup> Nitrogen removed is based on a measurable value of yield. Crop yield is multiplied by a coefficient determined via direct testing of the harvested materials. The nitrogen removed coefficient expresses the amount of nitrogen removed from the field for a given crop per unit of crop yield.

The multi-year A/R ratio, as proposed by the Agricultural Expert Panel and implemented in this order, is distinguished from previous ratios in two ways. First, it utilizes removed nitrogen instead of nitrogen uptake/consumption. This is an important simplification as it is based on a measurement instead of an estimate. The basis of any good performance metric is that it relies on quantitative measurements that can be performed simply and repeatedly with relative accuracy and that it is easy to understand. The uptake/consumption of nitrogen by a crop as it was employed by the previous orders was based on estimation, not a measurement. Often the published guidance regarding plant uptake/consumption has wide ranges of values from which to select, with variation from low to high values ranging as much as 40 percent. Because of these inherent complexities and inaccuracies, using uptake/consumption as part of a performance metric is problematic. Second, utilizing the measurements of applied and removed nitrogen over several years allows for variations that happen from year to year to cancel out and the carryover of nitrogen in soil to become insignificant for purposes of tracking and reporting. A multi-year or multi-cropping-cycle<sup>108</sup> approach to a performance metric related to nitrogen management serves to simplify some of the inherent complexity of trying to perform a nitrogen balance on the basis of a single cropping-cycle and justly account for nitrogen present in its many varied states within a field and crop system.

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<sup>107</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report., p. 28.

<sup>108</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel report recommends a “multi-year” A/R approach, and we are here extending that approach’s concept to use the term “multi-cropping-cycle” as an alternate description that would apply to areas where multiple crop cycles are grown in the same location within a single growing season. We believe the Expert Panel’s main concept was that it takes multiple cycles of growing crops in order to cancel out appropriate variations in nitrogen application and removal that happen between individual cycles. The Expert Panel expressed this approach as “multi-year” since it is typical that only one crop cycle happens within a year. However, there are instances within California agriculture where multiple crops with short growing periods will be grown in the same location within the span of a single year, and therefore the same variation canceling effect can be seen in a period shorter than a multi-year period. The regional water boards will need to use their discretion in how they implement the multi-cropping-cycle period to ensure that it is appropriate to the circumstances. For the purposes of this order, since the growing conditions within the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition’s area of coverage are largely one-crop cycle per year, we will continue to use the term “multi-year” to encompass both the multi-year and multi-cropping-cycle concepts.

When evaluated over multiple years, the A/R ratio provides a reliable measurement of the nitrogen left in the field. In each consecutive year, the nitrogen left in the field from the prior year, as approximated by the A/R ratio, will either be utilized by the next crop or move further down in the soil column with potential to be leached to groundwater. If, over several years, the ratio of nitrogen applied and nitrogen removed from the field remains high, a significant portion of the nitrogen applied to the field is remaining in the field and potentially reaching groundwater over time through percolation.<sup>109</sup> A high multi-year A/R ratio thus alerts the Member, the third-party group, and the regional water board to the need to address over-application at the field level. As recommended by the Agricultural Expert Panel, a multi-year A/R ratio may also provide the basis for acceptable multi-year A/R ratio target values, with reduction in the multi-year A/R ratio toward the target ratio for an area over time acting as a proxy for reduction in nitrate discharge to groundwater.<sup>110</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel Report identified a shift to using the A/R ratio in nitrogen management as critical in reducing nitrogen leaching to groundwater because the multi-year A/R ratio will provide a fairly accurate picture of the efficiency of the nitrogen application on the field and the potential over-application of nitrogen over several years. Similarly, the trend in the multi-year A/R ratio over time will inform whether practices are working to reduce the amount of nitrogen being left on the field and the corresponding potential for discharge to groundwater.

Although not considered by the Agricultural Expert Panel, we find that the multi-year A/R ratio will be rendered more informative if additionally paired with an A-R difference value (pounds of nitrogen applied minus pounds of nitrogen removed) to further tease out the magnitude of any potential nitrogen over-application, especially in cases where use of only the multi-year A/R ratio may mask significant quantities of nitrogen left in the field.<sup>111</sup> Further, the A-R difference, whether considered at the scale of a field, a township, or an alternative geographic unit, provides useful information on the magnitude of the amount of nitrogen left in the soil with potential to reach groundwater. This data in turn allow the Third Party and regional water board to better focus follow-up and management practice implementation as well as research and modeling on groundwater loading.

We find that the INMP should include recording, and the INMP Summary Report should include reporting, of the data supporting the calculation of the multi-year A/R ratio and A-R

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<sup>109</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*, pp. iii, 24, 38.

<sup>111</sup> For example, a grower applying 75 pounds of nitrogen and removing 50 has the same A/R ratio of 1.5 as a grower applying 450 pounds of nitrogen and removing 300. But the nitrogen left in the field by the second grower is six times the magnitude of the nitrogen left in the field by the first grower.

difference.<sup>112</sup> We revise the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs to eliminate reporting on the nitrogen consumption ratio and to instead require recording and reporting of the AR data. We will require Members to determine and report nitrogen applied and crop yield.<sup>113</sup> Based on this data, we will require the Third Party to calculate annual A/R ratio and A-R difference values as well as a three-year running average, where feasible,<sup>114</sup> for these values for each Member and for each field. The Third Party shall communicate the calculated values back to the Members.

We specify the minimum requirements for the templates for the INMP and the INMP Summary Report as revisions to the General WDRs. Templates may be proposed by the Third Party and used with approval from the Central Valley Water Board.

The requirement for calculation of annual and multi-year<sup>115</sup> A/R ratio and A-R difference parameters for each grower by field<sup>116</sup> shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide, except as described below. The regional water boards shall retain discretion as to the division of responsibilities among the growers, third parties, and regional water boards for determination of the values, provided that the values are known to both the growers and the third parties.

We recognize that there are some circumstances in which the burden of reporting R may not be justified or may pose unique challenges because of difficulties in measuring yield, or where specialized outreach activities in multiple languages are warranted. It may be appropriate to allow additional time in these circumstances for development of alternatives and multilingual outreach. The regional water boards shall have discretion to determine that some or all growers in the following categories will have alternative requirements as specified:

1. Growers that (1) operate in areas with evidence of no or very limited nitrogen impacts to surface water or groundwater, (2) have minimal nitrogen inputs, and (3) have difficulty measuring yield, may report the A value only. The regional

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<sup>112</sup> We refer herein to “AR data” to encompass the multi-year A/R ratio and all data required to be reported in support of that ratio, including the A-R difference.

<sup>113</sup> At this early stage in adoption of the AR data reporting, we find it is appropriate to ask Members to report only measured values and not values that require calculation. However, we will require the Third Party to report individual A/R ratio and A-R difference values back to the Members so that the Members have the benefit of the information these values provide.

<sup>114</sup> We recognize that the boundaries of fields may change from year to year and that certain growers may not grow crops three consecutive years or the same crops for three consecutive years, but this level of imperfection in reporting does not detract from the overall usefulness of the data. In cases like these, the Third Party will be expected to make a good faith effort to report the available data in a meaningful way.

<sup>115</sup> See footnote 108.

<sup>116</sup> See footnote 88.



water board may exercise its discretion as to when, if at all, these growers will begin reporting R. An example of this grower category could be irrigated pastures.

2. Diversified socially disadvantaged growers, as defined by the Farmer Equity Act of 2017,<sup>117</sup> with (1) a maximum total acreage of 45 acres, (2) gross annual sales of less than \$350,000, and (3) a crop diversity greater than 0.5 crops per acre (one crop for every two acres), may initially report the A value only. The regional water board may exercise its discretion as to when these growers will begin reporting R and may accept alternative methodologies for estimating R. The regional water board may exercise its discretion as to whether these growers must receive targeted self-certification training.
3. Growers with (1) a maximum total acreage of 20 acres, and (2) a crop diversity greater than 0.5 crops per acre (one crop for every two acres), may initially report the A value only. The regional water board may exercise its discretion as to when these growers will begin reporting R and may accept alternative methodologies for estimating R. This category would include, for example, small growers with multiple crops that sell their crops primarily at farmers' markets.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VII.D; Attachment B, MRP, section VI.B.

*d. Requirement for Third Party to Determine Nitrogen Removed Coefficients*

One short-term challenge to using the multi-year A/R ratio and A-R difference is that certain information and data gaps need to be filled. There is insufficient information currently available to calculate the R value for most crops. This data needs to be gathered over time. At this time, it is not a common practice for a grower to track the amount of nitrogen removed during harvest. Terminology currently used for nitrogen application recommendations focuses on crop nitrogen uptake or crop nitrogen need with the goal of maximizing crop yield. Use of the multi-year A/R ratio and A-R difference thus requires a change in nitrogen application recommendations and terminology.<sup>118</sup>

Research is required to determine crop removal values. The Agricultural Expert Panel recommended research by third-party groups, commodity groups, and institutions to

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<sup>117</sup> Food & Agr. Code, §512, subd. (b).

<sup>118</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, pp. 27-28.

develop the data.<sup>119</sup> Such research would determine values for how many pounds of nitrogen are contained in a unit of crop yield (e.g. lbs-N/ton of almonds). This can be expressed as a coefficient, that, when multiplied with a crop harvest, will estimate the nitrogen removed<sup>120</sup>. The research will ultimately need to be completed for all harvested crop materials, including secondary, or complementary, harvests (i.e. prunings, removed vegetation, etc.).

We task the Third Party, in collaboration with the other Central Valley third parties, with conducting the appropriate testing or research to develop the relevant coefficients for calculating nitrogen removed by crop. We direct the Third Party to publish nitrogen removed coefficients for crops that cover 95% of acreage within the General WDRs' boundaries in time for use with the INMP Summary Reports due 1 March 2021 and 99% of the acreage in time for use with those due 1 March 2023 (with estimated coefficients based on similar crops being acceptable for crops covering the remaining 1%).<sup>121</sup> In addition to the other Central Valley third parties, we encourage the Third Party to work with University of California Cooperative Extension, CDFA, commodity organizations and others in developing the coefficients. The coefficients shall be approved by the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer, in consultation with State Water Board staff, following an opportunity for public review and comment. The initial set of coefficients are not expected to be precise values and will likely require refinement over time, and ultimately will still represent estimates. Once approved, the Third Party must use those values to retroactively calculate the A/R ratio and A-R difference, both past annual reported values, and the three-year running average for the A/R ratio based on the three prior years.

The requirement for use of coefficients for conversion of yield to nitrogen removed values shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide. The regional water boards will have discretion to determine the number of crops to be analyzed and the timeline for development of the coefficients. The regional water boards must approve the coefficients in consultation with State Water Board staff, following an opportunity for public review and comment. In developing the coefficients, the regional water boards may rely on their own research, on

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<sup>119</sup> *Id.*, p.40.

<sup>120</sup> The amount of nitrogen determined by the coefficient may also include parts of the harvest that are not weighed or not generally reported as part of the crop yield, such as nut hulls. Coefficients may also be developed for use where harvest totals are measured by means other than weight, such as by box of produce, lugs, bins, bales, or other forms of volumetric measure.

<sup>121</sup> Published values for many crop coefficients are already available in the scientific literature and others are expected to become available in the near future. We acknowledge that some of these coefficients warrant further refinement, such as potentially based on crop varieties or regional characteristics, but we encourage the Third Party to start using available crop coefficients now to start calculating R values and to perform relevant analyses prior to the 2021 and 2023 deadlines, and work to refine the coefficients over time.

published values, on the research of other entities, and on coefficients approved by other regional water boards. The regional water boards may also require the third parties to develop the coefficients in the first instance.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attachment B, MRP, Section V.D.

e. Expansion of Reporting Requirements

i. Rationale for Field-Level Nitrogen Application Data Reporting to the Central Valley Water Board

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require Members to report nitrogen application data in the INMP Summary Report that is submitted to the Third Party; the Third Party in turn aggregates that data and reports it to the Central Valley Water Board in a manner that characterizes the input, uptake, and loss of the nitrogen application by specific crops, but summarizes the data at the township level, rather than by Member or field.<sup>122</sup> Because the multi-year A/R ratio will provide a concrete, measurable, and reliable benchmark by which progress in reducing groundwater nitrate impacts can be determined, we find that the data should be reported to the Central Valley Water Board by field (although, as we discuss in more detail later, we allow for the field-level data to be reported with anonymous identifiers, rather than Member name or location).

Similar to the aggregated data reporting for management practices, the aggregated reporting of nitrogen application data required in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs allows the Central Valley Water Board to analyze trends in nitrogen application. The aggregation and analysis by the Third Party is thus an important task that leads to valuable information. There are nevertheless compelling reasons for the non-aggregated nitrogen application data to also be reported to the Central Valley Water Board at a field level.

Most significantly, access to the full field-level data set will allow the Central Valley Water Board to develop the multi-year A/R ratio target values that were recommended by the Agricultural Expert Panel. As multi-year A/R ratio data becomes available over the next few years, we direct the Central Valley Water Board to determine acceptable ranges for multi-year A/R ratio target values by crop. (We lay out our specific direction to the Central Valley Water

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<sup>122</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. B, MRP, § V.C, Report Component (17), p.23. Aggregated data reporting may, however, under some circumstances obscure the on-the-ground reality of how much aggregate nitrogen is being left in the fields because of the averaging effect of reporting fields with over-application along with fields with under-application of nitrogen. For example, the averaging may suggest a net effect of zero, whereas in reality significant nitrogen is left in the field in the first instance, and likely crop failure in the second instance does not act to mitigate the impacts from the nitrogen left in the first field.

Board in the sections that follow.) In describing the assumptions underlying its recommendations, the Agricultural Expert Panel stated that, while there is currently insufficient information to assign target values to the multi-year A/R ratio, “[i]t will be a regulatory goal to learn what the ranges of these multi-year ratios are for multiple crops and situations, in order to define acceptable target values” and that “[i]t will be a regulatory goal to reduce the average value of this A/R metric in regions.”<sup>123</sup> Development of acceptable multi-year A/R ratio target values is warranted because the multi-year A/R ratio is the most reliable measure of the potential for nitrogen to reach groundwater that is currently available to us. The AR data captures a particular set of management practices that require implementation at the individual operation and field level. However, the multi-year A/R ratio, analyzed in concert with the data for the A-R difference, additionally provides information on the amount of nitrogen in the soil that could potentially reach the groundwater. In the absence of an extensive – and expensive – shallow groundwater monitoring network, the multi-year AR data is currently the most promising method for determining whether implemented management practices are leading to a meaningful reduction in the nitrogen that has the potential to reach groundwater. Given this dual purpose served by the AR data, and given the magnitude of the problems due to nitrate impacts in groundwater, multi-year A/R ratio target values are expected to provide a valuable tool in irrigated lands regulatory programs for fair and even-handed consideration of nitrogen application practices. We find that this consideration should be employed to inform Members’ practices on a field basis, in addition to a township or broader basis.<sup>124</sup>

An additional reason we direct the Third Party to submit field-level data to the Central Valley Water Board is that it allows for appropriate oversight by the Board. Access to the full field level data set enables the Central Valley Water Board to verify the accuracy and completeness of the Third Party’s calculations and analyses. It also allows the Board to exercise reasonable oversight to confirm that the appropriate Members have been identified as outliers for follow up by the Third Party and, if warranted, the Central Valley Water Board.

Finally, the data set will have uses beyond the short-term needs of the water boards; for example, researchers may use the data to conduct studies advancing the science

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<sup>123</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 24.

<sup>124</sup> As the agency with primary oversight over water quality in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, the Central Valley Water Board is the appropriate party to develop the acceptable target values; furthermore, in developing the target values, we expect the Central Valley Water Board to analyze data gathered through irrigated lands regulatory programs throughout the region, not just data gathered through the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, and to collaborate with other regional water boards to share and compare data with support from the State Water Board. Field studies are not a substitute for access to a complete data set of field-level A/R ratio data. A field study may result in determination of an acceptable A/R ratio target value for a specific set of conditions, but cannot anticipate the variability in conditions throughout a region.

supporting future developments of agricultural practices that support development and refinement of regulatory programs, environmental justice groups may use the township-level data to assist in planning for areas that may need drinking water assistance in the future, and local agencies may use the data in groundwater quality management efforts.

We recognize that the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force recommended that data related to nitrogen application be aggregated prior to being reported to the regional water board.<sup>125</sup> However, the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force issued its recommendation before the Agricultural Expert Panel was established, so the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force could not have anticipated that the Agricultural Expert Panel Report would recommend that nitrogen application data be used to develop acceptable multi-year A/R ratio target values. As explained above, in order to develop the target values, the Central Valley Water Board needs access to the field-level data. The Nitrogen Tracking Task Force was working with a different metric, a nitrogen mass balance, which is reported annually rather than on a multi-year basis, is complicated by uncertainty associated with how much nitrogen residual in the soil has the potential to percolate to groundwater, and is therefore not suitable as a performance measure. Because the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force's proposed nitrogen mass balance approach would not have been used to develop a performance measure, it would not have been necessary for the regional water boards to receive field-level data related to the nitrogen mass balance. Even so, the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force acknowledged that, "if access to more fine-grained data is needed for quality control or problem-solving purposes, the Water Boards can reach down to access growers' original raw data at field scale"<sup>126</sup> and further that the regional water boards are "responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the data they receive and may consider developing an audit mechanism."<sup>127</sup> The Agricultural Expert Panel found that the AR data needed to be tracked at a field level to be meaningful,<sup>128</sup> but the Panel did not specifically speak to whether the field-level data should be reported to a third-party group or to the regional water board. As we discussed in the previous section, the multi-year A/R ratio does not suffer from the uncertainties of previously proposed metrics; and, since the multi-year A/R ratio is less susceptible to misinterpretation or misrepresentation, the argument in favor of providing only aggregated data is less compelling. In any case, anonymous reporting of field-level nitrogen application data, as discussed in the next section, ameliorates some of the

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<sup>125</sup> Nitrogen Tracking Task Force Report, pp. 15-16.

<sup>126</sup> *Id.*, p. 19.

<sup>127</sup> *Id.*, p. 21.

<sup>128</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, pp. 37-38.

concerns expressed by the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force that led to the recommendation of aggregated data reporting to the Regional Board, including the imprecise nature of the reported data and Member confidence in the reporting process.<sup>129</sup>

We also note here that we are not persuaded that the INMP Summary Report data constitutes proprietary business information. In Order WQ-2013-0101 we similarly rejected the argument made by some petitioners that total nitrogen applied is sensitive proprietary information not appropriate for reporting and deferred to the protections for sensitive business information created by the Legislature in the Water Code and the Public Records Act, rather than carve out additional exceptions within the permit.<sup>130</sup> In that case, we required each discharger to report total nitrogen applied directly to the Central Coast Water Board and noted that the timing and frequency of nitrogen applications, rather than data regarding the total amount, was more likely to implicate competitive business practices. The additional information required to be reported here, i.e. the nitrogen removed from the field, does not significantly alter the balance that we must strike between the need for transparency and measurable benchmarks on the one hand, and the need for the agricultural community to protect trade secrets and other sensitive information on the other hand.<sup>131</sup> We note that the INMP Summary Report contains only specific, limited data that is necessary for use by the Central Valley Water Board for the purposes described above. We are not requiring that the entire INMP be submitted, nor are we requiring that other planning and management documents that Members may develop and use for operational purposes be submitted. Our purpose in requiring submission of field-level AR data to the Central Valley Water Board is to address, in an even-handed, data-driven manner, a crucial water quality and public health issue – nitrates in groundwater – by minimizing over-application of nitrogen to the fields,

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<sup>129</sup> We note that our direction maintains the majority of the recommendations of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force. The Agricultural Expert Panel only modified two reporting items as recommended by the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force. The Panel eliminated reporting of residual soil nitrogen credits and added reporting of irrigation method. In addition to these two items, our direction departs from the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force's recommendations primarily in the requirement to submit field-level, in addition to aggregated, data to the regional water board.

<sup>130</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, p. 45, fn.103; see also *id.*, p. 28. The relevant code provisions are Water Code, section 13267, subdivision (b)(2), Government Code section 6254, subdivision (k), and Evidence Code section 1060. Our conclusions as to how to address proprietary information in the context of an agricultural regulatory program were not questioned by the Sacramento Superior Court Ruling. We also note that section IX.4 (p.36) of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs establishes a process by which a Member may assert that all or a portion of a report is exempt from public disclosure.

<sup>131</sup> Under Order WQ-2013-0101, we limited nitrogen reporting to total nitrogen applied because we found that the ratio otherwise required to be reported in the Central Coast Agricultural Order relied on speculative values for crop nitrogen uptake (p. 49). As we have discussed above, the A/R ratio does not suffer from the same deficiency; while development of the appropriate coefficients for calculation for nitrogen removed from the field will require further data gathering and research, once the values are available, the multi-year A/R ratio is expected to be a reasonably accurate representation of nitrogen remaining on the field.

while at the same time preserving Members' need to manage their operations in accordance with confidential business practices and determinations.

In sum, we find that field-level data should be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board for the reasons we have articulated: to support development of acceptable multi-year A/R ratio target values for crops grown in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, to inform whether implemented nitrogen management practices are reducing the nitrogen that may potentially reach groundwater, and to allow for appropriate oversight over the Third Party's response to the data.

ii. *Data Sets Required to be Reported from the Third Party to the Central Valley Water Board*

While we direct reporting of field-level data, rather than aggregated data, to the Central Valley Water Board, at this early stage in the development of the multi-year AR data framework, we will not require the individual field data to be routinely identified by name or location. We are satisfied that the goals of the program can be carried out effectively if field-level data is linked to anonymous identifiers, with the Third Party withholding name and location data, at least in the early stages of the program. We heard extensive testimony in these proceedings from third parties and growers stressing that the continuation of a third-party framework in irrigated lands regulatory programs depends in part on an expectation of privacy and confidentiality for growers who prefer to interface with a third party rather than the regulatory agency. As we described in Section II.A., we believe and emphasize that third parties serve an extensive set of functions for growers beyond the maintenance of confidentiality, and we are not persuaded that the maintenance of confidentiality, in and of itself, is a legitimate goal of a regulatory program that must have transparency and accountability to the public.

The Water Boards' irrigated lands regulatory programs may be the most robust in the nation, but they are still relatively new compared to more mature programs like the federal Clean Water Act's industrial storm water program<sup>132</sup> administered by the Water Boards. The irrigated lands regulatory programs are also distinguishable from most other programs that regulate the discharge of pollutants in that the production of crops typically requires the beneficial application of nutrients and pesticides to land, but these are also two of the pollutants that are of primary concern for water quality pollution from agriculture. With traditional regulatory programs,

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<sup>132</sup> A complaint of some of the environmental groups is that not all of the data collected by the growers will be reported to the Water Boards. We note that even under a mature regulatory program like the industrial storm water program, the dischargers are required to collect and maintain more data than they are required to report to the Water Boards.

by contrast, stringent pollutant source control or even prohibiting the discharge of the pollutants of concern does not directly interfere with the underlying regulated activity. Finally, many growers have varying levels of business sophistication, limited experience with regulatory programs, and a reluctance to disclose data that they have never before disclosed to the public. Nonetheless, as the next major step in the evolution of our irrigated lands regulatory programs, this order requires growers to collect and report more data than ever before.

Therefore, we will proceed cautiously at this time and not require more information than we find is necessary to effectively manage the irrigated lands regulatory program and provide the public with the essential assurance that we are doing so. As a regulatory entity, we are cognizant that we should be judicious in exercising our regulatory authority only as necessary by only collecting that information that we believe is necessary to fulfill our mandates. We will periodically evaluate whether the framework we set out here is, in fact, sufficient to enable the oversight and transparency necessary to ensure measurable progress toward achieving water quality requirements while balancing the privacy concerns expressed by growers. We may require disclosure of name and location data in the future if we find that the framework we adopt here is not functioning properly. (See requirement in Section II.A.11 for periodic Central Valley Water Board reporting to the State Water Board on this question.) For now, however, we expect that the value of a fully-functioning third party will more than offset the limitations that are associated with receiving data that is largely anonymous.

The Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs will require submission by the Third Party of three data sets to the Central Valley Water Board. Examples of the three data sets are attached to this order as sample data Tables 2, 3, and 4, solely for illustrative purposes.

The first data set associates each field with a Member-specific anonymous identifier, the Anonymous Member ID discussed in the section on the Farm Evaluation, and displays the crop grown, the annual A/R ratio, the annual A-R difference, and the three-year A/R ratio, as well as some of the underlying data, on a per acre basis. This data set facilitates comparison of the reported A/R ratio and A-R difference for Members growing the same crop. The data set allows the Central Valley Water Board to verify the Third Party's calculations and analyses with regard to Member performance, and specifically to verify that the Third Party is identifying and following up with Members that are applying nitrogen at substantially higher levels than other Members growing the same crop. Over several years, the data set additionally provides trend data to ensure that Members are adjusting nitrogen application in response to follow up and training efforts. Table 2 and Figure 1 are illustrations of this data set.



The second data set associates each field with a location by assigning one or more anonymous location-identifiers tied to the APN for the parcel(s) that the field partially or completely overlays (Anonymous APN ID). Since APNs are not coextensive with fields, each field may be associated with more than one Anonymous APN ID and each Anonymous APN ID may be associated with more than one field. The location of each field is also tied to its underlying groundwater subbasin identified in Department of Water Resources' Bulletin 118. This data set also displays the crop grown, the annual A/R ratio, the annual A-R difference, the three-year A/R ratio, as well as some of the underlying data for those numbers as above, on a per acre basis. The purpose of this data set is to track nitrogen application data and its potential impacts with regard to a physical location, where Member data obscures such impacts because Members may be changing the fields they operate from year to year. This data set allows the Central Valley Water Board and stakeholders to flag situations where the A/R ratio and/or A-R difference may be significantly higher than other locations in the short term and higher than acceptable ranges of multi-year A/R ratio values in the long term, providing an indicator of potential nitrate impacts to underlying groundwater. The Central Valley Water Board can then ensure that the Third Party is responding appropriately and that the values associated with the location show a trend toward acceptable nitrogen application values. Table 3 and Figure 2 are illustrations of this data set.

The third data set does not utilize anonymous identifiers, but aggregates the data at a township level, similar to the current reporting under the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. This data set sets out A-R difference data by crop aggregated at the township level, average A/R ratio data by crop at the township level, and some of the underlying data by crop again aggregated at the township level. The purpose of this data set is to provide researchers and other interested persons township-level data to facilitate trend analysis and nitrogen loading modeling. Table 4 is an illustration of this data set.

Taken together, the data reporting set forth above enhances efficacy and accountability, while preserving many benefits of data collection and assimilation by the Third Party. The State Water Board finds that use of the anonymous identifiers and aggregated data as outlined here and set out in the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs retains the privacy protections of the existing order. At the same time, the revisions provide a more detailed set of field-specific data available to the Central Valley Water Board for oversight of the program and provide more transparency and assurance of progress for interested persons outside of the regulatory agency.

In particular, we anticipate that the anonymous field-level data is sufficient for the Central Valley Water Board to verify that implemented management practices are making

progress toward achievement of the water quality goals of the program. Where the Central Valley Water Board finds its oversight function requires a more proactive effort, we note that the Central Valley Water Board may at any time request the names and locations corresponding to the anonymous identifiers.<sup>133</sup> This option allows the Board to effectively follow up with individual Members where the data indicates that insufficient progress is being made by the Third Party's follow-up efforts with a Member. The Central Valley Water Board also has the discretion to direct the Third Party to segregate the anonymous data into smaller geographic subsets where warranted. For example, if there are repeated surface water exceedances in a single water body, the Central Valley Water Board could direct the Third Party to report the management practices and nitrogen application data for only those Members who are upstream of the exceedances. We note that environmental groups and others are free to request that the Central Valley Water Board obtain this type of targeted data from the Third Party. We expect that the Central Valley Water Board will be judicious in determining whether to grant the requests. Of course, all data obtained by the Central Valley Water Board will be subject to public disclosure in accordance with the Public Records Act.

In section II.A.11 of this order, we set out our direction to the Central Valley Water Board on how the submitted data shall be utilized.

In addition to submitting the underlying data, we direct the Third Party to evaluate the data, providing comparisons of the A/R ratio and A-R difference by crop type, and within crop type, by irrigation method, soil condition, and farming operation size and other appropriate evaluations as directed by the Executive Officer.<sup>134</sup>

The Third Party is directed to report the data sets set out above in accordance with the schedule set out in Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.

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<sup>133</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § X, p. 36.

<sup>134</sup> Under the existing Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, the Third Party aggregates the data for each crop in each township and provides a "box and whisker plot" of the distribution of grower nitrogen application data for each crop and township combination. Our review of the reports submitted with this aggregation framework concluded that the box and whisker plot distribution did not yield any valuable insight into variation of nitrogen application practices across townships because the data was equally varied across townships without any clear township-level patterns. In addition, as explained in the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Analysis for the 2016 Crop Year (see pages 41-42, available at [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water\\_issues/irrigated\\_lands/water\\_quality/coalitions/east\\_sanjoaquin/ground\\_water/2017\\_0630\\_esj\\_nmp\\_sum\\_analysis.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/water_quality/coalitions/east_sanjoaquin/ground_water/2017_0630_esj_nmp_sum_analysis.pdf) (as of Jan. 31, 2018)), the approach did not result in a meaningful method of identifying outlier growers. For these reasons, we have eliminated the requirement to continue to report it as required by the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. We find it more useful for a distribution to be produced for the Third Party's region as a whole for purposes of determining the range of application practices and determining outliers. Township-level data is still very valuable for purposes of determining township-level nitrogen loading, but that is precisely the data generated by Table 4 described in this section.

The requirement for field-level AR data submission to the regional water board consistent with the data sets and analysis of those data sets described in this section shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide. The regional water boards have the discretion to require additional data related to irrigation and nitrogen management. For third-party programs only, the AR data shall be submitted with anonymous identifiers. With regard to the aggregated dataset, the regional water board is not limited to aggregating the data at the township level, but may choose a smaller or larger area unit based on region-specific and program-specific considerations.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VIII.D, Attachment B, MRP, section V.D, section V.E, Report Component (17).

We note that there will not be anonymity associated with the data under our precedence where a regional water board is directly regulating growers and directly receiving grower data, such as in the current program in the Central Coast region.<sup>135</sup> The regional water board also does not have the benefit of a third party to work with growers for follow-up and outreach and must work directly with growers to ensure their adoption of appropriate management practices to address any over-application that the data may be indicating. We may find that the coalition-based approach in the Central Valley region and elsewhere ultimately results in better water quality because of the role played by the third party in working with growers as described in section II.A, including the third party's familiarity with its members and ability to assist the regional water boards by providing technical assistance and training to those members. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the different irrigated lands regulatory programs throughout the state, we will be directing all of the regional water boards to provide program updates, including progress regarding the precedential aspects of this order, to the State Water Board on a triennial basis. These updates will also include the regional water boards' efforts to ensure that all growers are enrolled in the agricultural regulatory program, as this is a critical means of ensuring an even playing field for all growers. Irrigated lands regulatory programs require high levels of participation to succeed, so ensuring high enrollment levels must be a high priority for all the regional water boards. The updates will also include discussion of costs incurred by the regional water boards, the third parties, and individual growers, make recommendations for streamlining

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<sup>135</sup> Nothing in this order is intended to preclude Central Coast growers and the Central Coast Water Board from agreeing to adopt a third party program that carries out the full functions contemplated by this order and is bound by the precedential direction in this order.

reporting requirements, and report on progress on identifying and addressing outliers and water quality improvement, and other items specified by State Water Board staff. We will consider establishing a neutral panel to evaluate the programs after the second triennial program update.

*f. Required Follow-Up*

We further revise the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs to require specific actions of the Third Party and of the Member when a Member is determined to be an outlier based on reported AR data.

Outliers will be identified by the Third Party annually based on the INMP Summary Report data submitted for that particular year. Eventually, it is our expectation that outliers will be determined with reference to the ranges for the multi-year A/R ratio and A-R difference target values developed by the Third Party and the Central Valley Water Board. At this early stage, we recognize that the limited data available, as well as the variation in conditions from field to field and from year to year, mean that any definition of outliers is imperfect. We will not specifically define the term in Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, but will direct the Third Party to propose an approach and the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer to approve that approach, after public notice and comment, that defines a set of Members with whom the Third Party will follow up. The Third Party may choose to apply that approach annually for a period of years to determine outliers, or the Third Party may propose and seek approval of a different approach each year. Our view of the data collected so far by the Third Party indicates that different methods of assigning outliers may be needed as different crops are considered, as there appears to be no single approach that is appropriate across all crop types. Because we encourage growers to use the nitrates already present in groundwater to fertilize crops and reduce their use of other sources of nitrogen accordingly, a Member will not be identified as an outlier based on high AR data if the only application of nitrogen is in their irrigation water.

The Third Party must inform the set of outlier Members approved by the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer that they are potentially over-applying nitrogen to their fields. Following receipt of notification, these Members, including Members in low-vulnerability areas previously exempt from the INMP certification requirements, must either attend additional INMP self-certification training in person or work with an irrigation and nitrogen management plan specialist for certification of the next INMP prepared following notification. These Members must also report on the next annual INMP Summary Report that they were notified as outliers for reported AR data. The INMP Summary Report will then be expected to reflect additional or improved management practices implemented to address potential over-application of nitrogen.

We continue to believe that the Third Party is best suited (both in terms of expertise and in terms of developed relationships) for the role and responsibility of follow up with Members to address any potential over-application. The Third Party is the lead in outreach and education and as part of that responsibility will be expected to follow up with Members who are outliers for reported AR data. If Third Party follow up does not yield sufficient progress in reducing sources of contamination or improving water quality in the coming years, the Central Valley Water Board should reevaluate this approach and consider adding to the program a trigger, such as three consecutive years of high A/R ratios, that will require non-anonymous reporting of that Member to the Central Valley Water Board.

The requirement for the third party to follow up with and provide training for AR data outliers and for identification of repeated outliers as set out above shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide, except that the regional water boards will be responsible for the follow up and training for irrigated lands regulatory programs that directly regulate growers without a third-party intermediary.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section IV.C.8.c, section VII.D; Attachment B, MRP, section V.D, section VI.B, INMP Component (3).

## **6. Recordkeeping Requirements**

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require that the Third Party shall maintain any reports and records required for a period of five years. We revise the General WDRs to require maintenance of the reports and records for ten years and to require the Third Party to back up the field-specific data submitted on the Farm Evaluations, the INMP Summary Reports, and the MPIRs in a secure offsite location managed by an independent entity. This requirement is needed because it is critical that the Central Valley Water Board have the ability to access outlier Members' names and locations if warranted at a future date.

This recordkeeping requirement shall be precedential statewide for all third-party irrigated lands regulatory programs.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section X.

## **7. Surface Water Quality Monitoring**

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs do not require water quality monitoring of discharges coming off the farms, but require monitoring in the receiving waters. The watershed is divided into six zones. Two "core" sites and several "represented" sites are designated in each zone. According to the General WDRs, the represented sites are sites with

characteristics similar to the core sites such that a water quality issue detected at the core site may be an indication of a similar issue at a represented site. The two core sites are continuously monitored on an alternating basis. An exceedance at a core site triggers the requirement to monitor at the represented sites within the same zone.<sup>136</sup>

The Environmental Petitioners argue that the surface water quality monitoring is ineffective as a feedback mechanism that can tie management practice implementation with the water quality goals of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. We took up the question of the appropriate approach to surface water quality monitoring in State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101. The Central Coast Agricultural Order incorporates both regional receiving water monitoring and, for Tier III discharges, edge-of-farm discharge monitoring. In Order WQ 2013-0101, we declined to revise the surface water discharge monitoring requirements but we also expressed our concerns with the approach:

We are skeptical that the Central Coast Water Board has adopted the monitoring program best suited to meet the purpose of identifying and following up on high-risk discharges. The variability in the composition of end-of-field discharges makes it difficult to characterize such discharges through sampling at a limited number of locations and in a limited number of sampling events. Further, even though the surface water discharge monitoring requirements are targeted to the highest risk dischargers, problem discharges and areas are likely to be found outside of the influence of farms operated by Tier 3 dischargers. The better approach may be to rely on receiving water monitoring data and to require the third party monitoring groups administering receiving water monitoring to pursue exceedances with increasingly focused monitoring in upstream channels designed to narrow down and identify the sources of the exceedances.<sup>137</sup>

We presented the question of the appropriate surface water quality monitoring framework to the Agricultural Expert Panel. The Agricultural Expert Panel agreed that monitoring of surface water discharges from individual fields or farms is costly and complicated, as well as subject to serious challenges in identifying the appropriate timing for periodic sampling and

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<sup>136</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. B, MRP, § III.A, pp. 3-6. The Third Party or the Executive Officer may additionally designated "Special Project Sites" to be monitored as part of a SQMP or to address a TMDL. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>137</sup> State Water Board Order 2013-0101, pp. 37-38. The Sacramento Superior Court Ruling stated with regard to surface water quality monitoring: "Petitioners have failed to persuade the court that surface discharge monitoring of all discharges is required –or even possible given that there are approximately 435,000 acres of irrigated land and approximately 3000 agricultural operations generating discharges of waste." (Sacramento Superior Court Ruling at 41.) Although the Ruling held that the State Water Board had struck an appropriate balance in requiring individual surface discharge monitoring for Tier 3 dischargers only, the court did not hold that discharge monitoring for high risk discharges is a required element of a surface water receiving monitoring program. To the contrary, the court held that "both the Water Code and the NPS policy expressly allow the use of cooperative or watershed-based monitoring. . . . While individual monitoring might provide more information, it would be complicated, costly, and would threaten to overwhelm Regional Board staff." (*Ibid.*)

coordinating with shifting field crew operations, pesticide applications, and sediment runoff events, and with schedules for lab operations. The Agricultural Expert Panel Report stated:

For surface water issues, the Panel recommends water quality monitoring of receiving water and a clear understanding of the watershed hydrology. Sufficient samples should be taken in the watershed streams to detect if problems do indeed exist. The sampling should be of sufficient density (spatially and temporally) to identify general locations of possible pollution. This is recommended rather than sampling at each discharge point. For example, a single measurement point at the downstream discharge of a very large watershed would be insufficient. When/if problems are identified, sampling should move upstream to locate the source of the problem.<sup>138</sup>

We continue to believe that receiving water monitoring is generally preferable to field-specific surface water discharge monitoring in irrigated lands regulatory programs for the reasons articulated by us in Order WQ-2013-0101 and by the Agricultural Expert Panel. Receiving water monitoring is a reliable and effective methodology for identifying water quality issues without resorting to more costly end-of-field measurements.

This notwithstanding, having now carefully reviewed the particular surface water quality monitoring framework established in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, we believe the question of whether the monitoring is “of sufficient density (spatially and temporally) to identify general locations of possible pollution” should be evaluated as part of an independent peer review.

We have two questions regarding this surface water quality monitoring framework: First, is there information to support the premise that when the core site and the represented sites have similar hydrology, crop type, land use, soil type, and rainfall, and are assumed to be managed similarly, a water quality problem at a core site would be indicative of an exceedance at a represented site? Our review of the data found monitoring at represented sites can reveal exceedances for a different set of constituents than those found at the core sampling sites, even where the physical characteristics are similar. We agree the monitoring program approved by the Central Valley Water Board is meant to also capture human behavior in management practices, beyond just physical site characteristics, but the data may suggest that there is enough variability in field-by-field practices to yield significantly varied monitoring results from core sites to represented sites.

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<sup>138</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 41.

Second, are the core and represented monitoring sites, collectively, of sufficient spatial density or distribution<sup>139</sup> to be able to reasonably identify exceedances throughout the watershed? We recognize that water quality monitoring at core and represented sites is supplemented by additional, potentially upstream, monitoring under an SQMP, when triggered. But the problem is that a SQMP may not be triggered until an exceedance is detected at a core or represented site, and water quality exceedances upstream or in an adjacent portion of the watershed to that of the core and represented sites may go undetected in the interim.<sup>140</sup>

The Nonpoint Source Policy does not require any particular framework for monitoring and does not necessarily even require comprehensive ambient monitoring. But the nonpoint source implementation program must “include sufficient feedback mechanisms so that the [regional water board], dischargers, and the public can determine whether the program is achieving its stated purpose(s), or whether additional or different [management practices] or other actions are required.”<sup>141</sup>

We are cognizant of the argument, advanced by the Central Valley Water Board and the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, that the current surface water quality monitoring provisions of the General WDRs reflect a studied decision by the Central Valley Water Board to balance the Third Party’s monitoring costs with the need to increase funds for management practice implementation. At least in one respect, this compromise appears to have some merit. In Order WQ-2013-0101, as quoted above, we stated that an effective receiving water monitoring program must pursue exceedances in upstream channels and narrow down the source of the exceedances. The General WDRs eschew this framework in favor of requiring management practice improvements by all Members identified as potential sources of discharges in the affected watershed. This approach may be reasonable in the first couple of iterations of attempts to correct exceedances, although identification of individual sources should be required if improvements are not sufficient.<sup>142</sup> In other respects, we are not certain whether the balance between monitoring on the one hand and increased funding for management practice implementation on the other hand has been appropriately struck. The General WDRs must

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<sup>139</sup> The Third Party indicated in comments that there were a limited number of monitoring sites with public access. This is an artificial limitation because access to the growers’ private roads for access to water bodies to conduct surface water quality monitoring is a reasonable requirement for membership in any third party-based program.

<sup>140</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § VIII.H.1, p. 33.

<sup>141</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> We note that the Agricultural Expert Panel also set an expectation that monitoring would move upstream to identify sources as needed. (Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 41.)



ensure that existing and developing water quality problems are in fact detected and subsequently corrected and must provide for sufficient density of monitoring to achieve that purpose.

To address our questions and those raised by interested persons, we will remand the surface water quality monitoring component of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs to the Central Valley Water Board. Although we have concerns as to the sufficiency of the monitoring, we also recognize that Water Code section 13267 specifically directs that “[t]he burden, including costs of [monitoring] reports shall bear a reasonable relationship to the need for the report and the benefits to be obtained from the reports.” In designing such a landscape-scale surface water quality monitoring program, it is necessary to have a firm understanding of the variety of both the discharges and the surface receiving waters and careful judgment in order to strike an appropriate balance between the costs and benefits of different monitoring designs. We believe the relevant determinations should be made at the regional water board level in the first instance, after being advised by an expert panel. We direct the Central Valley Water Board to implement a public external expert review process to evaluate the existing monitoring and assessment framework and make recommendations for improvements or corrections if needed. The experts shall consider the competing evaluations of the current surface water quality monitoring program submitted to the State Water Board by the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition and by California Coastkeeper Alliance et al., as well as any other critiques, evaluations, or other comments submitted during the experts’ public review process. The Central Valley Water Board shall convene the experts within eighteen months of the adoption of this order. The experts shall file their report within a year, unless the Executive Director finds that there is good cause for the proceedings to take longer than a year. After it receives the panel’s report, the Central Valley Water Board shall make any appropriate revisions to the surface water quality monitoring program, and shall file a copy of the panel’s report and those revisions, if any, with the State Water Board.

We expect the experts to be charged with answering the following questions:

- What are the management decisions that are driving the information needs for monitoring and data assessment in the Eastern San Joaquin surface water quality monitoring program?
- Does the current monitoring design provide scientifically defensible data for the relevant management decisions and are the management decisions consistent with the representative framework of the monitoring program?
- Is the current monitoring framework of sufficient density (spatially and temporally) to identify general locations of possible pollution?

- Is the representative monitoring strategy a technically sound approach for identifying water quality problems related to discharges from irrigated agriculture? What criteria should be applied to evaluate whether a site is representative?
- Do the current monitoring and reporting program requirements constitute a sufficient feedback system to verify that appropriate management practices are being proposed and implemented?
- Is the monitoring and reporting program adequate to determine if a correlation between management practices implemented, monitoring and reporting data, and water quality requirements exists?
- If revisions are warranted, how should the monitoring plan be revised? Topics should cover temporal and spatial monitoring design, analyte selection, analytical methods, data analysis, and synthesis.
- What processes for evaluating monitoring program effectiveness could be implemented for continuous improvement?

We expect the review to be conducted by neutral experts with knowledge, skills, and abilities to address the following topics of needed expertise:

- Landscape-based water quality modeling: Expertise in predictive modeling of potential contamination using pesticide use reports, soil, weather, and crop information to help determine chemical, temporal, and spatial potential for contamination and effect
- Agronomy: Expertise on cultural practices, pest management, BMPs, soil, plant, and nutrient information
- Data science and statistics: Expertise to ensure that the monitoring design is a targeted design and to enable analysis of existing data from the program to determine variability in support of the temporal and spatial design of the program
- Toxicology, biology, chemistry: Expertise to address selection of test methods and test species appropriate for the chemicals selected to be monitored, including some expertise on the fate and transport of these particular elements in the typical receiving waters of California.

While the external expert review proceeds, the Central Valley Water Board and the Third Party shall continue to implement the existing program, with any revisions approved by the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer.

The conclusions and recommendations of the external expert review of the Eastern San Joaquin surface water quality monitoring program will not be precedential for other irrigated lands regulatory programs, as there is significant regional and watershed-based variation in the conditions, pollutants, and practices for which each surface water quality monitoring program must be designed. However, following evaluation of the Eastern San Joaquin surface water quality monitoring program, the State Water Board may choose to convene a panel of experts to make recommendations on a framework for surface water quality monitoring to provide general guidance on some common principles for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide. If we

proceed with such an expert panel, the panel will be expected to review and consider the range of surface water quality monitoring programs that have been adopted in the state.

## **8. Groundwater Quality Monitoring**

The Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs contain a set of requirements for groundwater quality monitoring and management practice assessment and evaluation. The General WDRs first require preparation of a Groundwater Quality Assessment Report, which provides a baseline for groundwater quality conditions in the watershed by assessing all existing data.<sup>143</sup> Second, the General WDRs require implementation of a Management Practice Evaluation Program in which targeted studies are conducted to evaluate management practices that are protective of groundwater quality.<sup>144</sup> Third, the General WDRs require Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring, based on sampling of a network of existing wells, to determine current and long-term regional groundwater quality trends.<sup>145</sup>

We add to the groundwater monitoring provisions of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs a set of monitoring and reporting requirements designed specifically to address identification of on-farm drinking water supply wells with nitrate concentrations that are detrimental to public health. We then make several revisions to the Groundwater Quality Assessment, Management Practice Evaluation Program, and Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring provisions of the General WDRs, but these modifications are comparatively minor.

### *a. Drinking Water Well Monitoring*

Nitrates consumed at concentrations above the MCL of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of nitrate+nitrite as N<sup>146</sup> can pose serious health risks to pregnant women and infants. In State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101 we recognized the importance of making accurate, reliable nitrate concentration data available to the consumers of well water and established a framework where the nitrate concentration for every drinking water well was determined through existing data, direct sampling, or a statistically valid projection, and where users were notified of exceedances. We now add drinking water well monitoring provisions to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs similar to those established for the Central Coast by Order WQ 2013-0101.

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<sup>143</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. B, MRP, § IV.A, pp.13-15.

<sup>144</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, § IV.B, pp. 15-17.

<sup>145</sup> *Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, § IV.C, p.17.

<sup>146</sup> As stated previously, the MCL is also expressed as 45 mg/L of nitrate as NO<sub>3</sub>.

The new provisions require Members to initially sample all on-farm drinking water supply wells for nitrate concentrations annually.<sup>147</sup> In lieu of one or more annual samples, the Member may rely on drinking water supply well sampling data available from any time within the prior five years. Where existing data or sampling data indicates that the nitrate concentration was below 8 mg/L for three consecutive annual sampling events, the member may thereafter sample every five years instead of annually. An alternative sampling schedule may be required by the Executive Officer at any time on a case by case basis. Results of the drinking water supply well monitoring must be submitted by the laboratory directly to GeoTracker. Results of any existing sampling data must be reported to GeoTracker directly by the Member.

The new provisions require that users receive notification if a drinking water well exceeds 10 mg/L of nitrate+nitrite as N. The Member must provide notice to users within ten days of the exceedance and send a copy of the notice to the Central Valley Water Board. Where the Member is not the property owner, the Member may choose to provide the notice or instead pass on the results to the property owner within 24 hours of learning of the exceedance; the property owner must then notify the users within nine days of the exceedance and copy the Central Valley Water Board.<sup>148</sup> The Central Valley Water Board is directed to work with stakeholders to develop a notification template in appropriate languages.<sup>149</sup> The State Water Board expects that the Central Valley Water Board will, where appropriate, act promptly to require the Member to provide users with safe drinking water for consumption.

Unlike in Order WQ 2013-0101, where we permitted a statistically valid projection of well nitrate levels, with this order we require actual sampling of all on-farm wells that are used for drinking water. We conclude that, given the public health risk associated with drinking water

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<sup>147</sup> Because the drinking water supply well sampling requirements are imposed directly on the Members with no Third Party role for oversight, we expect the Central Valley Water Board to send a biennial mass mailing to all Members informing them of the new requirements, and encouraging them to also sample for other potential contaminants. The Central Valley Water Board will work with the State Water Board in developing the letter for the mass mailing. The Members will be required to provide notice to any non-Member owners or operators associated with the enrolled irrigated lands parcel of the new requirements. If a well is no longer used for drinking water, the Member or non-Member owner may retain evidence to this effect (e.g., photo documentation of capped faucets or bottled water receipts) in lieu of conducting the sampling. Before drinking water use of that well may resume, the Member or non-Member owner must comply with the sampling requirements.

<sup>148</sup> Finding 2 of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs states that enforcement action for non-compliance may be taken against both the owner and the operator, even when the owner is not enrolled as a Member.

<sup>149</sup> A process for development of the template and the minimum content and format requirements are described in Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Section VIII.C.4.

that exceeds the MCL levels, the only way to ensure that public health is fully protected is to require sampling of every on-farm drinking water supply well.<sup>150</sup>

As previously discussed, we are aware that the Central Valley Water Board is currently working on salt and nitrate control program-related basin plan amendments with the goal of providing safe drinking water to nitrate impacted communities and groundwater users through discharger resources. We are also aware of ongoing discussions and proposals among interested persons to address drinking water well contamination and the provision of replacement water through legislation that would more broadly address private drinking water supply wells, not only on-farm drinking water supply wells, as the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs does. In order to allow some time for consideration of legislative proposals, the requirements for on-farm drinking water well monitoring will not take effect, if, prior to January 1, 2019, the State Water Board determines that the legislature has established a comprehensive statewide program that assures that private drinking water wells will be routinely monitored for nitrate contamination and users of those wells will be notified of the results.

The Environmental Petitioners argue that the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color, are discriminatory, and are null and void by virtue of denying enjoyment of those communities' residence, landownership, and tenancy, because Latino and low-income communities are more likely to have drinking water contaminated by nitrates and less likely to have access to health care, treatment, or substitute water sources.<sup>151</sup> With the revisions we have made to the General WDRs, including the additional drinking water well monitoring provisions added with this section,

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<sup>150</sup> In June 2015, Senate Bill 83 amended Water Code section 13752 to mandate public access to well completion reports. Well completion reports are required to be filed with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) for all groundwater wells at the time that they are constructed. The reports are required to contain information regarding each well's location and construction, and the lithology of the subsurface, among other items. As a result of the amendment, all well completion reports are available to the public, except that personal information (e.g., an individual's name and address) must be redacted. In the past, the State Water Board has obscured from public view in its online groundwater information systems, including GeoTracker, the precise locations of water supply wells for public water systems and some private domestic wells by providing a randomly-generated point within approximately one mile of the well's precise location. In addition, the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water has not released records that identify the precise location of water supply wells used by public water systems. Since well completion reports, including information about the location of the wells, are now publicly available by request from DWR, we announced our decision that, as of January 10, 2017, we will no longer obscure public water system groundwater well location information on our online groundwater information systems or withhold other records that identify the precise location of water supply wells used by public water systems. With this order, we extend our decision to all other groundwater wells. Henceforth, we will cease obscuring the location of any groundwater wells, absent exceptional circumstances. Not only is this consistent with the Legislature's clear policy direction regarding the transparency of groundwater data, it also helps to facilitate efforts by governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations to identify individuals and communities that are in need of infrastructure and replacement water supplies, and general research regarding groundwater quality.

<sup>151</sup> See Gov't Code, §§ 11135, 12900 et seq., & 65008.

we find that the discharges of waste authorized by the General WDRs will not disproportionately impact or discriminate against Latino and low-income communities, or deny their enjoyment of their residences, property, or tenancy. We make this finding in particular because the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs require (1) calculation and reporting of field-level AR data; (2) implementation and reporting of management practices where the Member is identified as having a significantly higher than average multi-year A/R ratio in order to reduce over-application of nitrogen; (3) monitoring of on-farm drinking water supply wells to determine if they exceed public health standards; (4) prompt notification of users if a well exceeds public health standards. Further, although Water Code section 106.3, by its terms, does not apply to the issuance of a water quality order, it is appropriate for us to consider the human right to water in this context,<sup>152</sup> and we find that our adoption of the order supports the basic human right “to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes,” expressed in Water Code section 106.3, for the same reasons articulated in this paragraph.

In sum, after January 1, 2019, Members must initiate sampling of private drinking water supply wells located on their property. The requirements of this section will not take effect if, prior to January 1, 2019, the State Water Board determines that the legislature has established a comprehensive statewide program that assures that private drinking water wells will be routinely monitored for nitrate contamination and users of those wells notified of the results.

The requirement for on-farm drinking water supply well monitoring, in accordance with the provisions described above, shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide. The regional water boards have the discretion to require sampling at a frequency that is similar, but not identical, to the frequency specified above.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VII.E, section VIII.E.1; Attachment B, MRP, section IV.A.

*b. Groundwater Quality Assessment Report*

The Groundwater Quality Assessment Report, which serves the purpose of providing the technical basis informing the scope and level of effort for implementation of the General WDRs groundwater monitoring and implementation provisions, was approved by the Central Valley Water Board on December 14, 2014. We make no revisions to the requirements at this point.

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<sup>152</sup> See State Water Board Order WQ 2013-0101, pp. 67-68.

The preparation of a Groundwater Quality Assessment Report shall not be precedential statewide.

c. Management Practice Evaluation Program

The scope and purpose of the Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) has evolved since the adoption of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs and is continuing to evolve. We are reluctant to make any significant revisions to the MPEP requirements so that the Central Valley Water Board retains continued flexibility to refine the program. We expect that the MPEP will initially focus on the determination of the crop-specific coefficients for conversion of yield to nitrogen removed and then on the determination of acceptable ranges for the multi-year A/R ratio target values by crop.

We further expect the MPEP will help identify specific management practices appropriate for specific conditions to assist Members in minimizing surface water and groundwater impacts, particularly in areas with SQMPs and GQMPs. We revise the MPEP to require study of management practice effectiveness in all areas, not just areas designated as high vulnerability areas, although we explicitly acknowledge that prioritization may be based on the high vulnerability determination. The Central Valley Water Board stated as follows in a comment letter submitted in response to a February 8, 2016, draft of this order, which had proposed removal of the high/low vulnerability distinctions:

[T]he Central Valley Water Board does not oppose abolishing the high/low vulnerability distinction and is not disputing the State Water Board's rationale for doing so. The Central Valley Water Board has found that the high/low vulnerability distinction in the exiting General WDRs has become problematic because only Members within high vulnerability areas are required to participate and fund the MPEP . . . , even though the Board intended for these activities to be funded by all Members. Removing the designation would therefore allow the obligations to be funded in a more equitable manner.<sup>153</sup>

In response to other comments we received, we reinstated the high/low vulnerability distinctions in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs generally with this order, but we will remove them for purposes of the MPEP requirements.

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<sup>153</sup> Comment Letter, Central Valley Water Board, June 1, 2016, p. 17, available at <[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public\\_notices/comments/a2239ac/patrick\\_pulupa.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public_notices/comments/a2239ac/patrick_pulupa.pdf)> (as of Jan. 31, 2018). The comment letter implies that the same concern may apply to the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program, but we read the requirements for that program as not limited to high vulnerability areas.

We also require that any groundwater monitoring data supporting the Management Practice Evaluation Program be collected through shallow groundwater monitoring because shallow groundwater exhibits a more rapid response to practices on the field.<sup>154</sup>

The MPEP requirements shall not be precedential statewide.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VIII.E.3, Attachment B, MRP, section IV.E.

*d. Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring*

In addition to nitrate+nitrite as N, the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring provisions require monitoring for conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, total dissolved solids, and general minerals.<sup>155</sup> The Environmental Petitioners have asked us to expand the list of constituents further and argue specifically that the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring constituents should include pesticides and degradation products from pesticides.<sup>156</sup> We will not expand the monitoring constituents to include pesticides and degradation products from pesticides where the Central Valley Water Board can rely instead on the monitoring conducted by the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for data on these constituents. We address that issue through a revision to the GQMP provisions under section A.II.9. However, we direct the Central Valley Water Board to consider adding monitoring for parameters that are not covered by DPR but are known groundwater contaminants associated with agriculture, in particular 1,2,3-TCP and DBCP.

The requirement for groundwater quality trend monitoring shall be precedential for irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide; however, the specific requirements and the monitored constituents specified in the General WDRs shall not be precedential.

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<sup>154</sup> For purposes of this order only, we define shallow groundwater as groundwater located less than ten feet below the soil surface. As we discuss below, the Agricultural Expert Panel Report found that groundwater quality monitoring will not provide useful data for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of above-ground practices, except in very limited circumstances. (Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 8.) Monitoring of shallow groundwater constitutes the scenario in which the data is most likely to be meaningful. We note that the Agricultural Expert Panel's conclusions were with regard to impacts associated with farming, and not with impacts from other potentially more concentrated sources, such as holding ponds at dairies.

<sup>155</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. B, MRP, § IV.E, pp. 19-20.

<sup>156</sup> The Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring constituents specified in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs are conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, nitrate as N, total dissolved solid, and general minerals. (*Id.*, Attach. B, MRP, table 3, pp. 19-20.) In addition to advocating for addition of pesticides and degradation products from pesticides to that list, the Environmental Petitioners argue that the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring constituents should include deleterious minerals. On this point, we agree with the Central Valley Water Board's conclusion that the presence of nitrates at elevated levels (plus general minerals) serves as an indicator of other potential problems associated with irrigated agricultural discharges. (*Id.*, Attach. A, Information Sheet, p. 15.)



e. *The Multi-Year A/R Ratio and A-R Difference as Indicators of Nitrogen Loading to Groundwater*

It is important to note in our discussion of groundwater quality monitoring that the role of groundwater quality monitoring in any agricultural regulatory program is primarily one of trend monitoring. Groundwater quality monitoring does not yield data responsive enough to above-the-ground impacts to allow correlation of management practices and water quality outcomes, except under very limited conditions. The Agricultural Expert Panel stated that monitoring of first-encountered groundwater as an indication of the effectiveness of above-ground practices is meaningful only in a context where “sampled groundwater volume can be attributed to a defined recharge area, which must be contained within the area where the regulated discharge occurs” and further that such attribution is meaningful primarily in “areas of very shallow groundwater tables, relatively steady groundwater flow directions, high recharge, large regulated units, and a strong introduced discharge signal.”<sup>157</sup> Where these conditions are present, there are opportunities for studies of management practice effectiveness, as with the Management Practice Evaluation Program of the General WDRs. But another tool is needed to track the effectiveness of implemented practices in reducing discharges to groundwater under a broader set of regional conditions. Although one such tool may be conducting a soil profile analysis by monitoring soil samples for presence of constituents of concern, obtaining a statistically significant number of samples on an annual basis would be prohibitively expensive.

In contrast, the multi-year A/R ratio, analyzed in concert with the A-R difference, is both a cost-effective and a reliable methodology for tracking the amount of nitrogen left in the soil over a period of time, and that may enter the groundwater from the soil. Trends in the multi-year A/R ratio are expected to follow changes in management practices on the field, providing a reliable indication of whether management practices are working to increase efficiency in nitrogen application and to reduce the potential for nitrogen loss to groundwater. The A-R difference further informs the magnitude of any potential over-application of nitrogen. The multi-year A/R ratio and the A-R difference are thus appropriate metrics for determining measurable progress toward ensuring agricultural discharges are not causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality standards in the groundwater. The information obtained through the multi-year A/R ratio and A-R difference in a given area may also subsequently be matched with the groundwater quality trend monitoring data to evaluate and verify the results and conclusions of the methodology.

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<sup>157</sup> Agricultural Expert Panel Report, p. 8.

The AR data is, of course, specific to nitrogen impact, and the groundwater monitoring provisions of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs consider impacts from a wider set of constituents and remain an indispensable component of the regulatory program. However, with regard to nitrogen, we expect the multi-year A/R ratio and A-R difference to be the primary tools for management, reporting, and oversight going forward.

The agricultural third-party representatives and environmental justice organization representatives who presented the proposal for data reporting to us also proposed development of a methodology for determining targets for nitrogen loading on a township by township basis. We have incorporated into the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural WDRs a process and timeline for development of a “Groundwater Protection Formula” to generate township-specific “Groundwater Protection Values,” and further generate township-specific “Groundwater Protection Targets” based on those values for areas with GQMPs. The purpose of the Groundwater Protection Targets is to set a desired target that is intended for all growers (including growers that are Members of the Third Party and growers regulated under an individual order) within the township collectively to achieve compliance with the Receiving Water Limitations for groundwater within the time schedule for compliance specified in the General WDRs. The Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural WDRs direct development of the Groundwater Protection Formula by July 1, 2020, development and inclusion of Groundwater Protection Values into a GQMP within six months of the availability of the Groundwater Protection Formula, and development of Groundwater Protection Targets within one year of incorporation of a specific Groundwater Protection Value in the GQMP. The Groundwater Protection Formula, Values, and Targets are subject to Executive Officer approval following public review and comment. We recognize that this methodology may evolve over time as the Third Party and the Central Valley Water Board gain experience with its application.

The development of the Groundwater Protection Formula, Values, and Targets shall be precedential for the third parties that proposed the methodology. Even if the programs do not require GQMPs, all of the regional water boards shall apply this methodology or a similar methodology, designed to determine targets for nitrogen loading within high priority townships or other geographic areas, for the remaining irrigated lands regulatory programs in the state. High priority areas are those areas where the Executive Officer determines that irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality objectives or a trend of

degradation of groundwater that may threaten applicable basin plan beneficial uses.<sup>158</sup> In areas of the state with third parties, the third parties may take the lead in developing the methodology. In other areas, the regional water boards shall take the lead. In all cases, the development of the methodology and approval by the regional water boards' executive officers shall be subject to public review and comment.

## **9. Surface Water and Groundwater Quality Management Plans**

Under the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, the Third Party proposes and implements a SQMP or GQMP in an area in response to certain triggers indicative of water quality problems related to agricultural discharges to surface water or groundwater. Once triggered, a SQMP or GQMP must have a specific schedule of management practices and tasks to be implemented to achieve compliance with receiving water limitations and a monitoring system designed to measure whether management practice changes are in fact effective at achieving the requirements of the General WDRs.<sup>159</sup> In general, we do not disturb these provisions because we find that the triggers are appropriate for identifying areas in which additional or alternative management practice implementation and additional monitoring, above and beyond the baseline conditions of the General WDRs, is necessary to address exceedances.<sup>160</sup> In the previous section, we declined to expand groundwater monitoring constituents to include pesticides and degradation products from pesticides, but indicated that we would instead rely on data collected by DPR on pesticide impacts. That data is available in GeoTracker.<sup>161</sup> We will add to General WDRs a clarification that a GQMP may be triggered based on exceedances detected through monitoring programs outside the scope of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs provisions. We will additionally direct that the Executive Officer consider the State Water Board Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas and the DPR Groundwater Protection Areas when determining if an area should be subject to a GQMP.<sup>162</sup>

The SQMP and GQMPs are primary vehicles for requiring implementation of new and improved management practices under the General WDRs, but reporting on practices

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<sup>158</sup> We note that this definition of high priority is consistent with the conditions requiring the development of a GQMP in the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.

<sup>159</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs., Attach. B, MRP, Appen. MRP-1, §§ I.C-D, pp. 4-6.

<sup>160</sup> The triggers for the preparation of SQMPs and GQMPs are based on the same criteria as the high vulnerability determinations. Although we have found that the baseline requirements of the General WDRs should be applied uniformly, for purposes of prioritizing areas for additional management practices, the criteria are appropriate.

<sup>161</sup> Although the DPR data in GeoTracker is not available by precise location, the exceedances are correlated with a small enough area to be appropriate as a trigger for a GQMP. See also discussion of DPR's groundwater quality monitoring program at Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attachment A, Information Sheet, p. 17.

<sup>162</sup> Appen. A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, § VIII.H.2, pp. 37-38.

implemented with the SQMP and GQMP lacks specificity.<sup>163</sup> The Third Party is directed to report “a summary of management plan grower outreach conducted” and a “summary of the degree of implementation of management practices.”<sup>164</sup>

We add a provision to the SQMP and GQMP to make the requirement to report the degree of implementation of management practices more explicit. Members in a SQMP and/or GQMP area shall submit a Management Practice Implementation Report (MPIR) to the Third Party, laying out new or improved management practices implemented to address the particular water quality issues identified in the area. The Third Party will prepare an appropriate form specific to each SQMP or GQMP with appropriate reporting frequency based on the implementation cycle of the applicable management practices. For the SQMP and the GQMP already approved by the Central Valley Water Board, submission of MPIRs shall commence in 2019. Similar to the submission associated with the Farm Evaluations, the Third Party will submit a data set based on the MPIRs to the Central Valley Water Board with Anonymous Member IDs and Anonymous APN IDs.<sup>165</sup>

SQMPs and GQMPs shall not be precedential statewide.

The directed revisions are indicated at Appendix A, Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, section VIII.I. and footnotes 38-39; Attachment B, MRP-1.

#### **10. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements and Water Code Section 13267**

The revisions we have directed in the above sections modify many of the monitoring and reporting requirements of the General WDRs. Water Code section 13267 states that “[t]he burden, including costs, of [monitoring and reporting] shall bear a reasonable relationship to the need for the report and the benefits to be obtained from the reports.” This order revises the monitoring and reporting requirements of the General WDRs primarily as follows:

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<sup>163</sup> Over the next several years, we expect that improvements made in response to a high multi-year A/R ratio, rather than in response to a GQMP, to become the primary vehicle for implementing improved management practices addressing nitrate impacts. However, the GQMP, or an equivalent approach, will continue to have a significant role in irrigated lands regulatory programs in addressing impacts from pollutants other than nitrates. There may also be some fields in areas with conditions -- soil types and depth to groundwater -- that lead to nitrate impacts even with a low multi-year A/R ratio. In those cases, programs would have to rely on the GQMP or an equivalent approach to require improved practices in the area.

<sup>164</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attach. B, MRP, Appen. MRP-1, § I.F, p. 6.

<sup>165</sup> We recognize that the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs currently require the Third Party to identify, as part of its annual Membership List submission, Members who have failed to implement improved water quality management practices within the timeframe specified by an applicable SQMP or GQMP. (*Id.*, § IV.C.9, p. 21.) This already required information is significant in that it allows the Central Valley Water Board to follow up with or take enforcement against Members in violation of the SQMP or GQMP requirements, but it does not replace the need for a broader set of data, including data for management practices implemented under a SQMP or GQMP as well as in the absence of a SQMP or GQMP, to support effective program implementation.

For Members:

1. Members in high vulnerability areas must submit a Farm Evaluation only every five years instead of annually;
2. Members in a SQMP or GQMP areas must submit management practice implementation information to the Third Party on the MPIR;
3. Members must include irrigation management practice information and other irrigation-associated data and nitrogen management practice information in the INMP and the INMP Summary Report (previously reported on the Farm Evaluation);
4. Members in low vulnerability areas must now submit INMP Summary Reports (these requirements are phased in to allow additional time for Members exempt under the General WDRs);
5. Members who do not have existing sampling data must sample on-farm drinking water supply wells annually for at least three years; some Members may be required to provide notification of high nitrate levels.

For the Third Party:

1. The Third Party must develop unique Anonymous Member IDs and Anonymous APN IDs and maintain and track the IDs from year to year;
2. The Third Party must submit to the Central Valley Water Board management practice implementation data reported on the MPIRs by Anonymous Member ID;
3. The Third Party must submit to the Central Valley Water Board management practice implementation data reported on the Farm Evaluations and INMP Summary Reports by Anonymous Member ID;
4. The Third Party must identify and develop coefficients for conversion of yield into nitrogen removed;
5. The Third Party must calculate values for each field for nitrogen removed, A/R, A-R, and multi-year A/R;
6. The Third Party must submit to the Central Valley Water Board the data it receives from the INMP Summary Reports and from its calculations by Anonymous Member ID, by anonymous APN ID, and by township;
7. The Third Party must arrange for storage of field-specific data submitted in a secure offsite location managed by an independent entity.

The increased costs for the Third Party may be passed onto the Members in the form of higher membership fees.

We received comments on a February 8, 2016, draft of this order estimating projected increased costs based on the revisions to the monitoring and reporting provisions proposed in that draft.<sup>166</sup> We made a number of additional revisions in response to the comments

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<sup>166</sup> Comments on the February 8, 2016 draft are available at [http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public\\_notices/comments/a2239ac/](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public_notices/comments/a2239ac/) > (as of Jan. 31, 2018). Comments presenting cost projections include, but are not limited to: Patrick Pulupa, Central Valley Water Board, pp. 17-19 (June 1, 2016) (Continued)

to the provisions to minimize some of the potential cost increases. We now find that, while there will be an additional burden due to the revised monitoring and reporting requirements as compared to the existing requirements in the General WDRs, that additional burden bears a reasonable relationship to the benefits to be obtained from the expanded monitoring and reporting requirements.

With regard to revisions to the reporting of management practice implementation data, we find that, for Members in high vulnerability areas, the reporting burden is actually decreased by reduction of Farm Evaluation submission from annually to every five years, although some management practice implementation data will continue to be reported on the INMP Summary Report annually and, where applicable on the MPIR, according to a schedule to be determined by the Third Party. For Members in low vulnerability areas, irrigation practices and nitrogen practices must now be reported annually through the INMP Summary Report, which we consider below.

The costs with regard to nitrogen application reporting do not change for Members in high vulnerability areas. Members in low vulnerability areas have to prepare an INMP under the existing General WDRs. Under our revisions, they will be required to submit an INMP Summary Report to the Third Party. The INMP Summary Report primarily requires transferring data already recorded in the INMP to a separate sheet. We estimate that Summary Report preparation represents between two and eight hours of Member employee time, with a cost range of \$110 to \$960.

While Members will incur some additional direct compliance costs, the increased workload associated with field-level reporting of management practice information and AR data will be borne primarily by the Third Party, which, we recognize, must pass on its increased costs to Members in the form of membership fees. Increased costs will be due to additional staff for

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(Central Valley Water Board Comment Letter); Theresa Dunham, Somach Simmons & Dunn on behalf of East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, pp. 36-39 (June 1, 2016) (East San Joaquin Coalition Comment Letter); William Thomas, Best Best & Krieger on behalf of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition, pp. 22-25 (May 3, 2016); Ed Sills, Placer-Nevada-South Sutter-North Sacramento Subwatershed Group, pp. 2-3 (April 22, 2016); Nicole Bell, Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority, pp. 18-22 (May 30, 2016) (Kern River Coalition Comment Letter). In addition, several speakers at scheduled public workshops (see, e.g. Jennifer Markarian, Cost Notes, (May 17, 2016) available at <[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public\\_notices/petitions/water\\_quality/docs/a2239/workshops/markarian.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality/docs/a2239/workshops/markarian.pdf)> (as of Jan. 31, 2018)) and a number of parties meeting with Board members in disclosed ex parte meetings (see, e.g. Theresa Dunham, Somach Simmons & Dunn, on behalf of California Rice Commission, Ex Parte Disclosure (Sept. 12, 2016) available at <[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public\\_notices/petitions/water\\_quality/docs/a2239/ex\\_parte/exparteseptember12.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality/docs/a2239/ex_parte/exparteseptember12.pdf)> (as of Jan. 31, 2018) (September 12, 2016, Rice Commission Submission) presented cost information. Submission of cost estimates was specifically requested by the State Water Board and these estimates are part of the record of these proceedings.

outreach and training, especially in low vulnerability areas, increased costs of mailings, the work associated with assigning anonymous identifiers to field-level data and compiling the data sets, cost of the secure, off-site storage of the data, and other expenses. In comments submitted on the February 8, 2016, draft, the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition estimated that a similar set of requirements would lead to an annual cost increase in the range of \$310,000, which, according to our rough calculations translates to a 10% increase in the Coalition's annual budget and would result in a similar increase in Member fees.<sup>167</sup> We acknowledge that this is not an insignificant increase in costs. We note, however, that the applicable requirements will not be phased in completely until 2021, allowing the Third Party an opportunity to ramp up slowly and consider the most cost-effective approaches as the program develops.

Members will incur new costs for on-farm drinking water well sampling. That cost is estimated based on two to four hours of a Member's employee's time with a cost range of \$110 to \$480, and \$40 in sampling costs per well. Not all farms have drinking water supply wells and it is anticipated that the bulk of the farms that do will have only one well. We also note that these costs will be incurred beginning in 2019 only if a legislative solution to drinking water well monitoring is not in place prior to that data.

The Central Valley Water Board also submitted cost projections in response to the February 8, 2016, draft, based on increased staffing needs.<sup>168</sup> The Central Valley Water Board stated that such increased regulatory costs would result in higher annual waste discharge permit fund fees for Members. One significant driver of increased staffing predicted by the Central Valley Water Board was the workload associated with providing notification to users of on-farm drinking water supply wells with exceedances. That draft requirement applied only where the Member was not the owner of the irrigated lands. In response, we replaced the requirement for the Central Valley Water Board to provide notification with a requirement that the non-Member owner provide such notification if requested by the operator. Another driver of increased staffing needs was projected to be the work to compile paper submissions of field-level data. This order makes it clear that all field-level data will be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board in an electronic format. With regard to review of the field-level data, the Central Valley Water Board's role at this

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<sup>167</sup> These figures represent a rough estimate based on figures provided in the East San Joaquin Coalition Comment Letter at pages 36-39. Expenses projected in that comment letter that are no longer relevant include individual well data management. The entry of field-level data into Geotracker is also no longer a requirement under this order; however, we have retained \$25,000 of those costs in the calculations to account for the Third Party's work in preparing and submitting electronic data tables to the Central Valley Water Board. In addition, the costs representing the addition of a professional to assist members with INMP requirements is deducted from the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition estimates because the costs are already assigned to the Members above.

<sup>168</sup> Central Valley Water Board Comment Letter, pp. 17-19.

point is to review the data to facilitate oversight of Third Party analyses and follow up determinations. We expect the sortable and searchable nature of the data to allow more efficient review, to focus the Central Valley Water Board's evaluation of Member compliance and oversight over Third Party activities, and to facilitate measurement of progress towards improved water quality. We find that the review is achievable within existing Central Valley Water Board staffing resources and does not add to existing workload associated with oversight of the regulatory program.<sup>169</sup>

While we acknowledge above that Members will incur additional costs, under our revisions to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, the additional burden bears a reasonable relationship to the burden of the new monitoring and reporting requirements. These benefits have been discussed at length in the sections above. In brief summary, the data reported is expected to be used as follows:

- The multi-year A/R ratio will provide the Member and the Third Party with a reliable metric for any field-level nitrogen over-application and will more effectively target Third Party follow up for potential nitrate impacts, facilitating water quality improvements.
- The multi-year A/R ratio will provide the Member with an efficiency metric that can be used to support cost-savings in nitrogen application. The inclusion of irrigation management practice implementation reporting in the INMP may additionally improve efficiency in irrigation water usage.
- The field-level anonymous management practice implementation data and AR data will allow the Central Valley Water Board and stakeholders to verify that the Third Party is following up with appropriate Members and that the Members are implementing improved practices in response to the follow up.
- The field-level anonymous AR data will allow the Central Valley Water Board and stakeholders to verify that the Third Party's summary analyses accurately represent conditions and trends.
- The field-level anonymous AR data will enable the Central Valley Water Board to determine appropriate multi-year A/R ratio ranges by crop for potential incorporation into future regulatory programs.

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<sup>169</sup> As discussed, we also revised the outreach requirements of the General WDRs such that Members in low vulnerability areas, like members in high vulnerability areas, must now participate in outreach events annually. These are not strictly monitoring and reporting requirements but costs should nevertheless be considered consistent with other provisions of the Water Code. (Wat. Code §§ 13241, 13263.) To minimize any increases in costs, we additionally revised the outreach requirements to make it clear that Members could participate remotely, as well as phased in the outreach requirements for low vulnerability areas so that they are effective only after two years.



- The Central Valley Water Board will be able to correlate management practice implementation data from the INMP Summary Report and MPIR with AR data for use in statistically valid analyses to identify effective and ineffective management practices to reduce nitrate loading.
- The township level AR data set will be available to researchers to perform watershed-based modeling for nitrate groundwater loading, both within the Third Party boundaries and in the entire basin (by using data from other coalitions).
- The township-level AR data set will be available to researchers to conduct relevant studies that may help advance the science supporting future developments in the regulatory program, to local agencies to support groundwater quality management efforts, and to cities, counties, and non-governmental organizations to aid in anticipating areas, especially disadvantaged communities, that may need drinking water assistance.
- The drinking water well data will allow for notification of users consuming drinking water with nitrate levels above the public health standards.

#### **11. Direction to Central Valley Water Board Regarding Use of Submitted Data**

As a result of the revisions we have directed in the above sections, the Central Valley Water Board will receive several data sets commencing in May of 2019, in addition to the water quality monitoring data submitted to the Central Valley Water Board under the existing Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs: a data set with management practice implementation reported by Members on the Farm Evaluation, INMP Summary Report, and MPIR, three data sets with AR data reported by Members on the INMP Summary Report, one associated with Anonymous Member IDs, one associated with Anonymous APN IDs, and one associated with townships. We direct the Central Valley Water Board to use the data in several specific ways.

First, the Central Valley Water Board is directed to use the data to verify the accuracy and completeness of the analyses and summaries submitted by the Third Party based on the Farm Evaluations and the INMP Summary Reports. Second, the Central Valley Water Board is directed to use the data to confirm that the Third Party is appropriately following up with its Members, including those who are AR data outliers, those failing to implement appropriate management practices, and those that fail to timely submit required reports. Third, the Central Valley Water Board is directed to make the anonymous field-level data tables available to researchers and stakeholders to support studies and analyses, including modeling of nitrate loading to groundwater.

Finally, we direct the Central Valley Water Board, in consultation with the Third Party and other coalitions formed under the Central Valley irrigated lands regulatory program, CDFA and other appropriate parties, to evaluate the AR data submitted by the Third Party for the purposes of developing acceptable ranges for the multi-year A/R ratio target values for crops grown in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. The Central Valley Water Board is directed

to develop, in coordination with the State Water Board, other regional water boards, and CDFA, target values for each crop within three years of the availability of the nitrogen removed coefficient for that crop.<sup>170</sup> It is expected that the multi-year A/R ratio target values will be further refined over time for different conditions (e.g., irrigation method, soil conditions) for each crop.

In order to ensure the integrity of the field-level data reported by the Third Party, we additionally direct the Central Valley Water Board to periodically audit the Third Party's records by spot checking that the field-level A and yield data reported by the Members is being accurately transcribed and converted into A/R and A-R in the data tables submitted to the Central Valley Water Board. The Central Valley Water Board may do so by reviewing random selections of the data housed with the third party.

The Central Valley Water Board is directed to report annually to the State Water Board commencing September 1, 2020, on data received and progress toward identifying effective management practices and developing acceptable ranges for multi-year A/R ratio target values. The Central Valley Water Board shall also include discussion of progress on Groundwater Protection Targets in its annual report. Commencing on September 1, 2022, and every two years thereafter, the Central Valley Water Board shall also report to the State Water Board on whether anonymous field-level reporting is providing sufficient information for oversight of and progress in the regulatory program.

It is premature at this point to project the manner in which the multi-year A/R ratio target values might serve as regulatory tools. That determination will be informed by the data collected and the research conducted in the next several years. If we move forward with a new regulatory approach in the future, we expect to do so only after convening an expert panel that can help evaluate and consider the appropriate use of the acceptable ranges for multi-year A/R ratio target values in irrigated lands regulatory programs statewide.

## **12. Summary**

We have directed significant revisions to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs in the above discussions. With those revisions, the Modified General WDRs have the following key components:

1. The Modified General WDRs require compliance with receiving water limitations that prohibit discharges from causing or contributing to an exceedance of applicable water quality objectives, unreasonably affecting applicable beneficial uses, or causing or contributing to a condition of pollution or nuisance. The Members must show immediate compliance with the receiving water limitations except where the Member is implementing

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<sup>170</sup> Where multiple crops are grown in the same field within the multi-year period, it may be appropriate to use a weighted average of the target values of those crops.

a SQMP or a GQMP for specified waste parameters in accordance with an approved time schedule.

2. The Modified General WDRs' first step in achieving compliance with the receiving water limitations is to impose baseline requirements on all Members:
  - Members must implement management practices that minimize waste discharge offsite in surface water, minimize percolation waste to groundwater, and protect wellheads from surface water intrusion. Members plan and document the management practices by preparing a Farm Evaluation and an INMP, and, as required, an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan and an MPIR. Members participate in outreach activities to learn about management practice options.
  - Members report these management practices at the field level through submission of the Farm Evaluation, the INMP Summary Report, and the MPIR to the Third Party. The INMP Summary Report also reports on the AR data of the Member by field.
3. The Modified General WDRs' second step in achieving compliance with the receiving water limitations is to impose additional requirements on Members where there are indications of water quality problems:
  - Where a Member is an AR data outlier, the Member must obtain additional training or employ an expert for certification of the INMP.
  - Where surface water or groundwater quality monitoring required to be conducted by the Third Party shows an exceedance, the Third Party must prepare a SQMP or GQMP that imposes additional management practice implementation requirements on Members in the area.
4. The Modified General WDRs' third step in achieving compliance with the receiving water limitations is to verify that implemented management practices are effective in addressing water quality problems.
  - The Third Party submits the field-level data from the Farm Evaluations, the INMP Summary Reports, and the MPIRs to the Central Valley Water Board with anonymous identifiers.
  - The field-level data sets allow the Central Valley Water Board to verify that Members are implementing additional management practices and that such implementation is leading to either an improved multi-year A/R ratio or improved water quality results.
  - The field-level data sets additionally allow the Central Valley Water Board to verify that the Third Party is identifying the appropriate set of Members for follow up and additional requirements.
  - Finally, the township-level data sets allow the Central Valley Water Board to predict trends in water quality, both potential degradation and improvement, and to associate the trends with management practice implementation so that a more complete set of information regarding the effectiveness of management practices and of the program as a whole is available.

We find that the approach in the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs complies with the Water Code and of the Nonpoint Source Policy. The Modified General WDRs require compliance with receiving water limitations, but accomplish that

compliance through implementation of management practices and through implementation of improved management practices where Members are not in compliance with the receiving water limitations. The Modified General WDRs ensure that the Third Party and the Central Valley Water Board have the feedback mechanism needed to link management practice implementation to water quality results so that the effectiveness of the management practices required can be verified. As a result, we find that there is a high likelihood that the Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs will lead to attainment of the receiving water limitations.

**B. Compliance with the Antidegradation Policy**

The Environmental Petitioners argue that the Central Valley Water Board failed to comply with the Antidegradation Policy in many respects when it adopted the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs. As explained above, several of these contentions are more appropriately considered under the rubric of compliance with the Water Code and the Nonpoint Source Policy in Section II.A of this order. By its terms, the Antidegradation Policy applies only to waters that are high quality; it supplements the Water Code requirements discussed above by adding additional antidegradation requirements that apply if the receiving waters are considered to be high quality. We will discuss the Environmental Petitioners' remaining arguments that relate only to high quality waters in this section.

High quality waters are those surface waters or areas of groundwater that have a baseline water quality better than required by water quality control plans and policies. The Antidegradation Policy required the Central Valley Water Board to issue WDRs that maintain the high quality of those waters unless it finds that any degradation of water quality (1) will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state; (2) will not unreasonably affect present or probable future beneficial uses of such water; and (3) will not result in water quality less than prescribed in water quality control plans or policies. In addition, the WDRs must require that discharges to high quality waters result in the best practicable treatment or control necessary to assure that no pollution or nuisance will occur and the highest water quality consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the State will be maintained. We have already addressed the requirements to not unreasonably affect beneficial uses, not result in water quality less than the quality specified by water quality objectives, and not cause a pollution or nuisance in Section II.A, above. While we found merit in several of the Environmental Petitioners' contentions discussed above and accordingly made several modifications to the General WDRs, we find no merit in the remainder of their contentions discussed below. To the contrary, we find that the Central Valley Water Board properly identified and complied with the remaining requirements of the Antidegradation Policy when it adopted the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs.

## 1. Application of Antidegradation Policy to Nonpoint Source Discharges

The State Water Board has, to date, provided relatively little specific direction to the regional water boards on how to apply the Antidegradation Policy to nonpoint sources.<sup>171</sup> The Nonpoint Source Policy's only reference to the Antidegradation Policy simply states that nonpoint source control implementation programs must be designed to meet water quality requirements, which include "water quality objectives established to protect beneficial uses and any higher level of water quality needed to comply with the State's antidegradation policy."<sup>172</sup> We recently explained that a traditional antidegradation analysis for a discrete point source discharge has limited value when considering antidegradation in the context of storm water discharges from diffuse sources, conveyed through multiple outfalls, with multiple pollutants impacting multiple water bodies within a region.<sup>173</sup> These same practical considerations also make it inappropriate to apply a discrete point source discharge approach in the context of a general order regulating both surface water and groundwater discharges from irrigated agriculture operations across a large landscape.<sup>174</sup> Accordingly, we take this opportunity to provide specific direction to the regional water boards on how to apply the Antidegradation Policy to nonpoint sources.

The Central Valley Water Board included an excellent synopsis of relevant existing guidance, and appropriate findings, regarding the application of the Antidegradation Policy to the Eastern San Joaquin General WDRs in Attachment A.<sup>175</sup> We find this synopsis and analysis to be an appropriate example for other regional water boards to consider when applying the antidegradation policy to nonpoint sources of pollution. We concur with that synopsis, which is generally applicable to all nonpoint source general orders, and also augment it by further addressing specific nonpoint source antidegradation issues and by providing additional guidance below.

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<sup>171</sup> As correctly noted by the Central Valley Water Board, Administrative Procedures Update 90-004 applies to discharges regulated under the federal Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. It does not apply to nonpoint source discharges. *Asociacion de Gente Unida por el Agua v. Central Valley Water Board*, *supra*, 210 Cal.App.4th at 1270.

<sup>172</sup> Nonpoint Source Policy, p.12, AR 36151.

<sup>173</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2015-0075 (*Los Angeles MS4*), p.27.

<sup>174</sup> The diffuse, landscape level groundwater discharges regulated under the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs are unlike the concentrated discharges from dairy retention ponds and corral areas that were the subject of *Asociacion de Gente Unida por el Agua v. Central Valley Water Board*, *supra*, 210 Cal.App.4th 1255.

<sup>175</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attachment A, Information Sheet, pp. 31-44. Due to its length, we decline to reprint it here. The synopsis is included in Appendix A to this order.

## **2. Baseline Water Quality**

The baseline water quality considered in making the appropriate findings is the best quality of the water since 1968, the year of the adoption of the Antidegradation Policy, or a lower level if that lower level was allowed through a permitting action that was consistent with applicable antidegradation policies.<sup>176</sup> The Environmental Petitioners contend that the Central Valley Water Board's assessment of baseline water quality throughout the area regulated by the General WDRs is too general and vague. We disagree.

When assessing baseline water quality for a general order, we find a general review and analysis of readily available data is sufficient. Regional water boards need not generate new data or take extraordinary steps to search for existing data. It is unusual to find substantial amounts of high quality historical data from the 1970's and 1980's, let alone 1968, for such extensive areas as those covered by the Central Valley Water Board's Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDR. While new ambient surface water and groundwater quality data are constantly being produced, there will always be substantial data gaps. Generation and synthesis of new data to fill all these gaps would be time intensive and costly, delaying the ultimate implementation of what would likely be a vastly similar program with or without the data. If existing data has already been synthesized or analyzed, or can be done so with minimal effort, then the regional water boards should consider those syntheses or analyses. Regional water boards should not delay the implementation of a regulatory program in order to conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment and analysis – especially where, as here, the general order imposes essentially the same iterative approach for management practices and other requirements regardless of whether or not the receiving water is high quality.

In almost all cases, it will be impossible for the regional water boards to establish an accurate numeric baseline for potentially hundreds of waterbodies and dozens of waste constituents in an area covered by a general order. Instead, regional water boards must conduct a general assessment of the existing water quality data that is reasonably available. Here, the Central Valley Water Board appropriately assessed thousands of surface water and groundwater data points and concluded that at least some of the surface waters and groundwater in the Eastern San Joaquin River watershed were high quality. Based on this finding, the Central Valley Water Board acted appropriately by then conducting a general antidegradation analysis for the General WDRs.

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<sup>176</sup> State Water Board Order WQ 2015-0075, p.24.

### **3. Maximum Benefit**

The Central Valley Water Board appropriately found that the degradation allowed<sup>177</sup> by the General WDRs is consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the state.<sup>178</sup> The Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the Central Valley Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program supports this finding, noting that the state depends on Central Valley agriculture for food and that Central Valley communities rely on agriculture for employment.<sup>179</sup> The Central Valley Water Board considered social costs of the discharges and reasonably concluded that the General WDRs' requirements to address all exceedances of water quality objectives according to the terms of a time schedule, implement best practicable treatment and control where irrigated agricultural waste discharges may cause degradation, and the inclusion of performance standards that work to prevent further degradation of surface and groundwater quality, should ensure that local communities not incur any additional treatment costs associated with the limited degradation authorized by the General WDRs. As discussed above, while dischargers are working to comply with the time schedule, if monitoring of drinking water supply wells indicates that MCLs are being exceeded, we expect dischargers that are causing or contributing to the exceedance to provide replacement water to the affected population. Given that the considerable societal benefits outweigh the costs associated with the effects of irrigated agriculture under the Modified General WDRs, any degradation allowed by the Modified General WDRs is consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the state.

### **4. Best Practicable Treatment or Control**

The Environmental Petitioners argue that the General WDRs fail to demonstrate that discharges to existing high quality waters will result in best practicable treatment or control. The General WDRs require farm evaluations for all Members and development of management plans when trends indicate degradation is threatening beneficial uses.<sup>180</sup> Management plans will evolve over time as monitoring and other feedback leads to new practices being developed and refined as part of the Management Practice Evaluation Program that the General WDRs require. The General WDRs require Members to implement practices found to be protective of

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<sup>177</sup> Contrary to the Environmental Petitioners' assertion, the General WDRs do not automatically authorize all surface waters and groundwater to become degraded up to the water quality objectives. The General WDRs include requirements that dischargers implement management practices that minimize waste discharge offsite in surface water and minimize percolation waste to groundwater, among other requirements.

<sup>178</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, Attachment A, p. 43.

<sup>179</sup> Programmatic EIR, Appendix A, AR 31907-32232.

<sup>180</sup> Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs, §§ III.B, pp. 24-25, VIII.H.2, pp.33-34, and Attachment A, pp. 41-42.

groundwater through the Management Practice Evaluation Program. In addition, use of the multi-year A/R ratio will be required in the Modified General WDRs as it will drive the implementation of more effective management practices over time and identify management practices that are less effective. The Modified General WDRs also require implementation of irrigation and nitrogen management plans and use of the multi-year A/R ratio in conjunction with the other management practices required by the Modified General WDRs. We find that these requirements, in combination with the other key components of the Modified General WDRs described in Section II.A., satisfy the best practical treatment or control standard. Not only do these requirements represent the present best approach in the view of our Expert Panel, we are not aware of any more protective requirements for large scale irrigated agricultural operations elsewhere.

We note that the irrigated lands regulatory programs across the state will continue to evolve as directed by this order, resulting in substantially more data and an improved understanding about the impacts to water quality and the methods to control those impacts. As the data and our understanding evolves, of course, so too must the regional water boards' analyses of maximum benefit and best practicable treatment or control.

### **III. ORDER**

For the reasons discussed in this order:

1. The Central Valley Water Board shall post and circulate a revised version of the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs as indicated in redline/strike-out format in Appendix A, and also incorporating the Central Valley Water Board's amendments dated February 19, 2016.
2. Commencing on September 1, 2020, the Central Valley Water Board shall report annually to the State Water Board on data received and progress toward identifying effective management practices and developing acceptable ranges for multi-year A/R ratio target values. Central Valley Water Board shall also include discussion of progress on Groundwater Protection Targets in its annual report. Commencing on September 1, 2022, and every two years thereafter, the Central Valley Water Board shall also report to the State Water Board on whether anonymous field-level reporting is providing sufficient information for oversight of and progress in the regulatory program. Upon the conclusion of the public external expert review of the surface water quality monitoring program and the resulting Central Valley Water Board's revisions, if any, to the surface water quality monitoring program, the Central Valley Water Board shall provide the details of both in a report to the State Water Board.



### **CERTIFICATION**

The undersigned, Clerk to the Board, does hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of an order duly and regularly adopted at a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board held on February 7, 2018.

AYE: Chair Felicia Marcus  
Vice Chair Steven Moore  
Board Member Dorene D'Adamo  
Board Member Tam M. Doduc  
Board Member E. Joaquin Esquivel

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeanine Townsend  
Clerk to the Board

TABLE 1

## Sample Field-Level Management Practice Data Reported to the Regional Board by Anonymous Member ID\*

ID	Data from INMP Summary Report						Data from Farm Evaluation			Data from MPIR			
Anonymous Member ID	Crop	Outlier Notification? (Annual)	INMP Certification Method (Annual)	Irrigation Method	Irrigation Practices (Annual)	Nitrogen Management Practices (Annual)	Pest Management Practices (Every Five Years)	Sediment and Erosion Management Practices (Every Five Years)	Irrigation wells? Abandoned wells? (Every Five Years)	In a SQMP area? (Annual)	Practices implemented to comply with SQMP	In a GQMP area?	Practices implemented to comply with GQMP
243721	Tomato <sub>1</sub>	Yes	CCA	Drip	Measured soil moisture	Evaluated crop nitrogen need; used fertigation	Followed label restrictions	Used off season cover crop	Yes, No	No	NA	No	NA
243721	Tomato <sub>2</sub>	No	CCA	Drip	Weather-based measured soil moisture	Used tissue/petiole testing	Used drift control agents	Stabilized creek and stream banks	Yes, Yes	No	NA	No	NA
243721	Corn	No	Self	Furrow	Tailwater return	Used split fertilizer applications	none	No irrigation drainage	Yes, Yes	No	NA	No	NA
341962	Almond	No	NRCS	Drip	Weather-based scheduleing	Used split fertilizer applications	Used buffer zones	Field is lower than surrounding terrain	Yes, No	Yes	Limited edge of field spraying	Yes	Used split fertilizer application
810619	Corn	No	<del>CCA</del> N/A	Furrow	Tailwater return	Tested irrigation water nitrogen concentration	Used vegetated drain ditches	Flow dissipaters, stabilited creed and stream banks	No, No	Yes	integrated pest management	No	NA
810619	Alfalfa	Yes	<del>Self</del> N/A	Border flood	Laser-leveled fields	none	Applied no pesticides	Used in-furrow dams	No, Yes	Yes	integrated pest management	No	NA
781936	Almond <sub>1</sub>	No	CCA	Sprinkler	Measured soil moisture	Tested soil for residual nitrogen	Mapped sensitive areas	irrigated with drip or micro irrigation syst.	Yes,No	No	NA	Yes	Compost added to soil
781936	Almond <sub>2</sub>	No	CCA	Flood	Irrigation based on crop water need	Tested soil for residual nitrogen	Used end-of-row sprayer shutoff	Planted cover corps or native vegetation	Yes, Yes	No	NA	Yes	Compost added to soil

\*The data in this table is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent actual data collected.

**Sample Field-Level Nitrogen Data Reported to the Regional Board by Anonymous Member ID\***

\*The data in this table is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent actual data collected. If multiple crop types are grown in the same field over the course of a year or over several years, variations on field nomenclature and crop reporting will be necessary. For example, the field could be identified as the same field in an extra column and an extra row could be added for each crop.

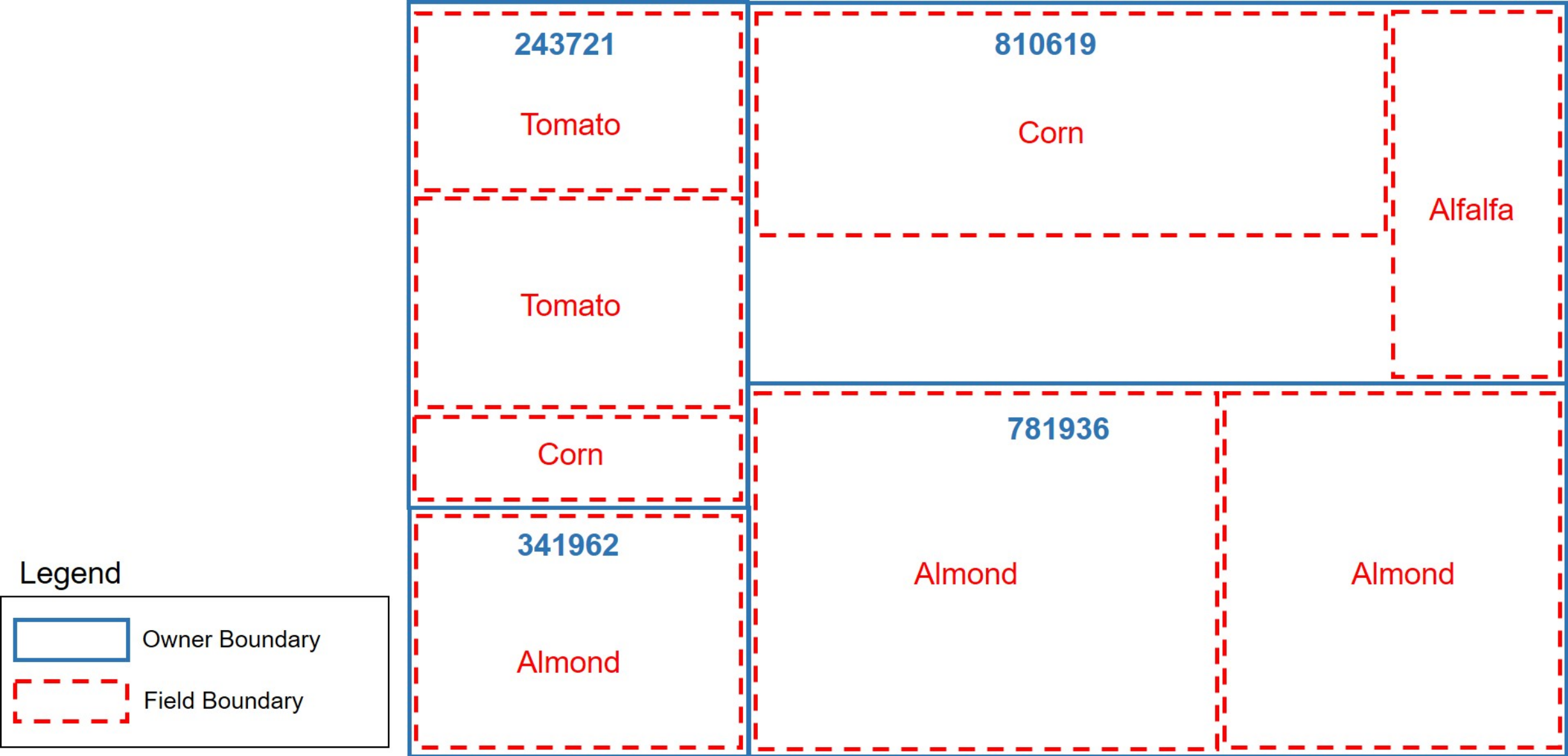
### Sample Field-Level Nitrogen Data Reported to the Regional Board by Anonymous APN ID\*

\*The data in this table is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent actual data collected. If multiple crop types are grown in the same field over the course of a year or over several years, variations on field nomenclature and crop reporting will be necessary. For example, the field could be identified as the same field in an extra column and an extra row could be added for each crop.

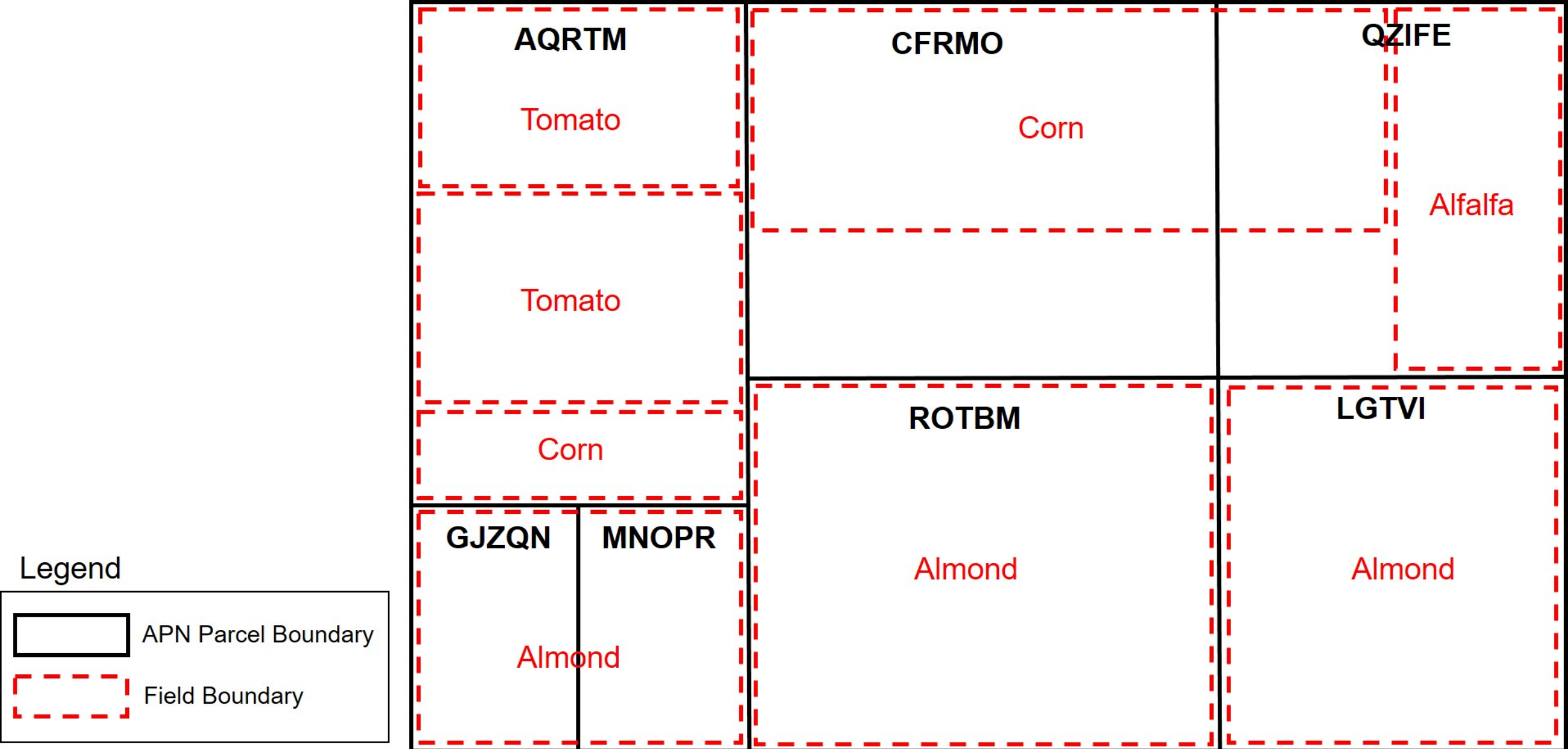
**TABLE 4****Sample Township-Level Nitrogen Data Reported to the Regional Board\***

Township Range (TR)	Crop	Total Acreage (ac)	N Applied via Fertilizer (total lbs)	N Applied via Organics/Compost (total lbs)	N Applied via Irrigation (total lbs)	Total Nitrogen Applied (total lbs)	Nitrogen Removed (total lbs)	A/R	A-R (total lbs)
02S07E	Almonds	88	20000	60	2390	22450	22400	1.0	50
02S07E	Corn, silage	54	12420	0	650	13070	11340	1.2	1730
02S07E	Walnuts	35	5250	0	500	5750	3575	1.6	2175
05S14E	Almonds	115	20700	0	3540	24240	16100	1.5	8140
05S14E	Corn, grain	600	66000	250	0	66250	55200	1.2	11050
05S14E	Grapes	112	2800	75	200	3075	3140	1.0	-65
05S14E	Oats	32	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
05S14E	Pistachios	1293	155160	0	3550	158710	108612	1.5	50098
05S14E	Wheat	1040	156000	200	900	157100	104000	1.5	53100
06S09E	Almonds	38	5700	0	705	6405	2052	3.1	4353
06S09E	Corn, grain	2144	235840	0	9858	245698	197248	1.2	48450
07S11E	Almonds	4696	657440	2000	3250	662690	422640	1.6	240050
07S11E	Tomatoes	891	160380	0	9928	170308	131868	1.3	38440
07S11E	Walnuts	105	15750	45	0	15795	8400	1.9	7395
08S13E	Barley	400	57000	200	400	57600	32000	1.8	25600
10S15E	Almonds	9328	2000000	800	14048	2014848	1679040	1.2	335808
10S15E	Corn, grain	387	42570	250	0	42820	35604	1.2	7216
10S15E	Tomatoes	91	12000	30	500	12530	17900	0.7	-5370
10S15E	Walnuts	80	11500	0	50	11550	9600	1.2	1950
11S17E	Almonds	9817	1511000	0	820	1511820	1079870	1.4	431950
11S17E	Corn, silage	54	12420	0	650	13070	11340	1.2	1730
11S17E	Walnuts	760	140000	300	6000	146300	66500	2.2	79800
13S17E	Almonds	1724	410000	0	3760	413760	258600	1.6	155160
13S17E	Tomatoes	186	19500	10	0	19510	1467	13.3	18043
13S17E	Walnuts	189	30000	200	1550	31750	6250	5.1	25500

\*The data in this table is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent actual data collected.



**Figure 1. Illustration of Anonymous Member ID, corresponding to Tables 1 and 2**



**Figure 2. Illustration of Anonymous APN ID, corresponding to Table 3**

**Appendix A to State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002:  
Modified Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs  
(As Adopted by the State Water Board on February 7, 2018)**

*Note:*

- 1. As stated in footnote 8 of this State Water Resources Control Board Water Quality Order (Order), this Appendix A does not reflect amendments to the Eastern San Joaquin Agricultural General WDRs adopted by the Central Valley Water Board on February 19, 2016 in Central Valley Water Board Order R5-2016-0015. In accordance with section III.1 of this Order, the Central Valley Water Board will incorporate those amendments into the General WDRs before posting and circulating the final version. This version of the WDRs is marked as R5-2012-0116-R4. The Central Valley Water Board may find it appropriate to use a different order or version number after making the amendments.*
- 2. Because of the redline/strikethrough format of Appendix A, table of content pagination, footnote numbering, section numbering, spacing, punctuation, and other minor formatting may change when the Central Valley Water Board prepares a final version of the WDRs. The Central Valley Water Board staff may make appropriate corrections to the formatting and to the cross-references to page and footnote numbers when preparing the final WDRs.*



**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

**ORDER R5-2012-0116, REVISION ~~34~~  
(referred to herein as ORDER R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~)**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER  
FOR  
GROWERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATERSHED  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

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Attachment A: Information Sheet

Attachment B: Monitoring and Reporting Program Order (contains appendices)

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Attachment E: Definitions, Acronyms, and Abbreviations

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

**Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER  
FOR  
GROWERS IN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATERSHED  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (hereafter, Central Valley Water Board or board), finds that:

**Findings**

**SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF THIS ORDER**

- 1 This Order serves as general waste discharge requirements (WDRs) for waste discharges from irrigated lands (or “discharges”) that could affect ground and/or surface waters of the state. The discharges result from runoff or leaching of irrigation water and/or stormwater from irrigated lands. Discharges can reach waters of the state directly or indirectly.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 This Order applies to owners and operators of irrigated lands within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. Either the owner or operator may enroll an irrigated lands parcel under this Order. The owners or operators that enroll the respective irrigated lands parcels are considered members of the third-party representing this area (hereinafter “Members”). The Member is required to provide written notice to the non-Member owner or operator that the parcel has been enrolled under the Order. Enforcement action by the board for non-compliance related to an enrolled irrigated lands parcel may be taken against both the owner and operator. ~~Although the third-party representative has not yet been selected, this Order contains eligibility requirements for a third-party representative and describes the process by which the Executive Officer may approve a request for third-party representation.~~
- 3 The Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed is bounded by the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range to the east, the Stanislaus River to the north, the San Joaquin River to the west, and the San Joaquin River Basin boundary to the south as identified in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basin Plan. This area is referred to as the “Order watershed area” or “third-party area” in this Order. See Figure 1 for a map of the third-party area.

There are some locations within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed where it may be more effective for owners and operators of irrigated lands that are not “Members” to enroll under an irrigated lands regulatory program (ILRP) order that recognizes a different third-party representative. Growers are only required to obtain coverage under one ILRP order.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions for “waste discharges from irrigated lands,” “waste,” “groundwater,” “surface water,” “stormwater runoff,” and “irrigation runoff,” as well as all other definitions, can be found in Attachment E to this Order. It is important to note that irrigation water, the act of irrigating cropland, and the discharge of irrigation water unto itself is not “waste” as defined by the Water Code, but that irrigation water may contain constituents that are considered to be a “waste” as defined by Water Code section 13050(d).

December 2012 – Revised October 2013, March 2014, ~~and~~ April 2015, October 2015, and February 2018.

- 4 “Irrigated lands” means land irrigated to produce crops or pasture used for commercial purposes including lands that are planted to commercial crops that are not yet marketable (e.g., vineyards and tree crops). Irrigated lands also include nurseries, and privately and publicly managed wetlands.
- 5 This Order is not intended to regulate water quality as it travels through or remains on the surface of a Member’s agricultural fields or the water quality of soil pore liquid within the root zone.<sup>2</sup>
- 6 This Order does not apply to discharges of waste that are regulated under other Water Board issued WDRs or conditional waiver of WDRs. If the other Water Board WDRs/waiver of WDRs only regulates some of the waste discharge activities (e.g., application of treated wastewater to crop land) at the regulated site, the owner/operator of the irrigated lands must obtain regulatory coverage for any discharges of waste that are not regulated by the other WDRs/waiver. Such regulatory coverage may be sought through enrollment under this Order or by obtaining appropriate changes in the owner/operator’s existing WDRs or conditional waiver of WDRs.
- 7 This Order implements the long-term ILRP in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. The long-term ILRP has been conceived as a range of potential alternatives and evaluated in a programmatic environmental impact report (PEIR).<sup>3</sup> The PEIR was certified by the Central Valley Water Board on 7 April 2011; however, the PEIR did not specify any single program alternative. The regulatory requirements contained within this Order fall within the range of alternatives evaluated in the PEIR. This Order, along with other orders to be adopted for irrigated lands within the Central Valley, together will constitute the long-term ILRP. Upon adoption of this Order, Order R5-2006-0053, Coalition Group Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands (Coalition Group Conditional Waiver), is rescinded as applied to irrigated lands within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. Existing Members that had previously enrolled under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver will be enrolled under this Order upon timely submittal of a Notice of Confirmation (see section VII.A of this Order).

#### **GROWERS REGULATED UNDER THIS ORDER**

- 8 This Order regulates both landowners and operators of irrigated lands from which there are discharges of waste that could affect the quality of any waters of the state. In order to be covered by this Order, the landowners or operators must be Members. Because this Order regulates both landowners and operators, but does not require enrollment of both parties, the provisions of this Order require that the Member provide notification to the non-Member responsible party of enrollment under this Order. The third-party group representing Members will assist with carrying out the conditions of this Order. Both the landowner and operator are ultimately responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of this Order.

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<sup>2</sup> Water that travels through or remains on the surface of a Member’s agricultural fields includes ditches and other structures (e.g., ponds, basins) that are used to convey supply or drainage water within that Member’s parcel or between contiguous parcels owned or operated by that Member.

<sup>3</sup> ICF International. 2011. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, Program Environmental Impact Report*. Final and Draft. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA

- 9 The third-party entity proposing to represent Members in the Order watershed area (the third-party) is required to submit to the Central Valley Water Board an application to represent growers within this Order's coverage area. The third-party representation will become effective upon Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer approval of the third party's application. The East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition served as the third-party group representing owners and operators of irrigated lands within the Order watershed area during the interim irrigated lands regulatory program, Order R5-2006-0053 (Coalition Group Conditional Waiver).
- 10 The third-party will be responsible for fulfilling the regional requirements and conditions (e.g., surface and groundwater monitoring, regional management plan development and tracking) of this Order and associated Monitoring and Reporting Program Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ (MRP). By retaining its third-party membership or establishing a new membership, a Member is agreeing to be represented by the third-party for the purposes of this Order. Any requirements or conditions not fulfilled by the third-party are the responsibility of the individual Member. The Member and non-Member owners and operators are responsible for conduct of operations on the Member's enrolled property.
- 11 To apply for coverage under this Order, a grower that is not a current Member in the third-party group will have different application requirements depending on the timing of its request for regulatory coverage (see section VII.A of this Order for specific requirements). Growers that enroll within 120 days of Executive Officer approval of the third-party will enroll under this Order by obtaining membership in the third-party group. This will streamline the initial enrollment process for the bulk of the irrigated agricultural operations within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. Growers who do not enroll within 120 days of Executive Officer approval of the third-party, or whom are prompted to apply by Central Valley Water Board enforcement or inspection, are required to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to comply with the terms and conditions of this Order to the Central Valley Water Board and obtain membership with the third-party group. This additional step for late enrollees is intended to provide incentive for growers to enroll promptly. There will be an administrative fee for submitting an NOI to the board. The fee will help recover costs for board efforts to conduct outreach to ensure growers subject to this Order enroll or submit reports of waste discharge.

#### **REASON FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY WATER BOARD ISSUING THIS ORDER**

- 12 The Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed region has approximately one million acres of cropland under irrigation and approximately 3,900 growers with "waste discharges from irrigated lands," as defined in Attachment E to this Order. Currently, approximately 165,000 acres are regulated under the Water Board's General Order for Existing Milk Cow Dairies (R5-2007-0035) and 538,121 acres are regulated under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver. Approximately 3,600 growers and 835,000 associated irrigated acres will require regulatory coverage under this Order or other WDRs or conditional waivers of WDRs. Small Farming Operations are those with a total farming operation that comprises less than 60 acres of irrigated land. In counties within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, Small Farming

Operations are operated by approximately 61 percent of the growers, but account for approximately 6% of the total irrigated lands.<sup>4</sup>

- 13 The Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed region contains all or portions of seven groundwater sub basins and has approximately 3,000 linear miles of surface water courses (including 700 linear miles of named surface water courses) that are, or could be, affected by discharges of waste from irrigated lands. This does not include surface water courses in the foothill and mountainous regions of the third-party area, where there are few irrigated lands operations. Discharges of waste from irrigated lands could adversely affect the quality of the “waters of the state,” as defined in Attachment E to this Order.
- 14 Within the third-party area, there are approximately 359,000 acres of irrigated lands within Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) Groundwater Protection Areas (GWPA)s. DPR identifies these areas as vulnerable to groundwater contamination from the agricultural use of certain pesticides, based upon either pesticide detections in groundwater or upon the presence of certain soil types (leaching and/or runoff) and a depth to groundwater shallower than 70 feet. Of the 359,000 acres, approximately 236,000 acres of the irrigated lands are within DPR GWPA)s that are characterized as vulnerable to leaching of pesticides (leaching areas), approximately 120,000 acres are within GWPA)s that are characterized as vulnerable to movement of pesticides to groundwater by runoff from fields to areas where they may move to groundwater (runoff areas), and 2,510 acres of irrigated lands are characterized as both leaching and runoff areas. For leaching areas, certain water soluble pesticides are carried mainly with excess irrigation water or rainwater through the soil profile and potentially to the underlying aquifer. For runoff areas, certain water soluble pesticides are carried mainly with runoff over the land surface to potential conduits to groundwater. However, DPR has not established or analyzed the GWPA)s with fertilizers and nitrate in mind, and its GWPA)s are established based upon detections of certain pesticides, many of which are of lower solubility. Solubility is one factor that can lead to groundwater contamination. Depending on the frequency of application and amount applied, certain water soluble constituents, such as nitrate, may share common pathways to groundwater with soluble pesticides. This Order includes consideration of DPR’s vulnerability factors and GWPA)s by the third-party in the determination of high vulnerability areas for nitrate.
- 15 The Central Valley Water Board’s *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report* (ECR)<sup>5</sup> identifies waters of the state with impaired water quality attributable to or influenced by irrigated agriculture, including within the third-party area. The *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Environmental Impact Report* (PEIR) describes that “[f]rom a programmatic standpoint, irrigated land waste discharges have the potential to cause degradation of surface and groundwater....”
- 16 Approximately 25 water bodies encompassing 450 linear miles of surface water courses have been listed as impaired pursuant to Clean Water Act section 303(d)<sup>6</sup> within the third-party area. Approximately 15 of those water bodies identify the potential source of the impairment

<sup>4</sup> Data are for Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne Counties; United States Department of Agriculture. 2007. *Census of Agriculture*.

<sup>5</sup> California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, and Jones and Stokes. 2008. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*. Sacramento, CA.

<sup>6</sup> 2008-2010 303(d) List.



as agriculture, and the remaining water bodies identify an unknown source of impairment. For example, Berenda Creek, Berenda Slough, Deadman Creek, Dry Creek, Duck Slough, Harding Drain, Highline Canal, Merced River, Mustang Creek, San Joaquin River, Stanislaus River, and the Tuolumne River are listed as impaired by the pesticide chlorpyrifos. Agriculture is identified as the potential source of impairment.

- 17 Elevated levels of nitrates in drinking water can have significant negative health effects on sensitive individuals. The Basin Plan contains a water quality objective for nitrate to protect the drinking water uses. The water quality objective for nitrate is the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 mg/L for nitrate plus nitrite as nitrogen (or 45 mg/L of nitrate as nitrate) established by the California Department of Public Health (22 CCR § 64431) that has been set at a level to protect the most at risk groups – infants under six months old and pregnant women.<sup>7</sup>

In some areas, nitrate from both agricultural and non-agricultural sources has resulted in degradation and/or pollution of groundwater beneath agricultural areas in the Central Valley.<sup>8</sup> Available data (see Information Sheet and the PEIR) indicate that there are a number of wells within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that have exceeded the MCL for nitrate. Groundwater in the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed has been designated for drinking water uses; therefore, the water quality objective of 10 mg/L for nitrate plus nitrite (as nitrogen) applies to groundwaters in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. Where nitrate groundwater quality data are not available, information on the hydrogeological characteristics of the area suggest that significant portions of the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed are vulnerable to nitrate contamination. Sources of nitrate in groundwater include leaching of excess fertilizer, confined animal feeding operations, septic systems, discharge to land of wastewater, food processor waste, unprotected well heads, improperly abandoned wells, and lack of backflow prevention on wells.

- 18 The Central Valley Water Board's authority to regulate waste discharges that could affect the quality of the waters of the state, which includes both surface water and groundwater, is found in the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code Division 7).
- 19 Water Code section 13263 requires the Central Valley Water Board to prescribe WDRs, or waive WDRs, for proposed, existing, or material changes in discharges of waste that could affect water quality. The board may prescribe waste discharge requirements although no discharge report under Water Code section 13260 has been filed. The WDRs must implement relevant water quality control plans and the Water Code. The Central Valley Water Board may prescribe general waste discharge requirements for a category of discharges if all the following criteria apply to the discharges in that category:
  - a. The discharges are produced by the same or similar operations.
  - b. The discharges involve the same or similar types of waste.
  - c. The discharges require the same or similar treatment standards.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the California Department of Public Health Nitrate Fact Sheet:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/drinkingwater/Documents/Nitrate/FactSheet-Nitrate-05-23-2012.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> PEIR, Appendix A

- d. The discharges are more appropriately regulated under general requirements than individual requirements.

The rationale for developing general waste discharge requirements for irrigated agricultural lands in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed includes: (a) discharges are produced by similar operations (irrigated agriculture); (b) waste discharges under this Order involve similar types of wastes (wastes associated with farming); (c) water quality management practices are similar for irrigated agricultural operations; (d) due to the large number of operations and their contiguous location, these types of operations are more appropriately regulated under general rather than individual requirements; and (e) the geology and the climate are similar, which will tend to result in similar types of water quality problems<sup>9</sup> and similar types of solutions.

- 20 Whether an individual discharge of waste from irrigated lands may affect the quality of the waters of the state depends on the quantity of the discharge, quantity of the waste, the quality of the waste, the extent of treatment, soil characteristics, distance to surface water, depth to groundwater, crop type, management practices and other site-specific factors. These individual discharges may also have a cumulative effect on waters of the state. Waste discharges from some irrigated lands have impaired or degraded and will likely continue to impair or degrade the quality of the waters of the state within the Central Valley Region if not subject to regulation pursuant to the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (codified in Water Code Division 7).
- 21 Water Code section 13267(b)(1) states: “(1) *In conducting an investigation specified in subdivision (a), the regional board may require that any person who has discharged, discharges, or is suspected of having discharged or discharging, or who proposes to discharge waste within its region, or any citizen or domiciliary, or political agency or entity of this state who has discharged, discharges, or is suspected of having discharged or discharging, or who proposes to discharge, waste outside of its region that could affect the quality of waters within its region shall furnish, under penalty of perjury, technical or monitoring program reports which the regional board requires. The burden, including costs, of these reports shall bear a reasonable relationship to the need for the report and the benefits to be obtained from the reports. In requiring those reports, the regional board shall provide the person with a written explanation with regard to the need for the reports, and shall identify the evidence that supports requiring that person to provide the reports. (2) When requested by the person furnishing a report, the portions of a report that might disclose trade secrets or secret processes may not be made available for inspection by the public but shall be made available to governmental agencies for use in making studies. However, these portions of a report shall be available for use by the state or any state agency in judicial review or enforcement proceedings involving the person furnishing the report.*”
- 22 Technical reports are necessary to evaluate Member compliance with the terms and conditions of this Order and to assure protection of waters of the state. Consistent with Water Code section 13267, this Order requires the implementation of a monitoring and reporting program (MRP) that is intended to determine the effects of Member waste discharges on water quality, to verify the adequacy and effectiveness of the Order’s conditions, and to evaluate Member compliance with the terms and conditions of the Order. ~~The requirements for reports~~

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<sup>9</sup> “Water quality problem” is defined in Attachment E.



~~and monitoring specified in this Order and attached MRP are based in part on whether an operation is within a high or low vulnerability area.~~ The third party is tasked with describing high and low vulnerability areas based on definitions provided in Attachment E to this Order and guidance provided in the MRP for development of the Groundwater Assessment Report. The Executive Officer will review third party proposed high and low vulnerability areas and make the final determination of these areas. High and low vulnerability areas will be reviewed and updated throughout the implementation of this Order. A Member who is covered under this Order must comply with MRP Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ which is part of this Order, and future revisions thereto by the Executive Officer or board.

- 23 The surface water quality monitoring and trend groundwater quality monitoring under this Order are regional in nature instead of individual field discharge monitoring. The benefits of regional monitoring include the ability to determine whether water bodies accepting discharges from numerous irrigated lands are meeting water quality objectives and to determine whether practices, at the watershed level, are protective of water quality. However, there are limitations to regional monitoring's effectiveness in determining possible sources of water quality problems, the effectiveness of management practices, and individual compliance with this Order's requirements.

Therefore, through the reporting and evaluation of applied nitrogen versus removed nitrogen, the Management Practices Evaluation Program, and development and utilization of Groundwater Protection Targets, the Surface Water Quality Management Plans and Groundwater Quality Management Plans, the third-party must evaluate the effectiveness of management practices in protecting water quality. In addition, Members must report the practices they are implementing to protect water quality and comply with Surface and Groundwater Quality Management Plans as applicable. Through the evaluations and studies conducted by the third-party, the reporting of applied and removed nitrogen as well as the management practices used by the Members, and the board's compliance and enforcement activities, the board will be able to determine whether a Member is complying with the Order.

Where required monitoring and evaluation does not allow the Central Valley Water Board to determine potential sources of water quality problems or identify whether management practices are effective, this Order requires the third-party to provide technical reports at the direction of the Executive Officer. Such technical reports are needed when monitoring or other available information is not sufficient to determine the effects of irrigated agricultural waste discharges to state waters. It may also be necessary for the board to conduct investigations by obtaining information directly from Members to assess individual compliance.

- 24 The Central Valley Water Board's *Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins* (hereafter Basin Plan) designates beneficial uses, establishes water quality objectives, contains programs of implementation needed to achieve water quality objectives, and references the plans and policies adopted by the State Water Board. The water quality objectives are developed to protect the beneficial uses of waters of the state. Compliance with water quality objectives will protect the beneficial uses listed in Finding 26.
- 25 This Order implements the Basin Plan by requiring the implementation of management practices to achieve compliance with applicable water quality objectives and requiring the prevention of nuisance. The Order requires implementation of a monitoring and reporting

program to determine effects of discharges on water quality and the effectiveness of management practices designed to comply with applicable water quality objectives.

- 26 Pursuant to the Basin Plan and State Water Board plans and policies, including State Water Board Resolution No. 88-63, and consistent with the federal Clean Water Act, the existing and potential beneficial uses of waters in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed may include:
- a. Municipal and Domestic Supply
  - b. Agricultural Supply
  - c. Industrial Service Supply
  - d. Hydropower Generation
  - e. Water Contact Recreation
  - f. Non-Contact Water Recreation
  - g. Warm Freshwater Habitat
  - h. Cold Freshwater Habitat
  - i. Migration of Aquatic Organisms
  - j. Spawning, Reproduction and Development
  - k. Wildlife Habitat
  - l. Freshwater Replenishment
  - m. Industrial Process Supply
- 27 In May 2004, the State Water Board adopted the *Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program* (NPS Policy). The purpose of the NPS Policy is to improve the state's ability to effectively manage NPS pollution and conform to the requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act and the Federal Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990. The NPS Policy requires, among other key elements, an NPS control implementation program's ultimate purpose to be explicitly stated. It also requires implementation programs to, at a minimum, address NPS pollution in a manner that achieves and maintains water quality objectives and beneficial uses, including any applicable antidegradation requirements.
- 28 This Order constitutes an NPS Implementation Program for the discharges regulated by the Order. The ultimate purpose of this program is expressly stated in the goals and objectives for the ILRP, described in the PEIR and Attachment A to this Order. Attachment A, Information Sheet, describes the five key elements required by the NPS Policy and provides justification that the requirements of this Order meet the requirements of the NPS Policy. This Order is consistent with the NPS Policy.
- 29 The United States Environmental Protection Agency adopted the National Toxics Rule (NTR) on 5 February 1993 and the California Toxics Rule (CTR) on 18 May 2000, which was modified on 13 February 2001. The NTR and CTR contain water quality criteria which, when combined with beneficial use designations in the Basin Plans, constitute enforceable water quality standards for priority toxic pollutants in California surface waters.

#### **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT**

- 30 For purposes of adoption of this Order, the Central Valley Water Board is the lead agency pursuant to CEQA (Public Resources Code sections 21100 et seq.). Pursuant to board direction in Resolutions R5-2006-0053 and R5-2006-0054, a Program Environmental Impact

Report (PEIR) was prepared. In accordance with CEQA, the Central Valley Water Board, acting as the lead agency adopted Resolution R5-2011-0017 on 7 April 2011, certifying the PEIR for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

- 31 This Order relies on the environmental impact analysis contained in the PEIR to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. Although the Order is not identical to any of the PEIR alternatives, the Order is comprised entirely of elements of the PEIR's wide range of alternatives. Therefore, the PEIR identified, disclosed, and analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the Order. The potential compliance activities undertaken by the regulated Members in response to this Order fall within the range of compliance activities identified and analyzed in the PEIR. Therefore, all potentially adverse environmental impacts of this Order have been identified, disclosed, and analyzed in the PEIR. If it is determined that a grower filing for coverage under this Order could create impacts not identified in the PEIR, individual WDRs would be prepared for that grower and additional CEQA analysis performed, which would likely tier off the PEIR as necessary. (See Title 14, CCR § 15152).
- 32 The requirements of this Order are based on elements of Alternatives 2 through 6 of the PEIR. The PEIR concludes that implementation of some of these elements has the potential to cause significant adverse environmental impacts. Such impacts are associated, directly and indirectly, with specific compliance activities growers may conduct in response to the Order's regulatory requirements. Such activities are expected to include implementation of water quality management practices and monitoring well installation and operation. Attachment A of this Order describes example water quality management practices that may be implemented as a result of this Order and that monitoring wells may be installed as a result of this Order. The types and degrees of implementation will be similar to those described in the PEIR for Alternatives 2 through 6. Also, because the cost of this Order is expected to fall within the range of costs described for Alternatives 2 through 6, significant impacts to agriculture resources under this Order will be similar to those described in the PEIR. Because of these similarities, this Order relies on the PEIR for its CEQA analysis. A listing of potential environmental impacts, the written findings regarding those impacts consistent with § 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines, and the explanation for each finding are contained in a separate Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations document (Attachment D), which is incorporated by reference into this Order.
- 33 Where potentially significant environmental impacts identified in Attachment D may occur as a result of Members' compliance activities, this Order requires that Members either avoid the impacts where feasible or implement identified mitigation measures, if any, to reduce the potential impacts to a less than significant level. Where avoidance or implementation of identified mitigation is not feasible, use of this Order is prohibited and individual WDRs would be required. The Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) Order, Attachment B, includes a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program to track the implementation of mitigation measures.
- 34 The PEIR finds that none of the program alternatives will cause significant adverse impacts to water quality. Consistent with alternatives in the PEIR, this Order contains measures needed to achieve and maintain water quality objectives and beneficial uses, reduce current pollutant loading rates, and minimize further degradation of water quality. As such, this Order will not cause significant adverse impacts to water quality.

## STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 68-16

- 35 State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Resolution No. 68-16 *Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California* (Resolution No. 68-16 or “antidegradation policy”) requires that a Regional Water Quality Control Board maintain high quality waters of the state unless the board determines that any authorized degradation is consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state, will not unreasonably affect beneficial uses, and will not result in water quality less than that described in a Regional Water Quality Control Board’s policies (e.g., quality that exceeds applicable water quality objectives). The board must also assure that any authorized degradation of existing high quality waters is subject to waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control (BPTC) of the discharge necessary to assure that pollution, or nuisance will not occur and the highest water quality consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained.
- 36 The Central Valley Water Board has information in its records that has been collected by the Central Valley Water Board, growers, educational institutions, and others that demonstrates that many water bodies within the Central Valley Region are impaired for various constituents, including pesticides, nitrates, and salts. Many water bodies have been listed as impaired pursuant to Clean Water Act section 303(d). This Order does not authorize further degradation of such waters.

Appendix A to the PEIR for the Irrigated Lands Program describes that “*there may be cases where irrigated agricultural waste discharges threaten to degrade high quality waters.*” For discharges to water bodies that are high quality waters, this Order is consistent with Resolution No. 68-16. Attachment A to this Order summarizes applicable antidegradation requirements and provides detailed rationale demonstrating how this Order is consistent with Resolution No. 68-16. As indicated in the summary, this Order authorizes limited degradation of high quality waters, not to exceed water quality objectives, threaten beneficial uses, or cause a condition of pollution or nuisance. The Order will also result in the implementation of BPTC by those discharging to high quality waters and assure that any change in water quality will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state.

## CALIFORNIA WATER CODE SECTIONS 13141 AND 13241

- 37 California Water Code section 13141 states that “*prior to implementation of any agricultural water quality control program, an estimate of the total cost of such a program, together with an identification of potential sources of financing, shall be indicated in any regional water quality control plan.*” Section 13141 concerns approvals or revisions to a water quality control plan and does not necessarily apply in a context where an agricultural water quality control program is being developed through waivers and waste discharge requirements rather than basin planning. However, the Basin Plan includes an estimate of potential costs and sources of financing for the long-term irrigated lands program. The estimated costs were derived by analyzing the six alternatives evaluated in the PEIR. This Order, which implements the long-term ILRP within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, is based on Alternatives 2-6 of

the PEIR; therefore, estimated costs of this Order fall within the Basin Plan cost range.<sup>10</sup> The total annual cost of compliance with this Order, e.g., summation of costs for administration, monitoring, reporting, tracking, implementation of management practices, is expected to be approximately \$4.10 per acre greater than the current surface water only protection program under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver. The total estimated cost of compliance of continuation of the previous Coalition Group Conditional Waiver within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed is expected to be approximately 96 million dollars per year (\$114.45 per acre annually). The total estimated cost of compliance with this Order is expected to be approximately 99 million dollars per year (\$118.55 per acre annually).

Approximately \$113.34 of the estimated \$118.55 per acre annual cost of the Order is associated with implementation of management practices. This Order does not require that Members implement specific water quality management practices.<sup>11</sup> Many of the management practices that have water quality benefits can have other economic and environmental benefits (e.g., improved irrigation can reduce water and energy consumption, as well as reduce runoff). Management practice selection will be based on decisions by individual Members in consideration of the unique conditions of their irrigated agricultural lands; water quality concerns; and other benefits expected from implementation of the practice. As such, the cost estimate is an estimate of potential, not required costs of implementing specific practices. Any costs for water quality management practices will be based on a market transaction between Members and those vendors or individuals providing services or equipment and not based on an estimate of those costs provided by the board. The cost estimates include estimated fees the third-party may charge to prepare the required reports and conduct the required monitoring, as well as annual permit fees that are charged to permitted dischargers for permit coverage. In accordance with the State Water Board's Fee Regulations, the current annual permit fee charged to members covered by this Order is \$0.56/acre. The combined total estimated costs that include third-party and state fees are estimated to be \$4.50 /acre annually or less than 5% of the total estimated cost of \$118.55 per acre. These costs have been estimated using the same study used to develop the Basin Plan cost estimate, which applies to the whole ILRP. The basis for these estimates is provided in the *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program*.<sup>12</sup> Attachment A includes further discussion regarding the cost estimate for this Order.

- 38 California Water Code section 13263 requires that the Central Valley Water Board consider the following factors, found in section 13241, when considering adoption of waste discharge requirements.

- (a) Past, present, and probable future beneficial uses of water.
- (b) Environmental characteristics of the hydrographic unit under consideration, including the quality of water available thereto.

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<sup>10</sup> When compared on a per irrigated acre basis; as the Basin Plan cost range is an estimate for all irrigated lands in the Central Valley versus this Order's applicability to a portion thereof (irrigated lands in Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed).

<sup>11</sup> Per Water Code section 13360, the Central Valley Water Board may not specify the manner in which a Member complies with water quality requirements.

<sup>12</sup> ICF International. 2010. *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program*. Draft. July. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA



- (c) Water quality conditions that could reasonably be achieved through the coordinated control of all factors which affect water quality in the area.
- (d) Economic considerations.
- (e) The need for developing housing within the region.
- (f) The need to develop and use recycled water.

These factors have been considered in the development of this Order. Attachment A, Information Sheet, provides further discussion on the consideration of section 13241 factors.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ONGOING WATER QUALITY EFFORTS**

- 39 Other water quality efforts conducted pursuant to state and federal law directly or indirectly serve to reduce waste discharges from irrigated lands to waters of the state. Those efforts will continue, and will be supported by implementation of this Order.
- 40 The Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) initiative has the goal of developing sustainable solutions to the increasing salt and nitrate concentrations that threaten the achievement of water quality objectives in Central Valley surface and groundwater. This Order requires actions that will reduce nitrate discharges and should result in practices that reduce salt loading. The board intends to coordinate all such actions with the CV-SALTS initiative. CV-SALTS may identify additional actions that need to be taken by irrigated agriculture and others to address these constituents. This Order can be amended in the future to implement any policies or requirements established by the Central Valley Water Board resulting from the CV-SALTS process. This Order includes provisions to promote coordination with CV-SALTS and to support the development of information needed for the CV-SALTS process.
- 41 Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) are established for surface waters that have been placed on the State Water Board's 303(d) list of Water Quality Limited Segments for failure to meet applicable water quality standards. A TMDL, which may be adopted by the Central Valley Water Board as Basin Plan amendments, is the sum of allowable loads of a single pollutant from all contributing point sources and nonpoint sources. The Central Valley Water Board is currently developing a pesticide TMDL and organochlorine pesticide TMDL, among others in development. This Order will implement these and other future TMDLs to the extent there are established requirements that pertain to irrigated agriculture, as well as the following approved TMDLs: San Joaquin River Deep Water Ship Channel dissolved oxygen; San Joaquin River salt, boron, selenium, diazinon, and chlorpyrifos.
- 42 The General Order for Existing Milk Cow Dairies (R5-2007-0035) and NPDES Dairy General Permit CAG015001 (Dairy General Orders) regulate discharges of waste to surface waters and groundwater from existing milk cow dairies in the Central Valley. Discharges from irrigated agricultural parcels are regulated by the Dairy General Orders if the owner or operator of the parcel applies dairy waste from its dairy operation. Irrigated agricultural parcels that receive dairy waste from external sources must obtain regulatory coverage for their discharge under this Order or waste discharge requirements that apply to individual growers. The Central Valley Water Board encourages the dairy industry and the third-party to coordinate the surface water and groundwater quality monitoring required of the two orders and coordinate their response to identified water quality problems.

- 43 The Central Valley Water Board approved the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition Management Plan on 25 November 2008. This plan includes implementation of the approved TMDLs listed in Finding 41. This plan (along with updates and modifications approved by the Executive Officer) will continue to be implemented under this Order to address the surface water quality problems identified therein, unless and until such time the Executive Officer requires modification of the plan or deems it to be complete, as described in this Order.

#### COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- 44 Integrated Regional Water Management Plans: Pursuant to part 2.75 of Division 6 of the Water Code (commencing with section 10750), local agencies are authorized to adopt and implement groundwater management plans (hereinafter “local groundwater management plans”), including integrated regional water management plans. The legislation provides recommended components to the plans such as control of saline water intrusion, regulation of the migration of contaminated water, monitoring of groundwater levels and storage, and the development of relationships with regulatory agencies. The information collected through implementation of groundwater management plans can support or supplement efforts to evaluate potential impacts of irrigated agricultural discharges on groundwater. This Order requires the third-party to develop regional groundwater monitoring workplans and, where necessary, groundwater quality management plans (GQMPs). The third-party is encouraged to coordinate with local groundwater management plans and integrated regional water management plans, where applicable, when developing regional groundwater monitoring workplans and GQMPs.
- 45 California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR): DPR has developed a Groundwater Protection Program under the authority of the Pesticide Contamination Prevention Act (PCPA) (commencing with Food and Agriculture Code section 13142). The program is intended to prevent contamination of groundwater from the legal application of pesticides. In addition to activities mandated by the PCPA, DPR’s program has incorporated approaches to identify areas vulnerable to pesticide movement, develop mitigation measures to prevent pesticide contamination, and monitor domestic drinking water wells located in groundwater protection areas. The Groundwater Protection Program can provide valuable information on potential impacts to groundwater from agricultural pesticides. If necessary, DPR and the county agricultural commissioners can use their regulatory authorities to address any identified impacts to groundwater or surface water attributable to pesticide discharges from agricultural fields.
- ~~46~~ California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA): The CDFA Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP) coordinates research to advance the environmentally safe and agronomically sound use and handling of fertilizer materials. The University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) and Currently, CDFA FREP is developing developed and offers nitrogen management certification training ~~programs~~ for farmers and Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs). Between 2012 and 2015, eight training sessions were held, certifying approximately 800 CCAs statewide. A special training program has also been developed for training CCAs to become grower-trainers and provide grower training. Among other certification options available for irrigation and nitrogen management plans, the CDFA training programs will be recognized as providing the training necessary for a farmer-Member or CCA to certify irrigation and nitrogen management plans ~~in high vulnerability groundwater areas~~. In addition, this Order requires the ~~development of a template for preparation of an~~

irrigation and nitrogen management plan and submittal of a summary report. CDFA has had an active role in working with the agricultural community on the concepts related to the template and that role is expected to continue. This Order leverages CDFA's work and expertise with respect to nitrogen management training and technical support to the professionals and third-parties that will be developing irrigation and nitrogen management plans for individual Members.

- 47 Nitrogen Management and Control – In response to nitrate groundwater concerns, the Legislature enacted Chapter 1 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2008 (SBX2 1, Perata), requiring the State Water Board to develop pilot projects focusing on nitrate in groundwater in the Tulare Lake Basin and the Salinas Valley, and to submit a Report to the Legislature. <sup>13</sup> In its report, the State Water Board made fifteen recommendations to address the issues associated with nitrate contaminated groundwater.

In fulfillment of Recommendation #11 of the Report to the Legislature, CDFA, in coordination with the Water Boards, convened the Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting Task Force (Nitrogen Tracking Task Force) to identify an appropriate nitrogen tracking and reporting system and to provide meaningful and high quality data to help CDFA and the water boards address groundwater quality nitrate issues in California. The Nitrogen Tracking Task Force included stakeholders and experts from agricultural organizations, academia, regulatory agencies, and the environmental advocacy community. The Task Force's Final Report<sup>14</sup> was released December 5, 2013, and made recommendations for a nitrogen tracking and reporting system. The recommended system addressed eight key topics including: (1) system structure; (2) data elements; (3) roles, responsibilities, and data accessibility; (4) benefits of participation; (5) verifiability; (6) societal benefits of the recommended system; (7) limitations; and (8) system phasing.

In fulfillment of Recommendation #14 of the Report to the Legislature, the State Water Board, in coordination with CDFA, convened the Agricultural Expert Panel to consider all existing studies, program, and efforts for agricultural nitrate control, including the recommendations of the Nitrogen Tracking Task Force. The Agricultural Expert Panel consisted of eight members with various areas of specialization including: an irrigation specialist/agricultural engineer, a soil scientist, a hydrogeologist, an agronomist, a certified crop advisor, a University of California Cooperative Extension farm advisor, a Central Coast grower, and a Central Valley grower. The Agricultural Expert Panel held multiple public meetings over a six month period in Tulare, San Luis Obispo, and Sacramento to consider the questions posed to them by the State Water Board. In its assessment, the Agricultural Expert panel considered groundwater monitoring, tracking and reporting of nitrogen fertilizer application, estimates of nitrogen use efficiency or similar metric, and farm-specific nutrient management plans as source control measures and regulatory tools. The Agricultural Expert Panel Final Report<sup>15</sup> was presented to the State Water Board on September 23, 2014. In its Final Report, the Agricultural Expert panel recommended (in no particular order):

<sup>13</sup> State Water Board Resources Control Board. 2013. Report to the Legislature, Recommendations Addressing Nitrate in Groundwater. <[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/nitrate\\_project/docs/nitrate\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/nitrate_project/docs/nitrate_rpt.pdf)>

<sup>14</sup> California Department of Food and Agriculture. 2013. Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting Task Force Final Report. <<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/environmentalstewardship/PDFs/NTRSTFFinalReport122013.pdf>>

<sup>15</sup> State Water Resources Control Board. 2014. Conclusions of the Agricultural Expert Panel. [http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/agriculture/docs/ILRP\\_expert\\_panel\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/agriculture/docs/ILRP_expert_panel_final_report.pdf)



- Establishment of coalitions as an intermediate body between Members and regional boards;
- Adoption of a Nitrogen Applied to Nitrogen Removed Ratio (A/R Ratio) as the primary metric for evaluating progress on nitrogen source control;
- Development of strong, comprehensive, and sustained educational and outreach program;
- Creation and implementation of Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans;
- Reporting of key values of crop type, acreage, total nitrogen applied, and total nitrogen removed by Members to the third-party;
- Trend groundwater monitoring for nitrate concentrations to track general aquifer conditions over multiple years;
- Targeted research to directly help the agricultural community to maintain and/or improve yields while simultaneously decreasing A/R ratio on individual fields;
- Analysis of reported values on a multiple-year basis to inform agricultural community of progress and sharpen improvement efforts.

~~GDFA, in coordination with the Water Boards, is convening a Task Force to identify intended outcomes and expected benefits of a nitrogen mass balance tracking system in nitrate high-risk areas. The GDFA Task Force may identify appropriate nitrogen tracking and reporting systems, and potential alternatives, that would provide meaningful and high quality data to help better protect groundwater quality.~~

~~In the Report to the Legislature,<sup>16</sup> the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has committed to convene a panel of experts from a broad spectrum of relevant disciplines (Expert Panel) to assess existing agricultural nitrate control programs and develop recommendations, as needed, to ensure that ongoing efforts are protective of groundwater quality. The Expert Panel will evaluate ongoing agricultural control measures that address nitrate in groundwater, and will propose new measures, if necessary. In its assessment of existing agricultural nitrate control programs and development of recommendations for possible improvements in the regulatory approaches being used, the Expert Panel will consider groundwater monitoring, mandatory adoption of best management practices, tracking and reporting of nitrogen fertilizer application, estimates of nitrogen use efficiency or a similar metric, and farm-specific nutrient management plans as source control measures and regulatory tools.~~

~~The deadlines for preparation of a nitrogen management plan and associated reporting have been established to allow the board to make any necessary adjustments to this Order based on the findings and recommendations of the GDFA Task Force and the SWRCB Expert Panel.~~

~~4648~~ The Central Valley Water Board will continue to work cooperatively with the other state agencies to identify and leverage their efforts.

#### **ENFORCEMENT FOR NONCOMPLIANCE WITH THIS ORDER**

~~4749~~ California Water Code section 13350 provides that any person who violates Waste Discharge Requirements may be: 1) subject to administrative civil liability imposed by the Central Valley

Water Board or State Water Board in an amount of up to \$5,000 per day of violation, or \$10 per gallon if the discharge involves a discharge of pollutants; or 2) be subject to civil liability imposed by a court in an amount of up to \$15,000 per day of violation, or \$20 per gallon. The actual calculation and determination of administrative civil penalties must be set forth in a manner that is consistent with the State Water Board's Water Quality Enforcement Policy.

~~48~~50 The State Water Board's Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy) endorses progressive enforcement action for violations of waste discharge requirements when appropriate, but recommends formal enforcement as a first response to more significant violations. Progressive enforcement is an escalating series of actions that allows for the efficient and effective use of enforcement resources to: 1) assist cooperative Members in achieving compliance; 2) compel compliance for repeat violations and recalcitrant violators; and 3) provide a disincentive for noncompliance. Progressive enforcement actions may begin with informal enforcement actions such as a verbal, written, or electronic communication between the Central Valley Water Board and a Member. The purpose of an informal enforcement action is to quickly bring the violation to the Member's attention and to give the Member an opportunity to return to compliance as soon as possible. The highest level of informal enforcement is a Notice of Violation.

The Enforcement Policy recommends formal enforcement actions for the highest priority violations, chronic violations, and/or threatened violations. Violations of this Order that will be considered a priority include, but are not limited to:

- a. Failure to obtain required regulatory coverage.
- b. Failure to meet receiving water limitations, unless the Member is implementing a Central Valley Water Board approved SQMP or GQMP in accordance with the time schedule provisions of this Order (section XII).<sup>17</sup>
- c. The discharge of waste to lands not owned, leased, or controlled by the Member without written permission from the landowner.
- d. Failure to prevent future exceedances of water quality objectives once made aware of an exceedance.
- e. Falsifying information or intentionally withholding information required by applicable laws, regulations or an enforcement order.
- f. Failure to implement a SQMP/GQMP.
- g. Failure to pay annual fees, penalties, or liabilities.
- h. Failure to monitor or provide information to the third-party as required.
- i. Failure to submit required reports on time.
- j. Failure to implement the applicable management practices, or equivalent practices, identified as protective of groundwater in the Management Practices Evaluation Report.

~~49~~51 Under this Order, the third-party is tasked with developing monitoring plans, conducting monitoring, developing water quality management plans, and informing Members of requirements. It is intended that the following progressive enforcement steps will generally be

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<sup>17</sup> A Member participating in a Management Practices Evaluation Program study (i.e., the study is taking place on the Member's farm) where data indicate the discharge from the study area is not meeting receiving water limitations will not be a priority for enforcement, if the Member is implementing a Central Valley Water Board approved SQMP or GQMP in accordance with the time schedule provisions of this Order (section XII).

taken in the event that the third-party fails to comply with the terms and conditions of this Order or attached MRP:

- a) First notification of noncompliance to the third-party. The Central Valley Water Board intends to notify the third-party of the non-compliance and allow a period of time for the third-party to come back into compliance. This notification may be in the form of a verbal notice, letter, or written notice of violation, depending on the severity of the noncompliance.
- b) Second notification of noncompliance to the third-party. If the third-party fails to adequately respond to the first notification, the board intends to provide written notice to the third-party and potentially affected Members of the failure to address the first notice.
- c) Failure of the third-party to adequately respond to the second notification. Failure to adequately respond to the second notification may result in partial (e.g., affected areas or Members) or full disapproval of the third-party to act as a lead entity, depending on the severity of noncompliance. Growers that were Members affected by a partial or full third-party disapproval would be required to obtain coverage for their waste discharge under other applicable general waste discharge requirements or submit a Report of Waste Discharge to the Central Valley Water Board.

### GENERAL FINDINGS

~~5052~~ This Order does not authorize violation of any federal, state, or local law or regulation.

~~5453~~ This Order does not authorize any act that results in the taking of a threatened or endangered species or any act that is now prohibited, or becomes prohibited in the future, under either the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code sections 2050 to 2097) or the Federal Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C.A. sections 1531 to 1544). If a "take" will result from any action authorized under this Order, the Member shall obtain authorization for an incidental take prior to construction or operation of the project. The Member shall be responsible for meeting all requirements of the applicable Endangered Species Act.

~~5254~~ This Order does not supersede the Central Valley Water Board's Basin Plans and policies, including prohibitions (e.g., pesticides) and implementation plans (e.g., Total Maximum Daily Loads), or the State Water Board's plans and policies.

~~5355~~ As stated in California Water Code section 13263(g), the discharge of waste into waters of the state is a privilege, not a right, and regulatory coverage under this Order does not create a vested right to continue the discharge of waste. Failure to prevent conditions that create or threaten to create pollution or nuisance will be sufficient reason to modify, revoke, or enforce this Order, as well as prohibit further discharge.

~~5456~~ This Order requires Members to provide the third-party with contact information of the person(s) authorized to provide access to the enrolled property for inspections. This requirement provides a procedure to enable board staff to contact grower representatives so that it may more efficiently monitor compliance with the provisions of this Order.

~~5557~~ Any instance of noncompliance with this Order constitutes a violation of the California Water Code and its regulations. Such noncompliance is grounds for enforcement action, and/or

termination of coverage for waste discharges under this Order, subjecting the discharger to enforcement under the Water Code for further discharges of waste to surface or groundwater.

~~56~~58 All discharges from the irrigated agricultural operation are expected to comply with the lawful requirements of municipalities, counties, drainage districts, and other local agencies regarding discharges to storm drain systems or to other courses under their jurisdiction.

~~57~~59 The fact that it would have been necessary to halt or reduce the discharge in order to maintain compliance with this Order shall not be a defense for violations of the Order by the Member.

~~58~~60 This Order is not a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit issued pursuant to the Federal Clean Water Act. Coverage under this Order does not exempt a facility from the Clean Water Act. Any facility required to obtain such a permit must notify the Central Valley Water Board.

~~59~~61 Water Code section 13260(d)(1)(A) requires persons subject to waste discharge requirements to pay an annual fee established by the State Water Board.

~~60~~62 The Findings of this Order, supplemental information and details in the attached Information Sheet (Attachment A), and the administrative record of the Central Valley Water Board relevant to the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, were considered in establishing these waste discharge requirements.

~~64~~63 The Central Valley Water Board has notified interested agencies and persons of its intent to adopt this Order for discharges of waste from irrigated lands within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, and has provided them with an opportunity for a public hearing and an opportunity to submit comments.

~~62~~64 The Central Valley Water Board, in a public meeting, heard and considered all comments pertaining to this Order.

~~63~~65 Any person affected by this action of the Central Valley Water Board may petition the State Water Board to review this action. The State Water Board must receive the petition within 30 days of the date on which the Central Valley Water Board adopted this Order. Copies of the law and regulations applicable to filing petitions will be provided upon request.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that, pursuant to California Water Code sections 13260, 13263, and 13267 and in order to meet the provisions contained in Division 7 of the California Water Code and regulations and policies adopted there under; all Members of the third-party group, their agents, successors, and assigns shall comply with the following:

**I. Coverage**

1. Order 2006-0053, Coalition Group Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands (Coalition Group Conditional Waiver), is hereby rescinded as it applied to Members of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

**II. Prohibitions**

1. The discharge of waste to waters of the state, from irrigated agricultural operations other than those defined in the Findings of this Order, is prohibited.
2. The discharge of hazardous waste, as defined in California Water Code section 13173 and Title 23 CCR section 2521(a), respectively, is prohibited.
3. The discharge of wastes (e.g., fertilizers, fumigants, pesticides) into groundwater via backflow through a water supply well is prohibited.
4. The discharge of any wastes (e.g., fertilizers, fumigants, pesticides) down a groundwater well casing is prohibited.

**III. Receiving Water Limitations**

**A. Surface Water Limitations<sup>18</sup>**

1. Wastes discharged from Member operations shall not cause or contribute to an exceedance of applicable water quality objectives in surface water, unreasonably affect applicable beneficial uses, or cause or contribute to a condition of pollution or nuisance.

**B. Groundwater Limitations<sup>19</sup>**

1. Wastes discharged from Member operations shall not cause or contribute to an exceedance of applicable water quality objectives in the underlying groundwater, unreasonably affect applicable beneficial uses, or cause or contribute to a condition of pollution or nuisance.

**IV. Provisions**

**A. General Specifications**

1. The third-party will assist its Members in complying with the relevant terms and provisions of this Order, including required monitoring and reporting as described in MRP Order R5-2012-

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<sup>18</sup> These limitations are effective immediately except where Members are implementing an approved Surface Water Quality Management Plan (SQMP) for a specified waste parameter in accordance with an approved time schedule authorized pursuant to sections VIII.H and XII of this Order.

<sup>19</sup> These limitations are effective immediately except where Members are implementing an approved Groundwater Quality Management Plan (GQMP) for a specified waste parameter in accordance with an approved time schedule authorized pursuant to sections VIII.H and XII of this Order.

0116-R~~34~~. However, individual Members of the third-party group continue to bear ultimate responsibility for complying with this Order.

2. Irrigated lands owners or operators with waste discharges to state waters (or “Dischargers”) that are not Members of the third-party group, or whose property is not enrolled by a Member of the third-party group, shall not be subject to coverage provided by the terms of this Order. Such Dischargers shall be required to obtain coverage for their waste discharge under individual waste discharge requirements or any applicable general waste discharge requirements that apply to individuals that are not represented by a third-party.
3. Members who are subject to this Order shall implement water quality management practices, as necessary, to protect water quality and to achieve compliance with applicable water quality objectives. Where applicable, the implementation of practices must be in accordance with the time schedule contained in an approved Groundwater Quality Management Plan or Surface Water Quality Management Plan.
4. Installation of groundwater monitoring wells or implementation of management practices to meet the conditions of this Order at a location or in a manner that could cause an adverse environmental impact as identified in the *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, Final Program Environmental Impact Report* (PEIR)<sup>20</sup> shall be mitigated in accordance with the mitigation measures provided in Attachment C of this Order.
5. The provisions of this Order are severable. If any provision of the Order is held invalid, the remainder of the Order shall not be affected.

#### **B. Requirements for Members of the Third-Party Group**

1. Members shall comply with all applicable provisions of the California Water Code, the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins*, and State Water Board plans and policies.
2. All Members shall comply with the attached Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) R5-2012-0116-R~~34~~, and future revisions thereto.
3. Members who are covered under this Order shall comply with the terms and conditions contained in this Order.
4. Each Member<sup>21</sup> shall participate in third-party outreach events, at least annually, ~~if any of the Member's parcels are in a designated “high vulnerability” area or governed by a SQMP/GQMP.~~ The Member shall review outreach materials to become informed of any water quality problems to address and the management practices that are available to address those issues. The Member shall provide annual confirmation to the third-party that the Member has ~~attended-participated in~~ an outreach ~~event-activity~~ during the previous year and reviewed the applicable outreach materials. Members who have no parcels in areas designated as high

<sup>20</sup> On 7 April 2011, the Central Valley Water Board adopted Resolution R5-2011-0017, certifying the PEIR for the long-term irrigated lands regulatory program.

<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of this provision only, the term “Member” or “Grower” includes “Designees”, provided that a Designee has responsibility for decisions related to management practices associated with farming operation.



vulnerability are not required to commence participation in third-party outreach events until 2020.

5. All Members shall provide the third-party with information requested for compliance with this Order.
6. All Members shall implement water quality management practices in accordance with any water quality management plans approved by the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer, and/or as necessary to protect water quality and to achieve compliance with surface and groundwater receiving water limitations of this Order (sections III.A and B). Water quality management practices can be instituted on an individual basis, or implemented to serve multiple growers discharging to a single location.
7. All Members shall implement effective sediment discharge and erosion prevention practices to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels. Members with the potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters, as identified by the Member in their Farm Evaluation, by the third-party in the Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report, or by the Executive Officer shall prepare and implement a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan as specified in section VII.C below.
8. All Members shall implement practices that minimize excess nutrient application ~~relative to crop need~~. Members shall prepare and implement a farm-specific irrigation and nitrogen management plan and submit a farm-specific irrigation and nitrogen management plan summary report as required by section VII.D of this Order.<sup>22</sup>
9. In addition to the reports identified in section VII of this Order, the Executive Officer may require the Member to submit additional technical reports pursuant to California Water Code section 13267.
10. The requirements prescribed in this Order do not authorize the commission of any act causing injury to the property of another, or protect the Member from liabilities under other federal, state, county, or local laws. However, enrollment under this Order does protect the Member from liability alleged for failing to comply with Water Code 13260.
11. This Order does not convey any property rights or exclusive privileges.
12. This Order shall not create a vested right, and all such discharges of waste shall be considered a privilege, as provided for in Water Code section 13263.

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<sup>22</sup> Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans are prepared in advance of the crop season, and based on circumstances that are forecasted. However, due to changes in weather, water availability, and other unanticipated circumstances, growers may find it necessary to adjust the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan as originally prepared. Such adjustments are not considered to be violations of the Order, provided the revision maintains compliance with provision of this Order. Should such adjustments be necessary, the member must document the reasons for adjustments in the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan retained at the grower's place of business and report the reasons to the third-party with the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan retained at the grower's place of business and report the reasons to the third-party with the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report (if applicable).

13. The Member understands that the Central Valley Water Board or its authorized representatives, may, at reasonable hours, inspect the facilities and irrigated lands of persons subject to this Order to ascertain whether the purposes of the Porter-Cologne Act are being met and whether the Member is complying with the conditions of this Order. To the extent required by Water Code section 13267(c) or other applicable law, the inspection shall be made with the consent of the Member, owner or authorized representative, or if consent is withheld, with a duly issued warrant pursuant to the procedure set forth in Title 13 Code of Civil Procedure Part 3 (commencing with section 1822.50). In the event of an emergency affecting the public health and safety, an inspection may be performed without the consent or the issuance of a warrant.
14. The Member shall provide the third-party with the phone number(s) of the individual(s) with authority to provide consent to access its facilities as described in provision IV.B.13 above.
15. The Member shall properly operate and maintain in good working order any facility, unit, system, or monitoring device installed to achieve compliance with the Order.
16. Settling ponds, basins, and tailwater recovery systems shall be constructed, maintained, and operated to prevent groundwater degradation, erosion, slope failure; and minimize the discharge of sediment. The construction and operation must be consistent with the applicable Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation practice standard, an NRCS or University of California Cooperative Extension recommendation, or an equivalent alternative standard.
17. Where applicable, the Member shall follow state, county or local agency standards with respect to water wells and groundwater quality when constructing new wells, modifying existing wells, or destroying wells. Absent such standards, at a minimum, the Member shall follow the standards and guidelines described in the California Department of Water Resources' *Water Well Standards (Bulletins 74-81 & 74-90 combined)*.
18. The Member shall maintain a copy of this Order, either in hard copy or electronic format, at the primary place of business, or the Member's headquarters for its farming operation. The Member shall also maintain excerpts of the Order's Member requirements that have been provided by the Executive Officer, so as to be available at all times to operations personnel. The Member and his/her designee shall be familiar with the content of this Order.
19. The Member, or the third-party on its behalf as applicable, shall submit all required documents in accordance with section IX of this Order.
20. Members shall, at a minimum, implement water quality management practices that meet the following farm management performance standards:
  - a. Minimize waste discharge offsite in surface water,
  - b. Minimize percolation of waste to groundwater,
  - c. Protect wellheads from surface water intrusion.
21. Members shall implement the applicable management practices, or equivalent practices, identified as protective of groundwater in the Management Practices Evaluation Report.



### C. Requirements for the Third-Party Group

In order to remain eligible to serve as a third-party representative to Members, the third-party shall perform the following:

1. Provide the Central Valley Water Board documentation of its organizational or management structure. The documentation shall identify persons responsible for ensuring that program requirements are fulfilled. The documentation shall be made readily available to Members.
2. Prepare annual summaries of expenditures of fees and revenue used to comply with this Order. The summaries shall be provided to or made readily available to Members.
3. If the third-party group receives a notice of violation (NOV) from the Central Valley Water Board, the third-party must provide to Members in the area addressed by the NOV appropriate information regarding the reason(s) for the violation. The notification must be provided to all Members within the area affected by the NOV within thirty (30) days of receiving the NOV from the board. The third-party group must provide confirmation to the board of each notification. A summary of all notices of violation received by the third-party group must be provided to all Members annually.
4. Develop and implement plans to track and evaluate the effectiveness of water quality management practices, pursuant to approved Surface Water Quality Management Plans and Groundwater Quality Management Plans.
5. Provide timely and complete submittal of any plans or reports required by this Order.
6. Conduct required water quality monitoring and assessments in conformance with quality assurance/quality control requirements. Provide timely and complete submittal of any reports required by this Order.
7. Within 30 days of receiving an NOA from the Central Valley Water Board (as described in section VIII.A), inform Members of this Order's requirements by providing a notice of confirmation form to be completed by each Member.
8. Conduct education and outreach activities to inform Members of program requirements and water quality problems, including exceedances of water quality objectives or degradation of water quality, identified by the third-party or Central Valley Water Board. Outreach events and materials shall include information on nitrogen application practices and the potential impact of nitrates on groundwater and, as appropriate depending on the anticipated grower audience, shall be provided in multiple languages. The third-party shall:
  - a. Maintain attendance-participation lists for outreach ~~events~~activities, provide Members with information on water quality management practices that will address water quality problems and minimize the discharge of wastes from irrigated lands, and provide informational materials on potential environmental impacts of water quality management practices to the extent known by the third-party group.
  - b. Provide an annual summary of education and outreach activities to the Central Valley Water Board. The annual summary shall include copies of the educational and management practice information provided to the growers. The annual summary must report the total number of growers who attended the outreach events and describe how growers could obtain copies of the materials presented at these events.

c. Provide additional INMP self-certification training for Members notified as being outliers for reported AR data and who opt not to use a specialist for INMP certification. This INMP self-certification training shall be focused on assisting Members in reducing their overall A/R<sub>3 year</sub> ratio and shall require in-person attendance.

9. Work cooperatively with the Central Valley Water Board to ensure all Members are providing required information and taking necessary steps to address exceedances or degradation identified by the third-party or board. As part of the Membership List submittal, identify the growers who have: (1) failed to implement improved water quality management practices within the timeframe specified by an applicable SQMP/GQMP; (2) failed to respond to an information request associated with any applicable SQMP/GQMP or other provisions of this Order; (3) failed to participate in third-party studies for which the third-party is the lead; (4) failed to provide confirmation of participation in an outreach ~~event~~ activity (per section IV.B.4 of this Order); or (5) failed to submit required fees to the third-party.
10. Ensure that any activities conducted on behalf of the third-party by other groups meet the requirements of this Order. The third-party is responsible for any activities conducted on its behalf.
11. Collect any fees from Members required by the State Water Board pursuant to the fee schedule contained in Title 23 CCR. Such fees shall then be submitted to the State Water Board.

## V. Effective Dates

1. This Order is effective upon adoption by the Central Valley Water Board on **7 December 2012** and remains in effect as revised by the Central Valley Water Board on **3 October 2013, 27 March 2014 and 17 April 2015**; and as revised by the State Water Board Order on February 7, 2018; unless rescinded or further revised by the Central Valley Water Board.
2. Regulatory coverage under this Order for discharges of waste from Members already enrolled under Order R5-2006-0053 is effective upon adoption of this Order by the Central Valley Water Board. Regulatory coverage under this Order is automatically terminated, if a Notice of Confirmation (NOC) is not received by the third-party from the currently enrolled Member within 120 days of Executive Officer issuance of an NOA to the third-party.
3. Regulatory coverage for Dischargers not already enrolled under Order R5-2006-0053 as of the date of adoption of this Order can be obtained directly through obtaining membership in the third-party group within 120 days of Executive Officer issuance of a Notice of Applicability (NOA) to the third-party. Regulatory coverage is effective when the third-party notifies the Central Valley Water Board that the Discharger's application for membership has been accepted.
4. After the initial 120-day period following issuance of an NOA to the third-party group, regulatory coverage is effective upon notification by the Central Valley Water Board that this Order applies to the grower through the issuance of an NOA. The Central Valley Water Board shall only issue an NOA after it has received a Notice of Intent (NOI) as required by section VII.A, and after the Central Valley Water Board has received notification from the third-party that the Discharger is a Member. The Discharger must pay any applicable State Water Board administrative fees associated with the filing of NOIs.

December 2012 – Revised October 2013, March 2014, ~~and~~ April 2015, October 2015, and February 2018

## Appendix A to State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ 2018-0002

## VI. Permit Reopening, Revision, Transfer, Revocation, Termination, and Reissuance

1. This Order may be reopened to address any changes in state statutes, regulations, plans, or policies that would affect the water quality requirements for the discharges, including, but not limited to, the Central Valley Water Board *Water Quality Control Plan* (Basin Plan) *for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins*.
  2. The Central Valley Water Board is developing amendments to the Basin Plan to incorporate new strategies for addressing ongoing salt and nitrate accumulation in the waters and soils of the Central Valley as part of the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CVSALTS) initiative. Should the Board adopt amendments to the Basin Plan to effectuate such strategies, and the amendments are approved by the State Water Board, these waste discharge requirements may be amended or modified to incorporate any newly applicable requirements.
  - ~~2.3.~~ The filing of a request by the third-party on behalf of its Members for modification, revocation and re-issuance, or termination of the Order, or notification of planned changes or anticipated noncompliance, does not stay any condition of the Order.
  - ~~3.4.~~ The third-party, on behalf of its Members, shall provide to the Executive Officer any information which the Executive Officer may request to determine whether cause exists for modifying, revoking and re-issuing, or terminating the Order, or to determine compliance with the requirements of this Order that apply directly to the third-party. Members shall provide to the Executive Officer, any information which the Executive Officer may request to determine whether cause exists for modifying, revoking and re-issuing, or terminating the Order as applied to the individual Member, or to determine compliance with the provisions of this Order that apply directly to the Member.
  - ~~4.5.~~ After notice and opportunity for a hearing, the Order may be terminated or modified for cause as applied to individual Members identified by the Central Valley Water Board. Cause for such termination or modification, includes, but is not limited to:
    - a. Violation of any term or condition contained in the Order;
    - b. Obtaining the Order by misrepresentation; or
    - c. Failure to fully disclose all relevant facts.
- A Member's regulatory coverage shall be automatically revoked if the NOC is not timely submitted (see section VII.A).
- ~~5.6.~~ After notice and opportunity for a hearing, the approval of the third-party to act as a lead entity representing Members may be partially (e.g., affected areas or Members) or fully revoked. Cause for such termination or modification includes, but is not limited to consideration of the factors in Finding 51 of this Order, and/or:
  - a. Violation of any term or condition contained in the Order that applies directly to the third-party;
  - b. Third-party misrepresentation;
  - c. Failure by the third-party to fully disclose all known relevant facts; or

- d. A change in any condition that results in the third-party's inability to properly function as the third-party entity representing Member interests or in facilitating Member compliance with the terms and conditions of this Order.

~~6-7.~~ The Central Valley Water Board will review this Order periodically and may revise this Order when necessary.

## **VII. Required Reports, Monitoring, and Notices – Member**

The Central Valley Water Board or the Executive Officer may require any of the following reports and notices to be submitted electronically as long as the electronic format is reasonably available to the Member, and only to the extent that the Member has access to the equipment that allows for them to submit the information electronically. If the Member does not have such access, reports and notices must be submitted by mail. Reports and notices shall be submitted in accordance with section IX, Reporting Provisions, as well as Attachment B MRP Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~. Members must prepare and maintain the following reports as instructed below, and shall submit or make available such reports to the third-party or the Central Valley Water Board as identified below.

### **A. Notice of Confirmation / Notice of Intent / Membership Application**

1. To confirm coverage under this Order, Members that, as of the effective date of this Order, are enrolled under Order R5-2006-0053 as Members of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition must submit a completed notice of confirmation (NOC) to the third-party within 120 days of Executive Officer approval of the third-party (as provided by issuance of an NOA to the third-party, see section VIII.A of this Order). The third-party will provide a NOC form to Members within 30 days of receiving an NOA (see section VIII.A) from the Central Valley Water Board. As part of the NOC, Members must provide certification that they have provided written notice to any responsible non-Member parties of the Member's enrollment under this Order and of the requirements of this Order (a responsible non-Member is a landowner whose parcel has been enrolled by an operator-Member under this Order or an operator who farms a parcel that has been enrolled by a landowner-Member). If the Member is a landowner that leases their land, the Member must provide the name and contact information of the lessee.
2. Within 120 days of Executive Officer issuance of an NOA to the third-party, all other growers within this Order's boundaries must become Members of the third-party to avoid additional fees and administrative requirements (see section VII.A.3 below). To obtain membership, a grower must submit a completed third-party Membership application to the third-party group. As part of the membership application, growers must provide certification that they have provided written notice to any responsible non-Member parties of the Member's enrollment under this Order and of the requirements of this Order. Upon submittal of a complete application, the third-party group may confirm membership, after which the Member will be considered covered under this Order. This provision does not apply to Members of the San Joaquin County and Delta Coalition; Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition; or Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition governed by the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver whose parcel(s) are located in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.
3. Beginning 121 days after Executive Officer issuance of an NOA to the third-party, any growers within this Order's boundaries that are not yet Members of the third-party or a Coalition governed by the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver must submit (1) a completed Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Central Valley Water Board to comply with the conditions of this Order, (2)

any required State Water Board administrative processing fee for the NOI, and (3) a Membership application to the third-party group. Upon submittal of a complete NOI, and after receiving confirmation from the third-party group that the grower is now a Member, the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer may then issue a Notice of Applicability (NOA), after which the Member will be considered covered under this Order. In lieu of issuing an NOA, the Executive Officer may deny the NOI and require the submittal of a report of waste discharge or issue an NOA for regulatory coverage under any applicable general waste discharge requirements for individual dischargers not represented by a third-party.

4. As an alternative to receiving regulatory coverage under this Order, a discharger may submit a report of waste discharge in accordance with Water Code section 13260 or a Notice of Intent for regulatory coverage under any applicable general waste discharge requirements for individual dischargers not represented by a third-party.

## **B. Farm Evaluation**

After the Executive Officer approves the Farm Evaluation Template (see Section VIII.C. below), Members shall complete a Farm Evaluation and submit a copy of the completed Farm Evaluation to the third-party group according to the schedule below.<sup>23</sup> The Member must use the Farm Evaluation Template approved by the Executive Officer (see section VIII.C below). A copy of the Farm Evaluation shall be maintained at the Member's farming headquarters or primary place of business, and must be produced upon request by Central Valley Water Board staff. In addition, Members shall comply with the following requirements where applicable:

### **1. Members in Low Vulnerability Areas**

#### **1. Members with Small Farming Operations**

By 1 March 2017, Members with Small Farming Operations must prepare their Farm Evaluation and submit it to the third-party. An updated Farm Evaluation must be prepared and submitted to the third-party by 1 March 2021 and every five years thereafter.

#### **2. All other Members<sup>24</sup>**

By 1 March 2015, all other Members must prepare their Farm Evaluation and submit it to the third-party. An updated Farm Evaluation must be prepared on 1 March 2021 and submitted to the third-party every five years thereafter.

### **2. All Members in High Vulnerability Areas (Surface/Groundwater)**

By 1 May 2014, all Members within a high vulnerability area must prepare their Farm Evaluation and submit it to the third-party. An updated Farm Evaluation must be prepared and submitted to the third-party by 1 March annually thereafter through 1 March 2018.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter, Members must prepare and submit their Farm Evaluation to the third-party on 1 March 2021 and every five years. As part of the Farm Evaluation, the Member shall provide information on any outreach events attended in accordance with section IV.B.4 of this Order. After 1 March 2017, the

<sup>23</sup> ~~Any farm map or information on the location of wells on the farm does not need to be provided to the third-party group.~~

<sup>24</sup> Members with parcels that do not meet the Small Farming Operation definition (see Attachment E).

<sup>25</sup> The Farm Evaluations prepared on 1 March 2018 will be prepared under the requirements of this Order prior to the revisions made to the Farm Evaluation through State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002.



~~Executive Officer may approve reduction in the frequency of updates and submission of Farm Evaluations, if the third-party demonstrates that year to year changes in Farm Evaluation updates are minimal and the Executive Officer concurs that the practices identified in the Farm Evaluations are consistent with practices that, when properly implemented, will achieve receiving water limitations or best practicable treatment or control, where applicable.~~

The Executive Officer may require more or less frequent submission of a Farm Evaluation for any Member or group of Members if the Executive Officer makes a determination that the change in frequency is warranted.

### **C. Sediment and Erosion Control Plan**

The requirements and deadlines of this section apply as specified to Members that are required to develop a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan per section IV.B.7 of this Order. The Member must use the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template approved by the Executive Officer (see section VIII.C.3 below), or equivalent. The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be prepared in one of the following ways:

- The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must adhere to the site-specific recommendation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), NRCS technical service provider, the University of California Cooperative Extension, the local Resource Conservation District; or conform to a local county ordinance applicable to erosion and sediment control on agricultural lands. The Member must retain written documentation of the recommendation provided and certify that they are implementing the recommendation; or
- The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be prepared and self-certified by the Member, who has completed a training program that the Executive Officer concurs provides necessary training for sediment and erosion control plan development; or
- The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be written, amended, and certified by a Qualified Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Developer possessing one of the following registrations or certifications, and appropriate experience with erosion issues on irrigated agricultural lands: California registered professional civil engineer, geologist, engineering geologist, landscape architect; professional hydrologist registered through the American Institute of Hydrology; certified soil scientist registered through the American Society of Agronomy; Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPSEC)<sup>TM</sup>/Certified Professional in Storm Water Quality (CPSWQ)<sup>TM</sup> registered through Enviro Cert International, Inc.; professional in erosion and sediment control registered through the National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET); or
- The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be prepared and certified in an alternative manner approved by the Executive Officer. Such approval will be provided based on the Executive Officer's determination that the alternative method for preparing the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan meets the objectives and requirements of this Order.

The plan shall be maintained and updated as conditions change. A copy of the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan shall be maintained at the farming operations headquarters or primary place of business; and must be produced by the Member, if requested, should Central Valley Water Board

staff, or an authorized representative, conduct an inspection of the Member's irrigated lands operation.

**1. *Deadline for Members with Small Farming Operations***

Within one (1) year of the Executive Officer accepting the third-party's Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report, Members with Small Farming Operations must complete and implement a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.

**2. *Deadline for all Other Members***<sup>26</sup>

Within 180 days of the Executive Officer accepting the third-party's Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report, all other Members must complete and implement a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.

**D. Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan, Data Supporting Nitrogen Applied/Removed Ratio, and Nitrogen Applied-Removed Difference**

All Members must prepare and implement an Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan (INMP) for each field<sup>27</sup> and submit the Nitrogen Management Plan/INMP<sup>28</sup> Summary Report for the previous crop year, ~~as described per the schedule detailed below.~~ All Members in high vulnerability areas must have the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan certified. The Member must use the Nitrogen Management Plan/INMP Template approved by the Executive Officer (see section VIII.C.2. below).

The Executive Officer may approve the use of multi-year INMPs for categories of crops that have consistent irrigation and nitrogen planning from year to year.<sup>29</sup> Multi-year plans cannot exceed three years in length, and if the Member decides to vary from the plan during its implementation period, a new INMP must be prepared, certified, and implemented. Members using multi-year INMPs must submit INMP Summary Reports annually. Utilization of a multi-year INMP remains at the discretion of the certifier.

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<sup>26</sup> Members with parcels that do not meet the Small Farming Operation definition (see Attachment E).

<sup>27</sup> Where this Order requires reporting by field, Members may report data for a portion of a field or for multiple fields provided that the reported area has (1) the same crop type, (2) the same fertilizer inputs, (3) the same irrigation management, and (4) the same management practices. In no case should a reported area exceed a total size of 640 acres, and different crop types must always be reported separately even if they are within the same reporting area.

<sup>28</sup> Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans are prepared in advance of the crop season, and based on circumstances that are forecasted. However, due to changes in weather, water availability, and other unanticipated circumstances, growers may find it necessary to adjust the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan as originally prepared. Such adjustments are not considered to be violations of the Order, provided the revision maintains compliance with provision of this Order. Should such adjustments be necessary, the member must document the reasons for adjustments in the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan retained at the grower's place of business and report the reasons to the third-party with the Nitrogen Management Plan retained at the grower's place of business and report the reasons to the third-party with the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report (if applicable).

<sup>29</sup> Whether a specific category of crops is appropriate for multi-year INMPs will depend on factors such as crop age, the level of variation of irrigation and fertilization practices from year to year, variation of cultivation practices, and climate zone. Likely candidates for multi-year INMPs include mature orchards that are managed consistently over multiple years.

An INMP must include the information identified in Attachment B MRP Section VI.B for use by the third-party in calculating an Applied/Removed (A/R) ratio for nitrogen, and an Applied-Removed (A-R) difference for nitrogen, as defined in the equations below. The A/R ratio is the ratio of total Nitrogen Applied<sup>30</sup> (from sources including, but not limited to, organic amendments, synthetic fertilizers, manure, and irrigation water) to the total Nitrogen Removed<sup>31</sup> (including all harvested materials and nitrogen annually sequestered in permanent wood for perennial crops). The A-R difference is the difference of total Nitrogen Applied and the total Nitrogen Removed.

A/R Ratio

$$= \frac{\text{Nitrogen Applied (from any source, including organic amendments, synthetic fertilizers, manure and irrigation water)}}{\text{Nitrogen Removed (via harvest and annually sequestered in permanent wood of perennial crops)}}$$

$$\text{A-R Difference} = \text{Nitrogen Applied} - \text{Nitrogen Removed}$$

Total Nitrogen Removed shall be determined, in part, by multiplying a member's crop yield by a crop-specific nitrogen coefficient,  $C_N$ , provided by the third-party, which represents the amount of nitrogen in the harvested crop. For some crops, the data needed to develop the  $C_N$  coefficient may not yet be available. The third-party is directed in Attachment B MRP Section VI.B to determine, through nitrogen removed testing and research, the most appropriate  $C_N$  coefficients for converting crop yield to nitrogen removed.

$$\text{Nitrogen Removed (lbs/acre)} = \text{Crop Yield (units/acre)} \times C_N \text{ (lbs/unit)}$$

~~The INMP Nitrogen Management Plan and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report shall be maintained at the Member's farming operations headquarters or primary place of business. The Member must provide the INMP Nitrogen Management Plan and Summary Report to board staff, if requested, or should board staff or an authorized representative conduct an inspection of the Member's irrigated agricultural operation. In addition, Members shall comply with the following requirements where applicable: The Member must submit the INMP Summary Report to the third-party in accordance with the schedule below. As provided in Attachment B MRP Section V, the third-party will provide certain INMP Summary Report data to the Executive Officer.~~

~~**1. All Members within a High Vulnerability Groundwater Area**~~

~~For Members located within a high vulnerability groundwater area, for which nitrate is identified as a constituent of concern, the Member must prepare and implement a certified Nitrogen Management Plan starting 1 March 2016. The plan must be certified in one of the following ways:~~

The INMP shall be certified in one of the following ways:

- Certified by an irrigation and nitrogen management plan specialist as defined in Attachment E of this Order. The specialist that certifies the INMP must be capable of answering questions relevant to the INMP and should be fully competent and proficient by education and experience in the field(s) relevant to the development of an INMP. These specialists

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<sup>30</sup> As defined in Attachment E.

<sup>31</sup> As defined in Attachment E.



may include Professional Soil Scientists, Professional Agronomists, Crop Advisers<sup>32</sup> certified by the American Society of Agronomy, Technical Service Providers certified in nutrient management in California by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), or Certified Agricultural Irrigation Management Specialists certified by The Irrigation Association; or

- Self-certified by the Member who attends a California Department of Food and Agriculture or other Executive Officer approved training program for ~~nitrogen plan~~INMP certification. The Member must retain written documentation of their attendance in the training program; or
- Self-certified by the Member that the plan adheres to a site-specific recommendation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the University of California Cooperative Extension. The Member must retain written documentation of the recommendation provided; or
- Self-certified by the Member if the Member states that the Member applies no fertilizer to the field; or
- ~~Certified by a nitrogen management plan specialist as defined in Attachment E of this Order. Such specialists include Professional Soil Scientists, Professional Agronomists, Crop Advisers<sup>33</sup> certified by the American Society of Agronomy, or Technical Service Providers certified in nutrient management in California by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).~~
- Certified in an alternative manner approved by the Executive Officer. Such approval will be provided based on the Executive Officer's determination that the alternative method for preparing the Nitrogen Management Plan meets the objectives and requirements of this Order.

Members notified by the third-party as being outliers for reported AR data must have their INMP certified by an irrigation and nitrogen management plan specialist unless the Member receives additional self-certification training provided by the third-party.

#### **1. ~~Deadlines for Members within a High Vulnerability Groundwater Area~~**

For Members located within a high vulnerability groundwater area, for which nitrate is identified as a constituent of concern, the Member must prepare and implement a certified INMP and submit an INMP Summary Report as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> Any Certified Crop Adviser who certifies an INMP must also have completed the nitrogen management training program offered by the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources and the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

<sup>33</sup> ~~Any Certified Crop Adviser who certifies an INMP must also have completed the nitrogen management training program offered by the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources and the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Should the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Certified Crop Adviser's establish a specific nitrogen management certification, any Certified Crop Adviser who certifies a nitrogen management plan must have a nitrogen management certification~~

**a. Deadlines for Members with Small Farming Operations within High Vulnerability Groundwater Areas**

By 1 March 2017, Members with Small Farming Operations shall prepare, and update by 1 March annually thereafter, ~~an INMP-Nitrogen Management Plan.~~<sup>34</sup> By 1 March 2018, and by 1 March annually thereafter, Members with Small Farming Operations shall prepare a certified INMP, and submit to the third-party the ~~Nitrogen Management Plan~~INMP Summary Report<sup>35</sup> for the previous year.

**b. Deadlines for all other Members**<sup>36</sup> **within High Vulnerability Groundwater Areas**

By 1 March 2015, all other Members shall prepare, and update by 1 March annually thereafter, ~~an Nitrogen Management Plan~~INMP.<sup>37</sup> By 1 March 2016, and by 1 March annually thereafter, all other Members shall prepare and implement a certified ~~Nitrogen Management Plan~~INMP pursuant to Provision VII.D.1 and submit to the third-party the ~~Nitrogen Management Plan~~INMP Summary Report<sup>38</sup> for the previous year.

**1. Deadlines for Members re-designated from Low Vulnerability to High Vulnerability Groundwater Areas**

~~Members with parcel(s) re-designated from low vulnerability to high vulnerability groundwater areas must prepare a Nitrogen Management Plan in compliance with this section (VII.D.1).<sup>39</sup> The schedule for certifying the Nitrogen Management Plan and submitting the initial Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report will be established by the Executive Officer.~~

~~After 1 March 2018, the Executive Officer may approve reduction in the frequency of submission of Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Reports, if the third-party demonstrates that year to year changes in Nitrogen Management Summary Reports are minimal and the Executive Officer concurs that the implemented practices are achieving the performance standard (see section IV.B.8).~~

**2. Deadlines for Members within a Low Vulnerability Groundwater Area**

By 1 March 2017, ~~and annually thereafter,~~ all Members within low vulnerability groundwater areas shall prepare, ~~and update by 1 March annually thereafter,~~ an Nitrogen Management PlanINMP.<sup>40</sup> By 1 March 2021, and by 1 March annually thereafter, Members within low vulnerability groundwater areas shall submit to the third-party the INMP Summary Report for the previous year. The Member must use the Nitrogen Management Plan Template approved by the Executive Officer (see section

<sup>34</sup> The INMP prepared up to and including 1 March 2018 will be prepared under the requirements of this Order prior to the revisions made to the INMP through the State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002.

<sup>35</sup> The INMP Summary Report prepared up to and including 1 March 2019 will be prepared under the requirements of this Order prior to the revisions made to the INMP through the State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002.

<sup>36</sup> Members with parcels that do not meet the Small Farming Operation definition (see Attachment E).

<sup>37</sup> The INMP prepared up to and including 1 March 2018 will be prepared under the requirements of this Order prior to the revisions made to the INMP through the State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002.

<sup>38</sup> The INMP Summary Report prepared up to and including 1 March 2019 will be prepared under the requirements of this Order prior to the revisions made to the INMP through the State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002.

<sup>39</sup> The designation of the vulnerability area may change based on updates to the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (see the MRP—Attachment B).

<sup>40</sup> The INMP prepared up to and including 1 March 2018 will be prepared under the requirements of this Order prior to the revisions made to the INMP through the State Water Board Order WQ 2018-0002.

~~VIII.C below), or equivalent. Certification of the Nitrogen Management Plan and submittal of a Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report are not required.~~

#### **E. Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring**

Due to the potential severity and urgency of health issues associated with drinking groundwater with high concentrations of nitrates, Members will be required to conduct testing and monitoring of all drinking water supply wells present on enrolled parcels<sup>41</sup> in accordance with the schedule in MRP section IV.A. If a well is identified as exceeding the MCL for nitrate, the Member must notify the Central Valley Water Board and users of the well in a timely fashion in accordance with the elements described in MRP section IV.A.

#### **E.F. Mitigation Monitoring**

As specified in this Order, certain members are required to implement the mitigation measures included in Attachment C. Such Members shall submit mitigation monitoring by 1 March of each year to the third-party. Mitigation monitoring shall include information on the implementation of CEQA mitigation measures, including the mitigation measure implemented, potential environmental impact the mitigation measure addressed, location of the mitigation measure [parcel number, county], and any steps taken to monitor the ongoing success of the measure.

#### **G. Management Practice Implementation Reporting in Surface and Groundwater Quality Management Areas**

Commencing on 1 March 2019, Members in areas subject to a SQMP or GQMP shall complete a Management Practice Implementation Report (MPIR) and submit a copy of the completed MPIR to the third-party group according to a schedule to be specified by the Third Party for each SQMP or GQMP and approved by the Executive Officer. The Member must use a MPIR form tailored to the requirements contained in each SQMP or GQMP and designed by the Third Party and approved by the Executive Officer. The MPIR shall report management practices implemented by the Member to comply with requirements under the SQMP or GQMP. The reporting frequency shall be based on the implementation cycle of the applicable management practice.

#### **F.H. Notice of Termination**

If the Member wishes to terminate coverage under this Order and withdraw its membership from the third-party, the Member shall submit a complete notice of termination (NOT) to the Central Valley Water Board and the third-party. Termination of regulatory coverage will occur on the date specified in the NOT, unless the Central Valley Water Board specifies otherwise. All discharges of waste to surface and groundwaters shall cease before the date of termination, and any discharges on or after this date shall be considered in violation of the California Water Code, unless other WDRs or waivers of WDRs regulate the discharge.

### **VIII. Required Reports and Notices – Third-Party**

The Central Valley Water Board or the Executive Officer may require any of the reports and notices to be submitted electronically, as long as the electronic format is reasonably available to the third-party. The third-party shall submit reports and notices in accordance with section IX, Reporting Provisions. The third-party must prepare the following reports:

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<sup>41</sup> Where a portion of the parcel is leased to a party other than a Member and the terms of the lease give the Member no control over the drinking water supply wells on that parcel, the Owner of the parcel is responsible for sampling of those drinking water supply wells.

### **A. Application to Serve as a Third-Party Representing Members**

Within 30 days of the effective date of this Order, the third-party must submit a letter to the Executive Officer requesting that the third-party serve as a third-party representing Members to carry out the third-party responsibilities. The Executive Officer will consider the following factors in determining whether to approve the request by issuing a Notice of Applicability (NOA) to the third-party.

1. Ability of the third-party to carry out the identified third-party responsibilities.
2. Whether the third-party is a legally defined entity (i.e., non-profit corporation; local or state government; Joint Powers Authority) or has a binding agreement among multiple entities that clearly describes the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability to its members.
3. Whether the third-party has binding agreements with any subsidiary group (e.g., subwatershed group) to ensure any third-party responsibilities carried out by the subsidiary group, including the collection of fees, are done so transparently and with accountability to the third-party. If the third-party will not rely on any subsidiary group to carry out any of its responsibilities, the third-party must state that in its application letter.
4. Whether the third-party has a governance structure that includes a governing board of directors composed in whole or in part of Members, or otherwise provides Members with a mechanism to direct or influence the governance of the third-party through appropriate by-laws.
5. Should the Central Valley Water Board terminate an organization's role as a third-party or the third-party submit a notice of termination, the Executive Officer will apply the above factors in evaluating the request of any successor organization to serve as a third-party and determining whether to approve the request by issuing an NOA.

### **B. Membership (Participant) List**

The third-party shall submit a list of its Members to the Central Valley Water Board within 180-days of receiving an NOA from the board and then annually by 31 July of each year (beginning the year following initial submission of the list). The membership list shall identify Members. The list shall also identify growers that have had their membership revoked and Members that are pending revocation. The membership list shall contain, at a minimum, the following information for each member: all parcel numbers covered under the membership, the county of each parcel, the section, township, and range associated with each parcel, the number of irrigated acres for each parcel, the Member's name, mailing address, the contact name and phone number of the individuals authorized to provide access to the enrolled parcels, the name of the farm operator for each parcel, if different from the Member, and identification of each parcel that is part of a Small Farming Operation, if applicable. In lieu of providing Members' phone numbers as part of the membership list, the third-party may provide the office contact name(s) and phone number(s) of a representative of the third-party. Any listed third-party office contact must be available for Central Valley Water Board staff to contact Monday through Friday (except established state holidays) from 8 am to 5 pm.

### **C. Templates**

Through the process described below, the Central Valley Water Board intends to provide templates to all Members that must be used to comply with the requirements of this Order. The board intends that these templates be developed by the third-party or Central Valley Water Board staff in coordination with other agricultural groups and experts to ensure the templates are applicable and

relevant for Members. To the extent possible, the templates need to collect information consistently across irrigated agricultural areas and commodities. Consistent information collection will facilitate analysis within a geographic area and across the Central Valley. However, the board recognizes that templates may vary (e.g., by commodity group) and may need to be tailored more specifically to ensure relevant information is collected. For example, templates for irrigated pasture would focus on collecting different types of data than templates for orchards.

### **1. Farm Evaluation Template**

Template development shall be in accordance with the requirements specified in Attachment B MRP section VI.A to this Order. Templates will be developed as follows:

#### **a. Third-Party Farm Evaluation Template**

The third-party may work with Central Valley Water Board staff in the development of a Farm Evaluation Template. Should it choose this option, the third-party shall make the Farm Evaluation Template available to its Members within 30-days of receiving the final Farm Evaluation Template as provided by the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer. Requirements for the Farm Evaluation Template are described in Attachment B MRP section VI.A., or

#### **a.b. Farm Evaluation Template Group Option**

The third-party may develop a Farm Evaluation Template with other agricultural water quality coalitions and agricultural commodity groups. Should it choose the group option, the third-party shall submit a Farm Evaluation Template to the Central Valley Water Board within 90-days from receiving an NOA from the board. The third-party shall make the Farm Evaluation Template available to its Members within 30-days of approval by the Executive Officer. Requirements for the Farm Evaluation Template ~~Group Option~~ are described in Attachment B MRP section VI.A., or

#### **b. Central Valley Water Board Farm Evaluation Template**

~~The third-party shall work with Central Valley Water Board staff in the development of a Farm Evaluation Template. Should it choose this option, the third-party shall make the Farm Evaluation Template available to its Members within 30-days of receiving the final Farm Evaluation Template as provided by the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer.~~

### **2. Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan (INMP) and INMP Summary Report Templates**

Template development shall be in accordance with the requirements specified in Attachment B MRP section VI.B to this Order. Templates will be developed as follows:

#### **a. Third-Party INMP Template and INMP Summary Report**

The third-party may work with Central Valley Water Board staff in the development of an INMP Template and INMP Summary Report. Should it choose this option, the third-party shall make the INMP Template and INMP Summary Report available to its Members within 30-days of receiving the final INMP Template and INMP Summary Report as provided by the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer. Requirements for the INMP Template and INMP Summary Report are describe in Attachment B MRP section VI.B, or

#### **a.b. INMP Template and INMP Summary Report Nitrogen Management Plan Template Group Option**

The third-party may develop a Nitrogen Management Plan ~~INMP~~ Template and INMP Summary Report with other agricultural water quality coalitions and agricultural commodity groups. Should it choose the group option, the third-party shall submit the ~~Nitrogen Management Plan~~ INMP



Template ~~and INMP Summary Report~~ to the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer within 90-days from receiving an NOA from the board. The third-party shall make the ~~Nitrogen Management Plan~~INMP Template ~~and INMP Summary Report~~ available to its Members within 30-days of approval by the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer. Requirements for the ~~Nitrogen Management Plan~~INMP Template ~~and INMP Summary Report Group Option~~ are described in Attachment B MRP section VI.B., ~~or~~

**~~b. Central Valley Water Board Nitrogen Management Plan Template~~**

~~The third-party shall work with Central Valley Water Board staff in the development of a Nitrogen Management Plan Template (including the associated Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report). Should it choose this option, the third-party shall make the Nitrogen Management Plan Template available to its Members within 30-days of receiving the final Nitrogen Management Plan Template as provided by the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer.~~

**3. Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template**

Template development shall be in accordance with the requirements specified in Attachment B MRP section VI.C. to this Order. Templates will be developed as follows:

**a. Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template Group Option**

The third-party may develop a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template with other agricultural water quality coalitions and agricultural commodity groups. Should it choose the group option, the third-party shall submit the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template to the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer within 90-days from receiving an NOA from the board. The third-party shall make the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template available to its Members within 30-days of approval by the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer. Requirements for the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template Group Option are described in MRP section VI.C., or

**b. Central Valley Water Board Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template**

The third-party shall work with Central Valley Water Board staff in the development of a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template. Should it choose this option, the third-party shall make the final Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template available to those Members required to develop a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan within 30-days of receiving the final Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template as provided by the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer.

**4. Drinking Water Notification Template**

The Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer will approve a Drinking Water Notification Template after public review and comment. The purpose of the template is to provide users of affected wells with information regarding the risks associated with drinking groundwater with high concentrations of nitrates and to document that the user has been notified. At a minimum, the template must be designed to contain the following information:

- A statement notifying users of the exceedance
- Material regarding the potential health risks associated with consuming nitrate contaminated drinking water and steps that should be taken for protection
- A signature block, to be signed by the Member or landowner, certifying that a copy of the Drinking Water Notification Template has been provided to affected users

The template will be made available in an appropriate set of languages and will be designed to be understood by low-literacy populations.

#### **D. Annual Report on Management Practice Implementation and Nitrogen Application**

On 1 July 2019, and annually thereafter, the third-party shall submit to the Executive Officer data on management practice implementation and nitrogen application as specified in Attachment B MRP sections V.C and V.D.

#### **D.E. ~~Groundwater Quality Monitoring and Protection Assessment Report and Evaluation/Monitoring Workplans~~**

This Order's strategy for evaluating groundwater quality and protection consists of (1) Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring, (2) a Groundwater Assessment Report, (3) a Management Practices Evaluation Program, and (4) a Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program, and (5) Groundwater Quality Management Plans that include Groundwater Protection Targets. Each of these elements 1-4 has its have their own specific objectives briefly described below, with more detail provided in the attached MRP. Element 5 is briefly described in section VIII.I, and is further detailed in the attached MRP.

##### **1. Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring**

In Section VII.E, this Order requires Members to conduct testing and monitoring of all drinking water supply wells present on the Members' property. The third-party, on behalf of Members, may conduct testing and monitoring of all drinking water supply wells present on the Members' property. If a well is identified as exceeding the MCL for nitrate, the Member must notify the Central Valley Water Board and users of the well in a timely fashion in accordance with the elements described in Attachment B MRP section IV.A.

##### **1.2. ~~Groundwater Quality Assessment Report~~**

The Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) provides the foundational information necessary for design of the Management Practices Evaluation Program, the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program, and the Groundwater Quality Management Plan. To accomplish this purpose, the GAR must include the following:

- Assessment of all available, applicable, and relevant data and information to determine the high and low vulnerability areas where discharges from irrigated lands may result in groundwater quality degradation;
- Establish priorities for implementation of monitoring and associated studies within high vulnerability areas;
- Provide a basis for establishing workplans to assess groundwater quality trends;
- Provide a basis for establishing workplans and priorities to evaluate the effectiveness of agricultural management practices to protect groundwater quality; and
- Provide a basis for establishing groundwater quality management plans in high vulnerability areas and priorities for implementation of those plans.

The GAR shall include the elements described in Attachment B MRP section IV. The GAR shall be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board and Central Valley Salinity Coalition within one (1) year of receiving an NOA from the Executive Officer.

### **32. Management Practice Evaluation Program Workplan**

Upon Executive Officer approval of the GAR, the third-party shall develop, either solely, or as a coordinated effort (see group option below), a Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) Workplan. The workplan must meet the goals, objectives, and other requirements described in Attachment B MRP section IV ~~.C of the attached MRP~~. The MPEP shall initially focus of the determination of the crop-specific coefficients for conversion of yield to nitrogen removed and then on the determination of acceptable ranges for the multi-year A/R ratios target values by crop. Following the initial focus, ~~The~~ the overall goal of the Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) is to ~~determine-evaluate~~ the effectiveness of management practices in ~~limitings, if any, irrigated agricultural practices have on first encountered groundwater under different conditions that could affect~~ the discharge of waste from irrigated lands to groundwater under different conditions (e.g., soil type, depth to groundwater, irrigation practice, crop type, nutrient management practice). A MPEP ~~may prioritize must address~~ the conditions relevant to high vulnerability groundwater areas. The third-party may develop the workplan in accordance with one of the options described below.

#### ***a. Management Practices Evaluation Program Group Option***

The third-party may fulfill its requirements as part of a larger Management Practices Evaluation Program Group. A Management Practices Evaluation Program (MPEP) Group refers to an entity that is formed to develop and carry out the management practices effectiveness evaluations required of this and other Orders applicable to the irrigated lands in the Central Valley.

At the time the GAR is submitted, the third-party must submit a copy of the agreement of the parties included in the MPEP Group. The agreement must include a description of the roles and responsibilities of each of the organizations in the MPEP Group; identification of the technical experts who will prepare and implement the workplans, along with their qualifications; the person(s) responsible for the timely completion of the workplans and reports required by this Order; and an organizational chart showing the reporting relationships and responsibilities of the participants in the group.

The third-party may use the group option if approved by the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer may disapprove the use of the group option, if 1) the group fails to meet required deadlines or implement the approved workplans; 2) the agreement submitted is not complete; or 3) the agreement submitted is deficient.

The MPEP Group Workplan shall be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board within two (2) years after written approval of the GAR by the Executive Officer.

#### ***b. Third-party Only Management Practices Evaluation Program***

Under this option, the third-party MPEP Workplans shall be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board within one (1) year after written approval of the GAR by the Executive Officer.

### **34. Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Workplan**

Upon Executive Officer approval of the GAR, the third-party shall develop a Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Workplan. The workplan must meet the goals, objectives, and other requirements described in Attachment B MRP section IV ~~of the attached MRP~~. The overall objectives of groundwater trend monitoring are to determine current water quality conditions of groundwater relevant to irrigated agriculture and develop long-term groundwater quality information that can be used to evaluate the regional effects of irrigated agricultural practices.



The workplan shall be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board within one (1) year after written approval of the GAR by the Executive Officer.

#### **E.F. Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report**

The Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report shall be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board within one (1) year of receiving an NOA from the Executive Officer. Within 30 days of written acceptance of the Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report, the third-party shall inform those Members with parcels in areas identified in the report of their obligation to prepare a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan. The Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report shall include the elements described in Attachment B MRP section VII.

#### **F.G. Surface Water Exceedance Reports**

The third-party shall provide exceedance reports if surface water monitoring results show exceedances of adopted numeric water quality objectives or trigger limits, which are based on interpretations of narrative water quality objectives. Surface water exceedance reports shall be submitted in accordance with the requirements described in Attachment B MRP section V.D-~~of the MRP~~.

#### **H. Monitoring Report**

The third-party shall submit the Monitoring Report to the Central Valley Water Board in accordance with the requirements in Attachment B MRP section V.~~EG of the MRP~~.

#### **G.I. Surface Water/Groundwater Quality Management Plan (SQMP/GQMP)**

##### **1. SQMP/GQMP General Requirements**

SQMP/GQMPs submitted by the third-party shall conform to the requirements provided in the MRP, Appendix MRP-1. Existing SQMPs that were developed and approved under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver (Conditional Waiver Order R5-2006-0053) continue to apply under this Order and shall be implemented as previously approved. Changes to any management plan may be implemented by the third-party only after approval by the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer may require changes to a management plan if the current management plan approach is not making adequate progress toward addressing the water quality problem or if the information reported by the third-party does not allow the Central Valley Water Board to determine the effectiveness of the management plan. Members shall comply with the revised management plans once they are approved by the Executive Officer.

For newly triggered SQMP/GQMPs, the third-party shall submit a SQMP/GQMP to the Central Valley Water Board within sixty (60) days. For any SQMP or GQMP that addresses salt or nitrates, the SQMP or GQMP shall also be submitted to the Chair of the CV-SALTS Executive Committee. This 60-day period begins the first business day after the third-party's receipt of the field or laboratory results that reported the triggering exceedance. The Central Valley Water Board will post the proposed SQMP/GQMP for a public review and comment period. Stakeholder comments will be considered by Central Valley Water Board staff to determine if additional revisions are appropriate. The third-party may, at its discretion, implement outreach or monitoring contained in a proposed management plan before approval. Members shall comply with the management plans once they are approved by the Executive Officer.

The third-party shall ensure continued implementation of SQMP/GQMPs until completed by the Executive Officer pursuant to the provisions contained in ~~the attached~~ Attachment B MRP, Appendix MRP-1, section III. The third-party shall submit a progress report in compliance with the provisions contained in ~~the attached~~ Attachment B MRP, Appendix MRP-1, section I.F.

## **2. Conditions Requiring Preparation of SQMP/GQMP**

### **a. Surface Water Quality Management Plan (SQMP)**

A SQMP shall be developed by the third-party where: (1) an applicable water quality objective or applicable water quality trigger limit is exceeded (considering applicable averaging periods<sup>42</sup>) twice in a three year period for the same constituent at a monitoring location (trigger limits are described in section VIII of the MRP) and irrigated agriculture may cause or contribute to the exceedances; (2) the Basin Plan requires development of a surface water quality management plan for a constituent or constituents discharged by irrigated agriculture, or (3) the Executive Officer determines that irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to a trend of degradation of surface water that may threaten applicable Basin Plan beneficial uses.

### **b. Groundwater Quality Management Plan (GQMP)**

A GQMP shall be developed by the third-party where: (1) there is a confirmed exceedance<sup>43</sup> (considering applicable averaging periods) of a water quality objective or applicable water quality trigger limit (trigger limits are described in section VIII of the MRP) in a groundwater well and irrigated agriculture may cause or contribute to the exceedance; (2) in high vulnerability groundwater areas to be determined as part of the Groundwater Assessment Report process (see MRP section IV); (3) the Basin Plan requires development of a groundwater quality management plan for a constituent or constituents discharged by irrigated agriculture; or (4) the Executive Officer, upon consideration of State Water Board Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas and the Department of Pesticide Regulation Groundwater Protection Areas and other relevant information, determines that irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality objectives or a trend of degradation of groundwater that may threaten applicable Basin Plan beneficial uses.

If the extent of Member contribution to a water quality exceedance(s) or degradation trend is unknown, the third-party may propose activities to be conducted to determine the cause, or eliminate irrigated agriculture as a potential source instead of initiating a management plan.

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<sup>42</sup> Exceedances of water quality objectives or water quality triggers will be determined based on any available data, including data from a regional monitoring program, and application of the appropriate averaging period. The averaging period is typically defined in the Basin Plan, as part of the water quality standard established by the U.S. EPA, or as part of the criteria being used to interpret narrative objectives. If averaging periods are not defined in the Basin Plan, U.S. EPA standard, or criteria, or approved water quality trigger, the Central Valley Water Board will use the best available information to determine an appropriate averaging period.

<sup>43</sup> A “confirmed exceedance of a water quality objective in a groundwater well” means that the monitoring data are determined to be of the appropriate quality and quantity necessary to verify that an exceedance has occurred. The determination of an exceedance may be based on data obtained by the Regional Water Board from any source and made available in Geotracker, including pesticide-related monitoring data collected by the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Requirements for source identification studies are set forth in ~~the Attachment B~~ MRP, Appendix MRP-1, section I.G.

### **3. SQMP/GQMP Not Required**

At the request of the third-party or upon recommendation by Central Valley Water Board staff, the Executive Officer may determine that the development of a SQMP/GQMP is not required. Such a determination may be issued if there is sufficient evidence indicating that Members discharging waste to the affected surface or groundwater are meeting the receiving water limitations given in section III of this Order (e.g., evidence indicates that irrigated agriculture does not cause or contribute to the water quality problem) or the Executive Officer determines that the exceedance is not likely to be remedied or addressed by a management plan.

### **4. Comprehensive Groundwater Quality Management Plan**

In lieu of submitting separate groundwater quality management plans in the timeframe identified in section VIII.H.1, the third-party may submit a Comprehensive Groundwater Quality Management Plan within 60 days of the Executive Officer's approval of the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report. With the exception of the timeframe identified in section VIII.H.1, all other provisions applicable to groundwater quality management plans in this Order and the associated MRP apply to the Comprehensive Groundwater Quality Management Plan. The Comprehensive Groundwater Quality Management Plan must be updated at the same time as the Management Plan Progress Report (see ~~attached Attachment B~~ MRP, Appendix MRP-1, section I.F) to address any constituents and areas that would have otherwise required submittal of a Groundwater Quality Management Plan.

### **5. Comprehensive Surface Water Quality Management Plan**

In lieu of submitting separate surface water quality management plans in the timeframe identified in section VIII.H.1, the third-party may submit a Comprehensive Surface Water Quality Management Plan or update the Surface Water Quality Management Plan approved under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver to conform to this Order and MRP. With the exception of the timeframe identified in section VIII.H.1, all other provisions applicable to surface water quality management plans in this Order and ~~the associated Attachment B~~ MRP apply to the Comprehensive Surface Water Quality Management Plan or an updated Surface Water Quality Management Plan approved under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver. The Comprehensive Surface Water Quality Management Plan must be updated at the same time as the Management Plan Progress Report (see ~~attached Attachment B~~ MRP, Appendix MRP-1, section I.F) to address any constituents and areas that would have otherwise required submittal of a Surface Water Quality Management Plan.

### **H.J. Technical Reports**

Where monitoring required by this Order is not effective in allowing the board to determine the effects of irrigated agricultural waste discharge on state waters or the effectiveness of water quality management practices being implemented, the Executive Officer may require technical reports be provided to determine the effects of irrigated agricultural operations or implemented management practices on surface water or groundwater quality.

### **I.K. Notice of Termination**

If the third-party wishes to terminate its role in carrying out the third-party responsibilities set forth in section VIII of this Order and other applicable provisions, the third-party shall submit a notice of termination letter to the Central Valley Water Board and all of its Members. Termination of the third-party will occur 30-days from submittal of the notice of termination letter, unless otherwise specified in the letter. With its notice of termination sent to its Members, the third-party shall inform its Members of their obligation to obtain coverage under other WDRs or a waiver of WDRs for their discharges, or inform such Members that they shall cease all discharges of waste to surface and groundwaters.

### **J.L. Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Requirements**

Approved TMDLs in the Basin Plan that apply to water bodies within the third-party's geographic area and have allocations for irrigated agriculture shall be implemented in accordance with the applicable Basin Plan provisions. Where required, the third-party shall coordinate with Central Valley Water Board staff to develop a monitoring design and strategy for TMDL implementation. Where applicable, SQMPs shall address TMDL requirements.

## **IX. Reporting Provisions**

1. Members and the third-party must submit required reports and notices in accordance with the requirements in this Order and attached Monitoring and Reporting Program Order R5-2012-0116-R~~34~~, unless otherwise requested by the Executive Officer.
2. All reports shall be accompanied by a cover letter containing the certification specified in section IX.3 below. The cover letter shall be signed by a person identified below, or by a duly authorized representative of that person:

For all reports:

- a. For a sole proprietorship: by the proprietor;
- b. For a partnership: by a general partner;
- c. For a corporation or the third-party: by a principal executive officer of at least the level of senior vice-president.

A person is a duly authorized representative only if:

- i. The authorization is made in writing by a person described in subsection a, b, or c of this provision; and
  - ii. The authorization specifies either an individual or a position having responsibility for the overall operation of the facility or organization, such as the position of manager. A duly authorized representative may thus be either a named individual or an individual occupying a named position; and
  - iii. The written authorization is submitted to the Central Valley Water Board.
3. Each person signing a report required by this Order or other information requested by the Central Valley Water Board shall make the following certification:

*"I certify under penalty of law that this document and all attachments were prepared under my direction or supervision in accordance with a system designed to assure that qualified personnel or represented Members properly gather and evaluate the information submitted. Based on my inquiry of the person or persons who manage the system, or those persons*

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*directly responsible for gathering the information, the information submitted is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, accurate, and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for knowingly submitting false information, including the possibility of fine and imprisonment for violations."*

4. All reports prepared and submitted to the Executive Officer in accordance with the terms of this Order will be made available for public inspection at the offices of the Central Valley Water Board, except for reports, or portions of such reports, subject to an exemption from public disclosure in accordance with California law and regulations, including the Public Records Act, Water Code section 13267(b)(2), and the California Food and Agriculture Code. If the third-party or a Member of the third-party asserts that all or a portion of a report is subject to an exemption from public disclosure, it must clearly indicate on the cover of the report that it asserts that all or a portion of the report is exempt from public disclosure. The complete report must be submitted with those portions that are asserted to be exempt in redacted form, along with separately-bound unredacted pages (to be maintained separately by staff). The Member/third-party shall identify the basis for the exemption. If the Executive Officer cannot identify a reasonable basis for treating the information as exempt from disclosure, the Executive Officer will notify the Member/third-party that the information will be placed in the public file unless the Central Valley Water Board receives, within 10 calendar days, a satisfactory explanation supporting the claimed exemption. Data on waste discharges, water quality, meteorology, geology, and hydrogeology shall not be considered confidential. NOIs shall generally not be considered exempt from disclosure.
5. To the extent feasible, all reports submitted by Members shall be submitted electronically to [irrlands@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:irrlands@waterboards.ca.gov), unless the Member is unable to submit the report electronically. If unable to submit the report electronically, the grower shall mail or personally deliver the report to the Central Valley Water Board. All reports from the third-party shall be submitted electronically to its Central Valley Water Board-assigned staff liaison. Upon notification by the Central Valley Water Board, all reports shall be submitted directly into an online reporting system, to the extent feasible.

#### **X. Record-keeping Requirements**

The Member and the third-party shall maintain any reports or records required by this Order for ~~five~~ ten years. Records maintained by the third-party include reports and plans submitted by Members to the third-party for purposes of complying with this Order. Individual Member information used by the third-party to prepare required reports must be maintained electronically and associated with the Member submitting the information. The maintained reports or records, including electronic information, shall be made available to the Central Valley Water Board upon written request of the Executive Officer. This includes all monitoring information, calibration and maintenance records of sampling equipment, copies of reports required by this Order, and records of all data used to complete the reports. Records shall be maintained for a minimum of ~~five~~ ten years from the date of sample, measurement, report, or application. This ~~five~~ ten-year period shall be extended during the course of any unresolved litigation regarding the discharge or when requested in writing by the Executive Officer.

The Third Party shall propose a mechanism for backing up and storing the field-specific data submitted on the Farm Evaluations, the INMP Summary Reports, and the MPIRs in a secure offsite location managed by an independent entity that specializes in the protection of data. Upon approval



of the mechanism by the Executive Officer, the Third Party shall implement the mechanism and provide documentation of the transfer of data to the independent entity.

## **XI. Annual Fees**

1. Water Code section 13260(d)(1)(A) requires persons subject to waste discharge requirements to pay an annual fee established by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board).
2. Members shall pay an annual fee to the State Water Board in compliance with the Waste Discharge Requirement fee schedule set forth at 23 CCR section 2200. The third-party is responsible for collecting these fees from Members and submitting them to the State Water Board on behalf of Members.

## **XII. Time Schedule for Compliance**

When a SQMP or GQMP is required pursuant to the provisions in section VIII.H, the following time schedules shall apply as appropriate in order to allow Members sufficient time to achieve compliance with the surface and groundwater receiving water limitations described in section III of this Order. The Central Valley Water Board may modify these schedules based on evidence that meeting the compliance date is technically or economically infeasible, or when evidence shows that compliance by an earlier date is feasible (modifications will be made per the requirements in section VI of this Order). Any applicable time schedules for compliance established in the Basin Plan supersedes the schedules given below (e.g., time schedules for compliance with salinity standards that may be established in future Basin Plan amendments through the CV-SALTS process, or time schedules for compliance with water quality objectives subject to an approved TMDL).

*Surface water:* The time schedule identified in the SQMP for compliance with Surface Water Limitation III. A must be as short as practicable, but may not exceed 10 years from the date the SQMP is submitted for approval by the Executive Officer. The proposed time schedule in the SQMP must be supported with appropriate technical or economic justification as to why the proposed schedule is as short as practicable.

*Groundwater:* The time schedule identified in a GQMP for compliance with Groundwater Limitation III.B must be as short as practicable, but may not exceed 10 years from the date the GQMP is submitted for approval by the Executive Officer. The proposed time schedules in the GQMP must be supported with appropriate technical or economic justification as to why the proposed schedules are as short as practicable.

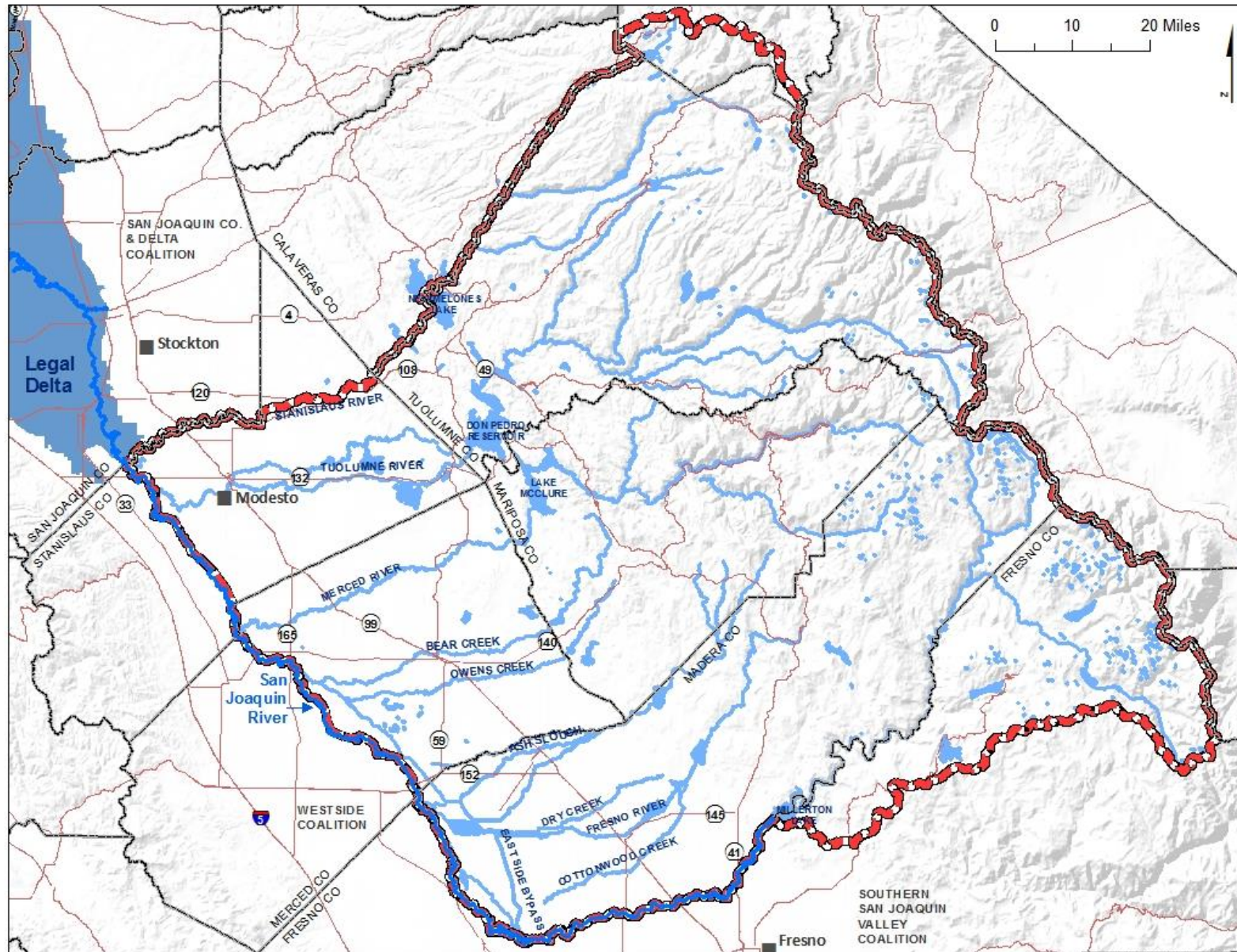
This Order becomes effective on 7 December 2012 and remains in effect as revised on 17 April 2015 unless rescinded or further revised by the Central Valley Water Board.

I, PAMELA C. CREEDON, Executive Officer, do hereby certify the foregoing is a full and correct copy of an Order adopted by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region on 7 December 2012, and revised on 3 October 2013, 27 March 2014, and 17 April 2015, and revised by the State Water Board on February 7, 2018.

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PAMELA C. CREEDON, Executive Officer

**Figure 1. Map of the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed Area.**



**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

**Attachment A to Order R5-2012-0116-R4  
INFORMATION SHEET**

**THIS INFORMATION SHEET PROVIDES THE RATIONALE FOR ORDER R5-2012-0116 THROUGH  
VERSION R3, INCLUDING ELEMENTS OF VERSION R3 THAT HAVE BEEN RETAINED IN VERSION  
R4. THE RATIONALE FOR THE REVISIONS RESULTING IN VERSION R4 ARE ESTABLISHED IN  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD ORDER WQ 2018-0002, AS STATED ON  
PAGE 24, FOOTNOTE 68 OF THAT ORDER.**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER  
FOR  
GROWERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATERSHED  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

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located. The spatial resolution by township provides a common unit that should facilitate analysis of data and comparisons between different areas. ....	24
The nitrogen management data collected by the third-party from individual Members will be aggregated by the township where the enrolled parcel is located and will not be associated with the Member or their enrolled parcel. For example, the third-party may have information submitted for 180 different parcels in a given township. At a minimum, the board would receive a statistical summary of those 180 data records describing the range, percentiles (10 <sup>th</sup> , 25 <sup>th</sup> , 50 <sup>th</sup> , 75 <sup>th</sup> , 90 <sup>th</sup> ), and any outliers for similar soil conditions and similar crops in that township. A box and whisker plot or equivalent tabular or graphical presentation of the data approved by the Executive Officer may be used. Based on this analysis, the Central Valley Water Board intends to work with the third-party to ensure that those Members who are not meeting the nitrogen management performance standards identified in the Order improve their practices. As part of its annual review of the monitoring report submitted by the third-party, the board will evaluate the effectiveness of third-party outreach efforts and trends associated with nitrogen management. The board intends to request information from the third-party for those Members who, based on the board's evaluation of available information, do not appear to be meeting nitrogen management performance standards. The reporting of nitrogen management data may be adjusted based on the outcomes of the efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board's Expert Panel and the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting System Task Force (see Finding 47 and the State Water Board's Report to the Legislature ). ....	24
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Overview

This attachment to Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party group, Order R5-2012-0116-R4 (referred to as the “Order”) is intended to provide information regarding the rationale for the Order, general information on surface and groundwater monitoring that has been conducted, and a discussion of this Order’s elements that meet required state policy.

Introduction

There are numerous irrigated agricultural operations within the boundaries of the Central Valley Water Board on over 7 million acres. Common to all types of these operations is the use of water to sustain crops. Depending on irrigation method, water use, geography, geology, climate, and the constituents (e.g., nutrients, pesticides, pathogens) present or used at a site, water discharged from the site may carry these constituents as waste off site and into groundwater or surface waters.

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) was initiated in 2003 with the adoption of a conditional waiver of WDRs for discharges from irrigated lands. The 2003 conditional waiver was renewed in 2006. The conditional waiver’s requirements are designed to reduce wastes discharged from irrigated agricultural sites (e.g., tailwater, runoff from fields, subsurface drains) to Central Valley surface waters ([Central Valley Water Board 2006](#)).

In addition to providing conditions, or requirements, for discharge of waste from irrigated agricultural lands to surface waters, the Central Valley Water Board’s conditional waiver included direction to board staff to develop an environmental impact report for a long-term ILRP that would protect waters of the state (groundwater and surface water) from discharges of waste from irrigated lands. Although the requirements of the conditional waiver are aimed to protect surface water bodies, the directive to develop a long-term ILRP and environmental impact report is not as limited, as waters of the State include ground and surface waters within the State of California ([CWC](#), Section 13050[e]).

The Central Valley Water Board completed an [Existing Conditions Report](#) (ECR) for Central Valley irrigated agricultural operations in December 2008. The ECR was developed to establish baseline conditions for estimating potential environmental and economic effects of long-term ILRP alternatives in a program environmental impact report (PEIR) and other associated analyses.

In fall 2008, the Central Valley Water Board convened the Long-Term ILRP Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup (Workgroup). The Workgroup included a range of stakeholder interests representing local government, industry, agricultural coalitions, and environmental/environmental justice groups throughout the Central Valley. The main goal of the Workgroup was to provide Central Valley Water Board staff with input on the development of the long-term ILRP. Central Valley Water Board staff and the Workgroup developed long-term program goals and objectives and a range of proposed alternatives for consideration in a PEIR and corresponding economic analysis. In August 2009 the Workgroup generally approved the goals, objectives, and range of proposed alternatives for the long-term ILRP. The Workgroup did not come to consensus on a preferred alternative.

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The Central Valley Water Board's contractor, ICF International, developed the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)<sup>1</sup> and Economics Report<sup>2</sup> for consideration by the board. The PEIR analyzed the range of proposed alternatives developed by the Workgroup. The Draft PEIR was released in July 2010, and the Final PEIR was certified by the board in April 2011 (referred to throughout as "PEIR"). In June 2011, the board directed staff to begin developing waste discharge requirements (orders) that would implement the long-term ILRP to protect surface and groundwater quality. During 2011, the board reconvened the Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup to provide additional input in the development of the orders. Also, during the same time, the board worked with the Groundwater Monitoring Advisory Workgroup to develop an approach for groundwater monitoring in the ILRP.

The board's intent is to develop seven geographic and one commodity-specific general waste discharge requirements (general orders) within the Central Valley region for irrigated lands owners/operators that are part of a third-party group. In addition, the board intends to develop a general order for irrigated lands owners/operators that are not part of a third-party group.

The geographic/commodity-based orders will allow for tailoring of implementation requirements based on the specific conditions within each geographic area. At the same time, the board intends to maintain consistency in the general regulatory approach across the orders through the use of templates for grower reporting, as well as in the focus on high vulnerability areas and areas with known water quality issues. The Order includes provisions to reduce the reporting requirements for small farming operations and areas of low vulnerability. The Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed General Order is the first of these orders to be considered by the board.

## Goals and Objectives of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program

The goals and objectives of this Order, which implements the long term ILRP in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, are described below. These are the goals described in the PEIR for the ILRP.<sup>3</sup>

*"Understanding that irrigated agriculture in the Central Valley provides valuable food and fiber products to communities worldwide, the overall goals of the ILRP are to (1) restore and/or maintain the highest reasonable quality of state waters considering all the demands being placed on the water; (2) minimize waste discharge from irrigated agricultural lands that could degrade the quality of state waters; (3) maintain the economic viability of agriculture in California's Central Valley; and (4) ensure that irrigated agricultural discharges do not impair access by Central Valley communities and residents to safe and reliable drinking water. In accordance with these goals, the objectives of the ILRP are to:*

- *Restore and/or maintain appropriate beneficial uses established in Central Valley Water Board water quality control plans by ensuring that all state waters meet applicable water quality objectives.*
- *Encourage implementation of management practices that improve water quality in keeping with the first objective, without jeopardizing the economic viability for all sizes of irrigated agricultural operations in the Central Valley or placing an undue burden on rural communities to provide safe drinking water.*

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<sup>1</sup> ICF International. 2011. Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, Program Environmental Impact Report. Draft and Final. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>2</sup> ICF International. 2010. Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program) (Economics Report).

<sup>3</sup> PEIR, page 2-6

- *Provide incentives for agricultural operations to minimize waste discharge to state waters from their operations.*
- *Coordinate with other Central Valley Water Board programs, such as the Grasslands Bypass Project WDRs for agricultural lands total maximum daily load development, CV-SALTS, and WDRs for dairies.*
- *Promote coordination with other regulatory and non-regulatory programs associated with agricultural operations (e.g., DPR, the California Department of Public Health [DPH] Drinking Water Program, the California Air Resources Board [ARB], the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Resource Conservation Districts [RCDs], the University of California Extension, the Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS], the USDA National Organic Program, CACs, State Water Board Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment Program, the U.S. Geological Survey [USGS], and local groundwater programs [SB 1938, Assembly Bill [AB] 3030, and Integrated Regional Water Management Plans]) to minimize duplicative regulatory oversight while ensuring program effectiveness.”*

### **Description of the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed Area<sup>4</sup>**

The Eastern San Joaquin Watershed area includes portions of Stanislaus, Merced, Calaveras, Fresno, and Alpine Counties, as well as the entire counties of Madera, Tuolumne, and Mariposa. See Figure 1 of the Order for a map of the area. There are approximately 1,000,000 acres of irrigated agricultural land within the watershed area, although approximately 165,000 of these acres are regulated under the Central Valley Water Board’s General Order for Existing Milk Cow Dairies. See Table 1 below for more detailed acreage information.

Surface water flows northward and out of the watershed area via the San Joaquin River. The San Joaquin drains watersheds on the east and west side of the San Joaquin Valley, though only east side watersheds are included in this Order’s watershed area. In addition to the San Joaquin River, which forms the southern and western boundary of the watershed, there are five major rivers in the watershed: the Fresno River, the Chowchilla River, the Merced River, the Tuolumne River and the Stanislaus River. In addition, the Eastside Bypass is considered a major waterbody. These eastern tributaries of the San Joaquin River drain the Sierra Nevada range from east to west. The region also contains all or portions of seven groundwater basins; see Figure 5 for a map of the groundwater basins.

The Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed area includes portions of two geomorphic provinces: the Sierra Nevada and Great Valley provinces. The San Joaquin Valley, part of the Great Valley, is a large sediment-filled trough, thousands of feet thick in some locations (Figure 1, Thiros 2010).<sup>5</sup> Scattered throughout the sediment-filled trough in the subsurface exist many lenses at varying depths of fine-grained deposits, including Corcoran Clay deposits, which form confining layer(s) (Figure 2, Bertold, Johnston, Evenson 1991).<sup>6</sup> Figure 3 from Thiros 2010 is a generalized diagram of the Central Valley, showing the basin-fill deposits and the components of the groundwater system under modern conditions.

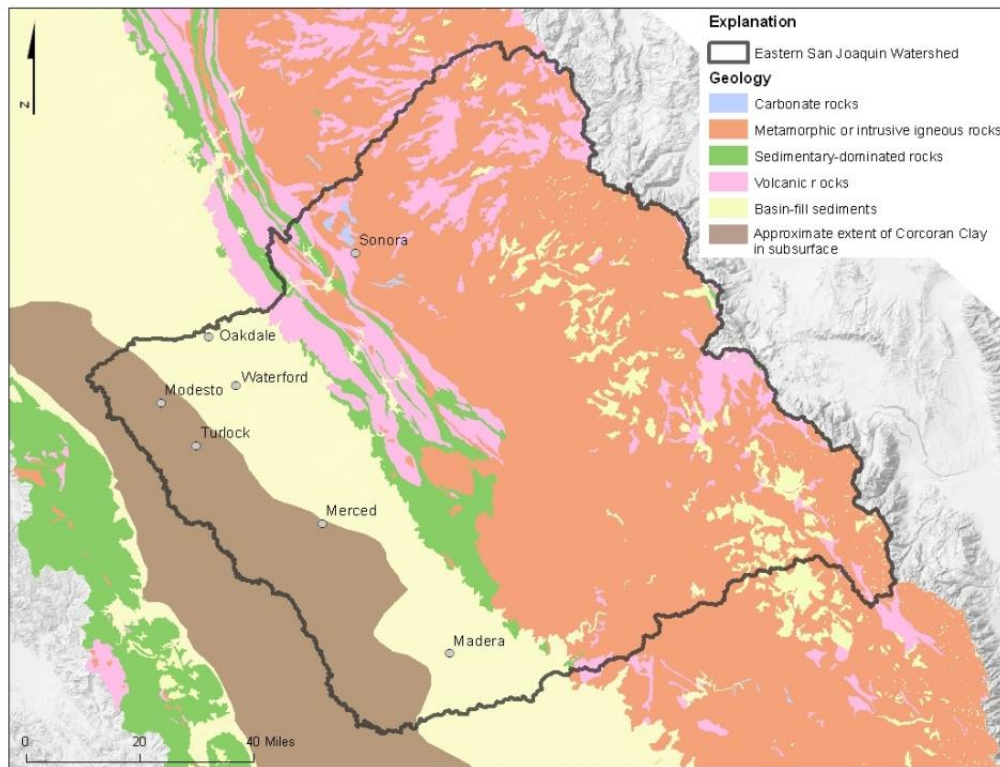
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<sup>4</sup> This section is adapted from the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition’s 20 October 2010 Monitoring and Reporting Program Plan.

<sup>5</sup> Thiros, S.A., 2010. Section 13. Conceptual Understanding and Groundwater Quality of the Basin-Fill Aquifer in the Central Valley, California *in* Conceptual Understanding and Groundwater Quality of Selected Basin-Fill Aquifers in the Southwestern United States. United States Geological Survey Professional Paper 1781.

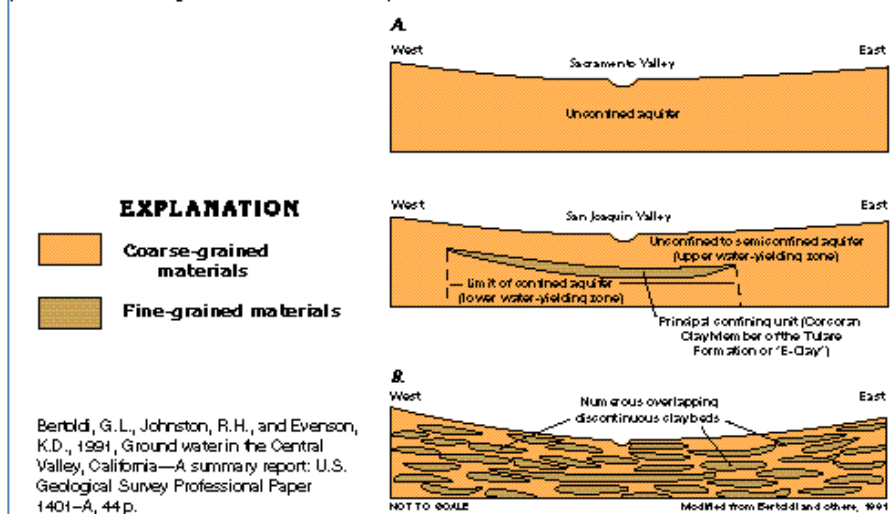
<sup>6</sup> Bertold, G.L., Johnston, R.H., Evenson, K.D. 1991. Groundwater in the Central Valley, California—A summary report. United States Geological Survey Professional Paper 1401-A.

**Figure 1. Generalized Geology of the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed – adapted from Thiros (2010)**



**Figure 2. Cross-sectional Diagram of Groundwater Confining Layers in the San Joaquin Valley – Bertold, Johnston, and Evenson (1991)**

Figure 78. According to early concepts of the aquifer system (A), it was generally considered to be unconfined in the Sacramento Valley and confined where the Corcoran Clay Member of the Tulare Formation, or "E-clay," is present in the San Joaquin Valley. However, recent studies suggest that the entire aquifer system is a single heterogeneous system (B) in which vertically and horizontally scattered lenses of fine-grained materials provide increasing confinement with depth.

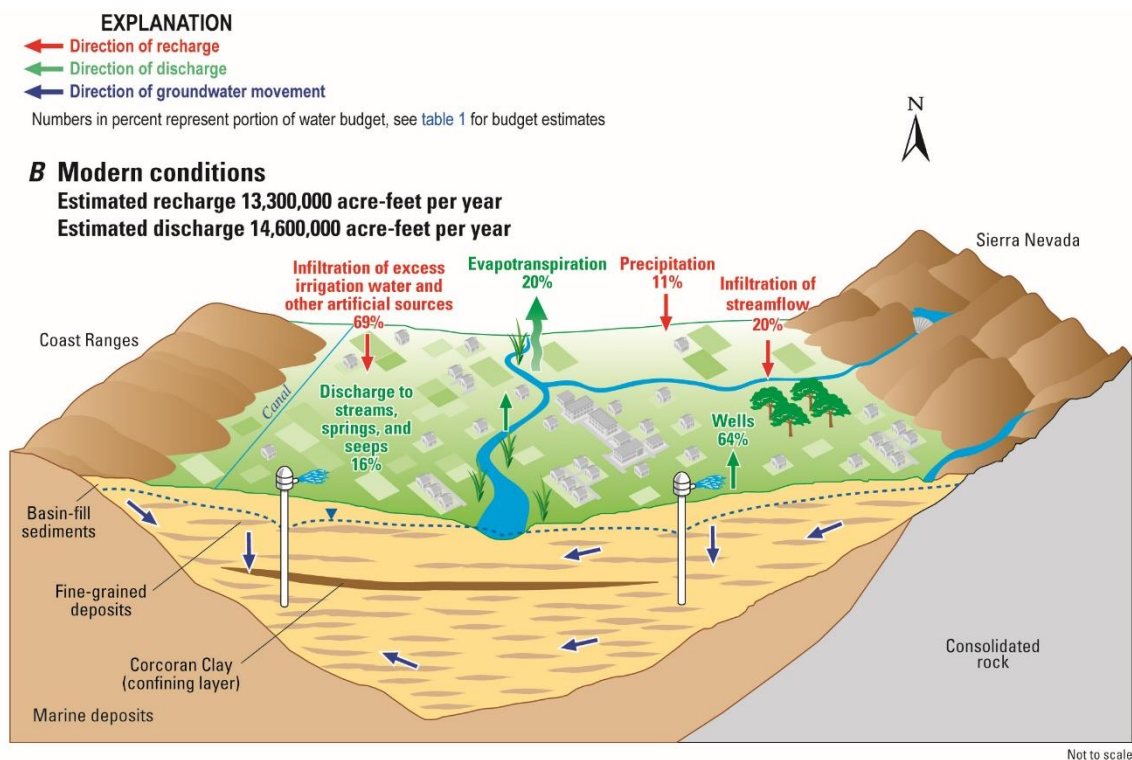




From Tanji and Kielen (2002)<sup>7</sup>:

The eastern side of the valley was formed from the alluvium of the Sierra Nevada, which consists mainly of granitic rocks. The soils derived from Sierran alluvium tend to be coarse textured and non-saline. The eastern groundwaters are characterized as low-salt calcium-bicarbonate-type water with total dissolved solids (*TDS*) typically in the 200-500 mg/litre range. In contrast, the soils on the western side were formed from alluvium of the Coast Range made up of uplifted marine sedimentary rocks. The soils on the western side tend to be finer textured and saline. The groundwaters on the western side are characterized as moderately saline sodium-sulphate-type waters with *TDS* typically in the 1 000-10 000 mg/litre range. The unconfined aquifer in both sides of the valley is gradually being filled up with decades of irrigation deep percolation. The soils in the valley and lowest part of the alluvial fans in the western side are waterlogged and salt affected. A nearly water-impermeable clay layer known as the Corcoran clay, about 200 m deep, serves as the boundary between the unconfined and confined aquifer. The groundwaters in the confined aquifer contain from 500 to 1 000 mg/litre *TDS*...

**Figure 3. Generalized Diagram for the Central Valley, Showing the Basin-fill Deposits and Components of the Groundwater System under Modern Conditions – Thiros (2010)**



Under Conditional Waiver Order R5-2006-0053, (Coalition Group Conditional Waiver) the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (ESJWQC) divided the area into six zones based on hydrology, crop types, land use, soil types, and rainfall. Zone names are based on the Core Monitoring location within

<sup>7</sup> Tanji, K. and N. Kielen, 2002. Agricultural drainage water management in arid and semi-arid areas. FAO Irrigation and Drainage Paper 61, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.

that zone: 1) Dry Creek at Wellsford Zone, 2) Prairie Flower Drain at Crows Landing Zone, 3) Highline Canal at Hwy 99 Zone, 4) Merced River at Santa Fe Zone, 5) Duck Slough at Gurr Rd Zone, and 6) Cottonwood Creek at Rd 20 Zone. See Table 1 for characteristics of each region. See Figure 4 for a map of the zones.

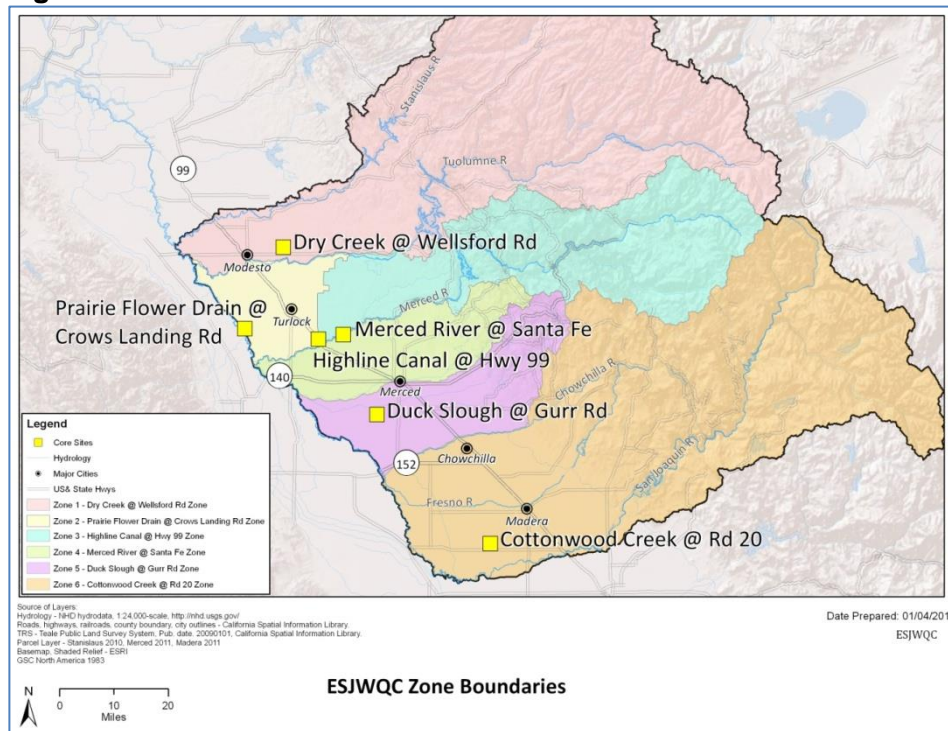
**Table 1. Zone Characteristics in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed Area**

	Zone 1 Dry Creek	Zone 2 Prairie Flower Drain	Zone 3 Highline Canal	Zone 4 Merced River	Zone 5 Duck Slough	Zone 6 Cottonwood Creek
Irrigated Acres	134,307	164,633	88,617	121,746	142,686	335,069
Soil (average %):						
Sand	56	71	62	59	40	64
Silt	25	19	24	25	36	22
Clay	18	10	15	16	24	14
Land Use (% of irrigated acres):						
Deciduous Fruits/Nuts	39	38	61	38	19	32
Field Crops	16	23	16	22	33	15
Grains/Hay	1	1	2	4	6	4
Pasture	35	31	11	20	31	13
Vineyard	4	3	9	6	2	31
Dairies:						
% of irrigated acres	15	28	12	20	23	10
Number of operations	109	270	25	72	56	49
Depth to Groundwater:						
Weighted Average, feet	49	30	138	46	69	120
Annual average precipitation in the San Joaquin Hydrologic Region is 20 inches. <sup>8</sup>						

The top ten crops based on 2010 total harvested acreage in the San Joaquin River Watershed are (listed in decreasing order): almonds, hay, silage, corn, grapes, tomatoes, irrigated pasture, wheat, cotton and walnuts. This list includes the acreage on both sides of the San Joaquin River, so does not necessarily represent the top ten crops for the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed area covered by this Order. There were over 100 crops grown in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed in 2010.

<sup>8</sup> California Department of Water Resources, Division of Flood Management, Regional Climate Data.

**Figure 4. ESJWQC Zone Boundaries**



## East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (ESJWQC) Organization

The ESJWQC submitted a Notice of Intent in October 2003 and received a Notice of Applicability (NOA) from the Executive Officer in February 2004. The NOA approved the ESJWQC's request to operate as a lead entity under the previous Coalition Group Conditional Waiver within its boundaries. Similar to the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver, this Order has been written for a third-party to provide a lead role in conducting monitoring, educating member growers (Members), developing water quality management plans, and interacting with the Central Valley Water Board on behalf of Members. Due to a substantial number of new requirements, this Order requires that the third-party submit a new application to serve as a third-party representing growers under this Order. The Central Valley Water Board anticipates that the ESJWQC will continue to operate as the third-party lead entity under this Order.

## Grower Enrollment Process

The enrollment process whereby growers obtain membership in the third-party group under this Order is designed to incentivize speedy enrollment by increasing both submittal requirements and fees due for those that wait to obtain regulatory coverage. Members in good standing when the Order is adopted, as well as growers needing membership, will have a 120-day period (after the NOA is issued by the Executive Officer for the third-party) to complete enrollment before additional requirements are initiated. Members in good standing will submit a one-page Notice of Confirmation (NOC) to the third-party, confirming that they would like to continue membership in the third-party and that they are familiar with the Order's requirements. Other growers will submit a membership application to the third-party and will be notified by the third-party when their membership is approved. This will streamline the initial enrollment process for the bulk of the irrigated agricultural operations within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

Growers that do not enroll within the 120-day enrollment period, or are prompted to apply due to Central Valley Water Board enforcement or inspection, will be required to submit (1) a Notice of Intent (NOI) to

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comply with the terms and conditions of the Order to the Central Valley Water Board, (2) an administrative processing fee for the increased workload associated with the grower outreach (as applicable), and (3) a Membership application to the third-party group. These additional steps of submitting an NOI and fee directly to the board after the initial enrollment deadline are intended to provide an incentive for growers to enroll promptly.

The third-party will provide an annual Membership List to the Central Valley Water Board that will include everyone who enrolled. The Membership List will specify Members in good standing as well as revoked memberships or pending revocations. Board staff will conduct enforcement activities as needed using the list of revoked/pending revocations.

### **Groundwater Quality Vulnerability**

The concept of higher and lower vulnerability areas was integrated into the Order to allow the board to tailor requirements to applicable waste discharge conditions. Resources can be focused on areas that need enhanced water quality protection, because the third-party has the option to identify low vulnerability areas where reduced program requirements would apply.

Vulnerability may be based on, but is not limited to, the physical conditions of the area (soil type, depth to groundwater, beneficial uses, etc.), water quality monitoring data, and the practices used in irrigated agriculture (pesticide permit and use conditions, label requirements, application method, etc.). Additional information such as models, studies, and information collected may also be considered in designating vulnerability areas.

High vulnerability areas for groundwater are those areas that meet the requirements for preparing a Groundwater Quality Management Plan or areas identified in the Groundwater Assessment Report, where available information indicates irrigated lands could cause or contribute to an exceedance of water quality objectives or degradation of groundwater quality that may threaten applicable beneficial uses. The Groundwater Assessment Report may rely on water quality data to identify high vulnerability areas and on assessments of hydrogeological conditions and other factors (e.g., areas of high fertilizer use) to identify high vulnerability areas. The third-party is also expected to review readily available studies and assessments of groundwater quality to identify those areas that may be impacted by irrigated agricultural operations. Examples of assessments that the third-party should review include: the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) Ground Water Protection Areas and the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas.

In general, low vulnerability areas for groundwater are areas that do not exhibit characteristics of high vulnerability groundwater areas (as defined in the MRP).

Vulnerability designations will be proposed by the third-party, based on the high and low vulnerability definitions provided in Attachment E of the Order. Vulnerability designations will be refined and updated periodically per the Groundwater Assessment Report and Monitoring Report processes (described in Attachment B, Monitoring and Reporting Program [MRP] Order R5-2012-0116-R4). The Executive Officer will make the final determination regarding the irrigated lands waste discharge vulnerability areas.

## **Surface Water and Groundwater Monitoring**

### ***Surface Water Quality Monitoring***

#### **Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) – Surface Water Quality Monitoring**

The ESJWQC has been operating under a Monitoring and Reporting Program Plan (MRP Plan) prepared according to the Monitoring and Reporting Program Order R5-2008-0005 for Coalition Groups under the amended Coalition Group Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from

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Irrigated Lands Order R5-2006-0053. The MRP Plan, together with the ESJWQC's Management Plan (described below), is the workplan for the monitoring and reporting program, including environmental monitoring, quality assurance and quality control, outreach, and tracking and reporting on progress.

Under previous MRP Order R5-2008-0005, the ESJWQC conducted three types of water quality monitoring: Core, Assessment, and Special Project. Monitoring design was specific to each of the six zones designated in 2008 by the ESJWQC within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. The zone designations were based on hydrology, crop types, land use, soil types, and rainfall. Each zone contained one Core Monitoring site and several Assessment Monitoring sites that would rotate every two years. Core Monitoring was designed to evaluate general water quality trends over time at the Core sites and included general physical parameters, nutrients, and pathogens. Assessment Monitoring rotated through Assessment sites and included analyses for a large suite of constituents. Core Monitoring sites underwent Assessment Monitoring every three years. Special Project Monitoring occurred when the requirement for a management plan was triggered and additional data were needed to identify sources of the exceedances, as well as to assess water quality improvement due to implementation of management practices. Special Project Monitoring also occurred in areas where total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies are required by the Basin Plan.

The basic questions to be answered by the updated surface water quality monitoring program are similar to those established under the previous MRP Order (R5-2008-005):

1. Are receiving waters to which irrigated lands discharge meeting applicable water quality objectives and Basin Plan provisions?
2. Are irrigated agricultural operations causing or contributing to identified water quality problems?<sup>9</sup> If so, what are the specific factors or practices causing or contributing to the identified problems?
3. Are water quality conditions changing over time (e.g., degrading or improving as new management practices are implemented)?
4. Are irrigated agricultural operations of Members in compliance with the provisions of the Order?
5. Are implemented management practices effective in meeting applicable receiving water limitations?
6. Are the applicable surface water quality management plans effective in addressing identified water quality problems?

The questions are addressed through the following monitoring and information gathering approaches:

1. The "Core" and "Represented" monitoring sites cover represented sections of the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed with irrigated agricultural operations. The requirement to evaluate materials applied to crops or constituents mobilized by irrigated agricultural operations will result in monitoring of those constituents in receiving waters.
2. The monitoring and evaluation approach required as part of the surface water quality monitoring and management plan development and implementation will address this question (see below and the requirements associated with surface water quality management plans).
3. Both "special project" monitoring associated with management plans and the monitoring conducted at "Core" monitoring sites should be sufficient to allow for the evaluation of trends. The requirements to gather information on management practices will provide additional

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<sup>9</sup> "Water quality problem" is defined in Attachment E.

information to help estimate whether any changes in trends may be associated with the implementation of practices.

4. The surface water monitoring required should allow for a determination as to whether discharges from irrigated lands are protective of beneficial uses and meeting water quality objectives. Other provisions in the MRP should result in the gathering of information that will allow the board to evaluate overall compliance with the Order.
5. The monitoring conducted as part of the implementation of a management plan, in addition to any special project monitoring required by the Executive Officer, should allow the board to determine whether management practices representative of those implemented by irrigated agriculture are effective. In addition, information developed through studies outside of these requirements can be used to evaluate effectiveness.
6. The “special project” monitoring associated with management plans will be tailored to the specific constituents of concern and the time period when they are impacting water quality. Therefore, the water quality data gathered, together with management practice information, should be sufficient to determine whether the management plans are effective.

The surface water monitoring required by this Order’s Monitoring and Reporting Program R5-2012-0116-R4 (MRP) has been developed using the ESJWQC’s August 2008 MRP Plan as a foundation. However, a number of changes were made to improve the cost-effectiveness of the surface water monitoring effort and ensure the data collected are the most appropriate for answering the monitoring questions.

The four primary changes were to: 1) eliminate the set frequency for monitoring; 2) eliminate the set parameter list for metals and pesticides; 3) change approach to trend monitoring to focus on parameters associated with irrigated agricultural waste discharges; and 4) modify the monitoring approach at previous “Core” and “Rotating” sites.

The rationale for the above changes are:

- 1) The previous requirement to monitor monthly resulted in monitoring during months in which no problems would be expected and infrequent monitoring during peak periods when potential problems could occur. The third-party will be required to evaluate pesticide use patterns and peak times when metals from irrigated agriculture operations may cause problems in surface water. Based on that evaluation, they will propose a frequency and time period to conduct monitoring that will adequately characterize surface waters receiving irrigated agricultural waste discharges.
- 2) The set list of parameters resulted in monitoring of some pesticides and metals that are unlikely to result in water quality problems. Also, in some cases pesticides that could cause or contribute to a water quality problem were not monitored. The third-party will be required to evaluate use patterns and properties (e.g., physical-chemical characteristics) and propose a list of metals to monitor. Board staff will work with DPR, third-party groups, and engage the ILRP Technical Issues Committee (TIC) to develop a process for selecting the list of pesticides and specific pesticides for monitoring by the third-party.
- 3) The general parameters that were monitored as part of previous core monitoring have been of limited value for monitoring trends related to irrigated agricultural waste discharge. Rather than requiring monitoring of general parameters to try to determine trends, trend monitoring will occur as part of management plan monitoring and through more frequent monitoring at “Core” sites.
- 4) The previous requirement included monitoring a broad suite of parameters once every three years on a monthly monitoring schedule. The “trigger” for requiring preparation of a management plan is more than one exceedance every three years. The previous approach reduces the likelihood of identifying and addressing a problem, especially if a problem is primarily prevalent in a single month – a management plan might never be triggered. In addition, by not sampling a broad suite of parameters two out of three years, significant problems related to hydrology or climate could be missed – for example, heavy pest pressure in a non-monitored year could result

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in heavy pesticide use and higher discharge that would not be identified. The new MRP requires two years of monitoring/two years off at the “Core” monitoring sites (any monitoring triggered by management plans would continue even if a site had an “off” year for monitoring). This approach will ensure that each “zone” includes one or more sites in which comprehensive assessment monitoring is being conducted, which should allow the board to track and identify any significant changes, while not imposing an undue cost burden.

- 5) The previous monitoring program included a set schedule for monitoring at previously identified “Rotating” sites. The MRP for this Order does not establish a set schedule for monitoring “Rotating” sites. Instead, the third-party will monitor two “Core” sites per zone with monitoring at additional sites (“Represented” monitoring sites) when “Core” site monitoring indicates that there is a water quality problem or as part of special studies and management plans. This change will facilitate a better process for targeted follow-up monitoring where there are water quality problems.

### **Surface Water Management Plans**

Since 2004, the ESJWQC has collected water quality monitoring data at 47 sites. Under Conditional Waiver Order R5-2006-0053, surface water quality management plans (SQMPs) were required for watersheds where there was an exceedance of a water quality objective or trigger limit<sup>10</sup> more than one time in a three year period. There are currently surface water management plans required for the following constituents: ammonia, arsenic, chlorpyrifos, copper, DDE, diazinon, diuron, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, *E. coli*, lead, molybdenum, nitrate, pH, simazine, total dissolved solids, thiobencarb, algae toxicity, sediment toxicity to *Hyalella azteca*; and water column toxicity to algae (*Selenastrum capricornutum*), fathead minnows (*Pimephales promelas*), and water fleas (*Ceriodaphnia dubia*). The ESJWQC’s Management Plan, which covers all of these constituents, was approved on 25 November 2008 and is updated annually. Table 2 provides a brief summary of the water quality sampling results for these constituents. This Order requires the ESJWQC’s 2008 Management Plan to be implemented.

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<sup>10</sup> Trigger limits are discussed below under “Water Quality Objectives.”

**Table 2. Summary of ILRP Surface Water Monitoring Data for Management Plan Constituents in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, 2004 through 2010**

Constituent	No. of sites requiring a management plan	Range of detected levels	Number of exceedances	Trigger limit
<i>Pesticides</i>				
Chlorpyrifos	23	ND <sup>1</sup> to 3.7 ug/L	90	0.015 ug/L
DDE	1	ND to 0.022 ug/L	4	0.00059 ug/L
Diazinon	1	ND to 0.24 ug/L	3	0.1 ug/L
Diuron	5	ND to 68 ug/L	17	2 ug/L
Simazine	2	ND to 25 ug/L	5	4 ug/L
Thiobencarb	1	ND to 5.8 ug/L	3	Must not be detected (ND)
<i>Toxicity</i>				
Water, <i>Selenastrum</i>	18	1.8% to 100% growth <sup>2</sup>	82	Reduction in growth <sup>2, 3</sup>
Water, <i>Pimephales</i>	3	0% to 100% survival <sup>2</sup>	12	Reduction in survival <sup>2, 3</sup>
Water, <i>Ceriodaphnia</i>	12	0% to 100% survival <sup>2</sup>	48	Reduction in survival <sup>2, 3</sup>
Sediment, <i>Hyaella</i>	13	0% to 100% survival <sup>2</sup>	55	Reduction in survival <sup>2, 3</sup>
<i>Metals (total)</i>				
Arsenic	4	ND to 30 ug/L	31	10 ug/L
Copper	17	0.4 to 120 ug/L	13	Variable <sup>4</sup>
Lead	11	ND to 24 ug/L	69	Variable <sup>4</sup>
Molybdenum	1	0.25 to 6.8 ug/L	5 <sup>5</sup>	Variable <sup>4</sup>
<i>Nutrients &amp; Salts</i>				
Ammonia	5	ND to 155.4 mg/L	27	Variable <sup>6</sup>
Nitrate as N	6	ND to 68 mg/L	63	10 mg/L
Total dissolved solids	8	<4 to 2,900 mg/L	126	450 mg/L
Electrical conductivity	12	<1 to 4,798 uS/cm	193	700 uS/cm
<i>Other</i>				
Dissolved oxygen	21	0 to 25.9 mg/L	335	>5 or >7 mg/L
<i>E. coli</i>	27	0 to 2,400 MPN/100mL	340	235 MPN/100mL
pH	15	5.02 to 9.7	81	>8.5 or <6.5

<sup>1</sup> ND = Not detected at measurable levels

<sup>2</sup> Compared to the control sample

<sup>3</sup> And statistically significant

<sup>4</sup> Hardness-dependent water quality objectives

<sup>5</sup> This management plan and associated 5 exceedances occurred in 2011

<sup>6</sup> Water quality objectives are dependent on pH and temperature

Similar to the previous Order (Coalition Group Conditional Waiver), this Order requires the third-party to develop SQMPs for watersheds where there is an exceedance of a water quality objective or trigger limit more than one time in a three year period. SQMPs may also be required where there is a trend of degradation that threatens a beneficial use. SQMPs will only be required for wastes that may be discharged by some or all of irrigated lands in the identified area. SQMPs are the key mechanism under this Order to help ensure that waste discharges from irrigated lands are meeting Surface Water Receiving Water Limitation III.A. The limitations apply immediately unless the Member is implementing the SQMP in accordance with the approved time schedule. The SQMP will include a schedule and milestones for the implementation of management practices (see Appendix MRP-1). The schedule must identify the time needed to identify new management practices necessary to meet the receiving water limitations, as well as a timetable for implementation of identified management practices. The SQMP will

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include a schedule for implementing practices that are known to be effective in partially or fully protecting surface water quality. The SQMP must also identify an approach for determining the effectiveness of the implemented management practices in protecting surface water quality.

The main elements of SQMPs are to A) investigate potential irrigated agriculture sources of waste discharge to surface water; B) review physical setting information for the plan area such as existing water quality data; C) considering elements A and B, develop a strategy with schedule and milestones to implement practices to ensure waste discharges from irrigated agriculture are meeting Surface Water Limitation III.A.1; D) develop a monitoring strategy to provide feedback on SQMP progress; E) develop methods to evaluate data collected under the SQMP; and F) provide annual reports to the Central Valley Water Board on progress.

Elements A – F are necessary to establish a process by which the third-party and Central Valley Water Board are able to investigate waste sources and the important physical factors in the plan area that may impact management decisions (elements A and B), implement a process to ensure effective practices are adopted by Members (element C), ensure that adequate feedback monitoring is conducted to allow for evaluation of SQMP effectiveness (elements D and E), and facilitate efficient board review of data collected on the progress of the SQMP (element F).

The SQMPs required by this Order require the third-party to include the above elements. SQMPs will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer. Also, because SQMPs may cover broad areas potentially impacting multiple surface water users in the plan area, these plans will be circulated for public review. Prior to plan approval, the Executive Officer will consider public comments on proposed SQMPs.

The burden of the SQMP, including costs, is reasonable. The Central Valley Water Board must be informed of the efforts being undertaken by irrigated agricultural operations to address identified surface water quality problems. In addition, a regional SQMP is a reasonable first step to address identified surface water quality problems, since the monitoring and planning costs are significantly lower, when undertaken regionally by the third-party, than requiring individuals to undertake similar monitoring and planning efforts. However, if the regional SQMP does not result in the necessary improvements to water quality, the burden, including costs, of requiring individuals in the impacted area to conduct monitoring, describe their plans for addressing the identified problems, and evaluate their practices is a reasonable subsequent step. The benefits and necessity of such individual reporting, when regional efforts fail, include, but are not limited to: 1) the need of the board to evaluate the compliance of regulated growers with applicable orders; 2) the need of the board to understand the effectiveness of practices being implemented by regulated growers; and 3) the benefits to all users of that surface water of improved water quality.

### ***Groundwater Quality***

#### **Groundwater Monitoring Advisory Workgroup**

The Groundwater Monitoring Advisory Workgroup (GMAW) consists of groundwater experts representing state agencies, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), academia, and private consultants. The following questions were identified by the GMAW and Central Valley Water Board staff as critical questions to be answered by groundwater monitoring conducted to comply with the ILRP.

1. What are irrigated agriculture's impacts to the beneficial uses of groundwater and where has groundwater been degraded or polluted by irrigated agricultural operations (horizontal and vertical extent)?

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2. Which irrigated agricultural management practices are protective of groundwater quality and to what extent is that determination affected by site conditions (e.g., depth to groundwater, soil type, and recharge)?
3. To what extent can irrigated agriculture's impact on groundwater quality be differentiated from other potential sources of impact (e.g., nutrients from septic tanks or dairies)?
4. What are the trends in groundwater quality beneath irrigated agricultural areas (getting better or worse) and how can we differentiate between ongoing impact, residual impact (vadose zone) or legacy contamination?
5. What properties (soil type, depth to groundwater, infiltration/recharge rate, denitrification/nitrification, fertilizer and pesticide application rates, preferential pathways through the vadose zone [including well seals, abandoned or standby wells], contaminant partitioning and mobility [solubility constants]) are the most important factors resulting in degradation of groundwater quality due to irrigated agricultural operations?
6. What are the transport mechanisms by which irrigated agricultural operations impact deeper groundwater systems? At what rate is this impact occurring and are there measures that can be taken to limit or prevent further degradation of deeper groundwater while we're identifying management practices that are protective of groundwater?
7. How can we confirm that management practices implemented to improve groundwater quality are effective?

The workgroup members reached consensus that the most important constituents of concern related to agriculture's impacts to the beneficial uses of groundwater are nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ) and salinity. In addition to addressing the widespread nitrate problems, the presence of nitrates in groundwater at elevated levels would serve as an indicator of other potential problems associated with irrigated agricultural practices. Central Valley Water Board staff utilized the recommended salinity and nitrate parameters and added general water quality parameters contained within a majority of the groundwater monitoring programs administered by the board (commonly measured in the field) and some general minerals that may be mobilized by agricultural operations (general minerals to be analyzed once every five years in Trend wells). The general water quality parameters will help in the interpretation of results and ensure that representative samples are collected. The board considered the above questions in developing the Order's groundwater quality monitoring and management practices assessment, and evaluation requirements.

### **Groundwater Quality Monitoring and Management Practice Assessment, and Evaluation Requirements**

The groundwater quality monitoring, assessment, and evaluation requirements have been developed in consideration of the critical questions developed by the Groundwater Monitoring Advisory Workgroup (listed above). The third-party must collect sufficient data to describe irrigated agricultural impacts on groundwater quality and to determine whether existing or newly implemented management practices comply with the groundwater receiving water limitations of the Order. The strategy for evaluating groundwater quality and protection consists of: (1) a Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR), (2) a Management Practices Evaluation Program, and (3) a Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program.

The general purpose of the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report is to analyze existing monitoring data and provide the foundation for designing the Management Practices Evaluation Program and the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program, as well as identifying high vulnerability groundwater areas where a groundwater quality management plan must be developed and implemented.

A Management Practices Evaluation Program (MPEP) is to be developed where known groundwater quality impacts exist for which irrigated agricultural operations are a potential contributor or where conditions make groundwater more vulnerable to impacts from irrigated agricultural activities (high vulnerability areas). The purpose of the MPEP is to identify whether existing site-specific and/or commodity-specific agricultural management practices are protective of groundwater quality in the high vulnerability areas and to assess the effectiveness of any newly implemented management practices instituted to improve groundwater quality. Given the wide range of management practices/commodities within the third-party's boundaries, it is anticipated that the third-party will rank or prioritize their high vulnerability areas and commodities, and present a phased approach to implementing the MPEP. The MPEP must be designed to answer GMAW questions 2, 5, 6, and 7. Where applicable, management practices identified as protective of groundwater quality through the MPEP (or equivalent practices) must be implemented by Members, whether the Member is in a high or low vulnerability area (see section IV.B.21 of the Order).

Since the focus of the MPEP is answering the questions related to management practices, the method or tools to be used are not prescribed by the board. The third-party is required to develop a workplan that describes the tools or methods to be used to associate management practice activities on the land surface with the effect of those activities on underlying groundwater quality. The board anticipates that the MPEP workplan will likely propose using a variety of tools, such as vadose zone monitoring, modeling, and groundwater monitoring. The third-party has the option of developing the workplan as part of a group effort that may include other agricultural water quality coalitions and commodity groups. Such a joint effort may avoid duplication of effort and allow collective resources to be more effectively focused on the highest priority studies, while ensuring the goals of the MPEP are met. Existing monitoring wells can be utilized where available for the MPEP.

The trend monitoring program is designed to determine current water quality conditions of groundwater in the third-party area, and to develop long-term groundwater quality information that can be used to evaluate the regional effects (i.e., not site-specific effects) of irrigated agriculture and its practices. Trend monitoring has been developed to answer GMAW questions 1 and 4. At a minimum, trend monitoring must include annual monitoring for electrical conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, nitrate as nitrogen (N), and once every five year monitoring for total dissolved solids, carbonate, bicarbonate, chloride, sulfate, boron, calcium, sodium, magnesium, and potassium. Existing shallow wells, such as domestic supply wells, will be used for the trend groundwater monitoring program. The use of existing wells is less costly than installing wells specifically designed for groundwater monitoring, while still yielding data which can be compared with historical and future data to evaluate long-term groundwater trends.

As the management practices identified as protective of groundwater quality through the MPEP are implemented, the trend monitoring, together with other data included in updates to the GAR, should show improvements in water quality. The trend monitoring and GAR updates will, therefore, provide a regional view as to whether the collective efforts of Members are resulting in water quality improvements. If groundwater quality trends indicate degradation in low vulnerability areas, then a Groundwater Quality Management Plan must be developed and implemented. Negative trends of groundwater quality in high vulnerability areas over time would be an indicator that the existing Groundwater Quality Management Plan is not effective or is not being effectively implemented.

The third-party may also look to and explore using existing monitoring networks such as those being conducted in accordance with local groundwater management plans (e.g., AB 3030, SB 1938, Integrated Regional Water Management Plans).

GMAW question 3, which seeks to differentiate sources of existing impact, cannot be easily answered by traditional groundwater monitoring. The MPEP and trend monitoring will help to answer this question,

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but other methods such as isotope tracing and groundwater age determination may also be necessary to fully differentiate sources. The MRP does not require these advanced source methods because they are not necessary to determine compliance with the Order. The MPEP will be used to help determine whether waste discharge at represented sites is of high enough quality to meet the groundwater limitations of the Order.

### **Data Summary, Pesticides**

Monitoring data collected for two studies conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board and the USGS in 2006 and 2008 showed detections of pesticides used by agriculture in groundwater within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.<sup>11</sup> Pesticides and pesticide degradates were detected in 59 percent of wells in the Central-Eastside San Joaquin Basin in 2006 and 30 percent of wells in the Madera-Chowchilla Study Unit in 2008. Most frequently detected pesticides in the studies include deethylatrazine (degradate of triazine herbicides), simazine, atrazine, metolachlor, DBCP, and deisopropylatrazine (degradate of triazine herbicides). Most pesticide detections were below health-based thresholds and applicable water quality objectives. Analyses were not run for all pesticides used in the study areas.

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), as part of its regulatory requirements under the Pesticide Contamination Prevention Act (PCPA) enacted in 1985, is required to maintain a statewide database of wells sampled for pesticide active ingredients and, in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (DPH) and the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), provide an annual report of the data contained in the database and the actions taken to prevent pesticides contamination to the Legislature and other state agencies. DPR also initiated the Ground Water Protection Program that focuses on evaluating the potential for pesticides to move through soil to groundwater, improving contaminant transport modeling tools, and outreach/training programs for pesticide users. There are approximately 359,000 acres of irrigated lands in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed within DPR Groundwater Protection Areas (GWPA's). Of the 359,000 acres, approximately 236,000 acres of the irrigated lands are within DPR GWPA's that are characterized as vulnerable to leaching of pesticides (leaching areas), approximately 120,000 acres are within GWPA's that are characterized as vulnerable to movement of pesticides to groundwater by runoff from fields to areas where they may move to groundwater (runoff areas), and 2,510 acres of irrigated lands are characterized as both leaching and runoff areas. See Figure 5 for a map of the Groundwater Protection Areas within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

DPR's current groundwater quality monitoring program should be sufficient to identify any emerging pesticides of concern and to track water quality trends of identified pesticides of concern. However, the presence of pesticides in groundwater indicates a discharge of waste subject to Water Board regulation. Therefore, should the board or DPR identify groundwater quality information needs related to pesticides in groundwater, the board may require the third-party to conduct studies or implement a monitoring plan to address those information needs. Where additional information collected indicates a groundwater quality problem, a coordinated effort with DPR to address the identified problem will be initiated and the board may require the third-party to develop a GQMP.

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<sup>11</sup> Landon, M.K., and Belitz, K., 2008. Ground-water quality data in the Central Eastside San Joaquin Basin 2006: Results from the California GAMA Program: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 325, 88 p. See also Shelton, J.L., Fram, M.S., and Belitz, K., 2009. Groundwater-quality data for the Madera-Chowchilla study unit, 2008: Results from the California GAMA program: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 455, 80 p. Available at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/455>.

### **Data Summary Nitrates – GeoTracker GAMA**

The State Water Board's GeoTracker GAMA (Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment) online information system integrates groundwater data from multiple sources, such as GAMA, DPR, Department of Water Resources (DWR), USGS, Department of Public Health (DPH), and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Staff queried GeoTracker GAMA. In January 2012 there were 35,640 nitrate results in GeoTracker GAMA within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed Area. These results were collected from environmental monitoring wells and water supply wells (94 percent of the samples were collected from water supply wells). The samples considered in this summary were collected from 1978 through 2011, although 84 percent of the samples were collected in years 2000 or later. There is only one nitrate sample in the GAMA database collected prior to 1979 (for the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed area). Samples were collected within all 6 counties in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, although most were collected in Stanislaus (62 percent), Merced (14 percent), and Madera (12 percent) Counties.

Sample collection depth information is not available for download from GeoTracker GAMA. However, 86 percent (30,807) of the samples were collected by DPH from water supply wells. DPH monitors water quality in public supply wells, which are typically hundreds to thousands of feet deep and pump large volumes of water from deeper aquifers. This indicates that this particular set of 35,639 nitrate results focuses primarily on conditions in deeper groundwaters. Since DPH primarily monitors active municipal supply wells, wells that have excessive nitrates (that are not treated or blended with better quality water) are generally taken out of water supply service, so monitoring ceases. Therefore, DPH data for active municipal wells generally do not include nitrate-contaminated wells. Additional data collected at shallower depths (where applicable) may be needed to adequately assess current groundwater quality conditions in the area.

Six percent of sample results for all GAMA well data for the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed were greater than the nitrate drinking water standard of 45 mg/L (as nitrate). An additional 34 percent of results fell between the drinking water standard and half of the standard (22.5 mg/L).

Of the 5,601 samples collected from 1979 through 1999, 9 percent were greater than the nitrate drinking water standard and an additional 29 percent fell between the drinking water standard and half of the standard. Of the 30,038 samples collected 2000 through 2011, 6 percent were greater than the nitrate drinking water standard and an additional 35 percent fell between the drinking water standard and half of the standard.

All nitrate results collected between 1979 and 1999 were reported by DPH. Of the 4,832 nitrate results reported by groups other than DPH that were collected 2000 through 2011, 14 percent were greater than the nitrate drinking water standard and an additional 17 percent fell between the standard and half of the standard.

There were 1,004 square-mile sections of land (township, range, and section or TRS) within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed Area with nitrate results in the GeoTracker GAMA dataset. When data were analyzed per TRS, three percent of sampled sections had an average nitrate level above the drinking water standard and an additional 18 percent of sections had an average nitrate level between 45 and 22.5 mg/L. Twenty-two percent of sampled sections had a maximum nitrate level above 45 mg/L and an additional 28 percent of sampled sections had a maximum level between 45 and 22.5 mg/L. See Figure 6 for a map showing the maximum nitrate result per square mile section of land with detections.

## **Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas**

In 2000, the State Water Resources Control Board created a map showing locations where published hydrogeologic information indicated conditions that may be more vulnerable to groundwater contamination. They termed these areas “Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas.” The map identifies areas where geologic conditions allow recharge to underlying water supply aquifers at rates or volumes substantially higher than in lower permeability or confined areas of the same groundwater basin. The map does not include hydrogeologically vulnerable areas (HVAs) where local groundwater supplies occur mainly in the fractured igneous and metamorphic rocks which underlie the widespread mountain and foothill regions of the Sierra Nevada, or in permeable lava flows which may provide primary recharge for extensive but sparsely populated groundwater basins. See Figure 5 for a map of the HVA areas within the third-party region.

## **Groundwater Quality Management Plans (GQMPs)**

Under this Order, groundwater quality management plans will be required where there are exceedances of water quality objectives, where there is a trend of degradation<sup>12</sup> that threatens a beneficial use, as well as for “high vulnerability groundwater areas” (to be designated by the third-party in the Groundwater Assessment Report based on definitions provided in Attachment E). Instead of development of separate GQMPs, the Order allows for the submittal of a comprehensive GQMP along with the Groundwater Assessment Report. GQMPs will only be required if irrigated lands may cause or contribute to the groundwater quality problem. GQMPs are the key mechanism under this Order to help ensure that waste discharges from irrigated lands are meeting Groundwater Receiving Water Limitation III.B. The limitations apply immediately unless the Member is implementing the GQMP in accordance with the approved time schedule. The GQMP will include a schedule and milestones for the implementation of management practices (see Appendix MRP-1). The schedule must identify the time needed to identify new management practices necessary to meet the receiving water limitations, as well as a timetable for implementation of identified management practices. The MPEP will be the process used to identify the effectiveness of management practices, where there is uncertainty regarding practice effectiveness under different site conditions. However, the GQMP will also be expected to include a schedule for implementing practices that are known to be effective in partially or fully protecting groundwater quality. For example, the ratio of total nitrogen available to crop consumption of nitrogen that is protective of water quality may not be known for different site conditions and crops. However, accounting for the amount of nitrate in irrigation supply water is known to be an effective practice at reducing the amount of excess nitrogen applied.

The main elements of GQMPs are to A) investigate potential irrigated agricultural sources of waste discharge to groundwater, B) review physical setting information for the plan area such as geologic factors and existing water quality data, C) considering elements A and B, develop a strategy with schedules and milestones to implement practices to ensure discharge from irrigated lands are meeting Groundwater Receiving Water Limitation III.B, D) develop a monitoring strategy to provide feedback on GQMP progress, E) develop methods to evaluate data collected under the GQMP, and F) provide reports to the Central Valley Water Board on progress.

Elements A – F are necessary to establish a process by which the third-party and Central Valley Water Board are able to investigate waste sources and the important physical factors in the plan area that may impact management decisions (elements A and B), implement a process to ensure effective practices are adopted by Members (element C), ensure that adequate feedback monitoring is conducted to allow

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<sup>12</sup> A trend in degradation could be identified through the required trend monitoring or through the periodic updates of the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report.

for evaluation of GQMP effectiveness (elements D and E), and facilitate efficient board review of data collected on the progress of the GQMP (element F).

This Order requires the third-party to develop GQMPs that include the above elements. GQMPs will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer. Also, because GQMPs may cover broad areas potentially impacting multiple groundwater users in the plan area, these plans will be circulated for public review. Prior to plan approval, the Executive Officer will consider public comments on proposed GQMPs.

In accordance with Water Code section 13267, the burden of the GQMP, including costs, is reasonable. The Central Valley Water Board must be informed of the efforts being undertaken by Members to address identified groundwater quality problems. In addition, a regional GQMP is a reasonable first step to address identified groundwater quality problems, since the monitoring and planning costs are significantly lower when undertaken regionally by the third-party than requiring individual Members to undertake similar monitoring and planning efforts. However, if the regional GQMP does not result in the necessary improvements to water quality, the burden, including costs, of requiring individual Members in the impacted area to conduct monitoring, describe their plans for addressing the identified problems, and evaluate their practices is a reasonable subsequent step. The benefits and necessity of such individual reporting, when regional efforts fail, include, but are not limited to: 1) the need of the board to evaluate the compliance of regulated Members with applicable orders; 2) the need of the board to understand the effectiveness of practices being implemented by Members; and 3) the benefits of improved groundwater quality to all users.

## **Farm Evaluations**

The Order requires that all Members complete a farm evaluation describing management practices implemented to protect surface and groundwater quality. The evaluation will also include information such as location of the farm, surface water discharge points, location of in service wells and abandoned wells and whether wellhead protection practices have been implemented.

The Order requires development of a farm evaluation template to assist Members in completing the evaluation. Once the Executive Officer approves the final template, all Members will be required to complete a farm evaluation. The Order establishes prioritization for Member completion and updating of the evaluations based on farm size and whether the operation is within a high or low vulnerability area. Farm evaluations must be maintained at the Member's farming operations headquarters or primary place of business and submitted to the third-party for summary reporting to the Central Valley Water Board.

The farm evaluation is intended to provide the third-party and the Central Valley Water Board with information regarding individual Member implementation of the Order's requirements. Without this information, the board would rely solely on regional surface and groundwater monitoring to determine compliance with water quality objectives. The regional monitoring cannot determine whether all Members are implementing protective practices, such as wellhead protection measures for groundwater. Regional monitoring also does not allow identification of which practices are protective in areas where impacts are observed and multiple practices are employed. For groundwater protection practices, it may take years in many areas (even decades in some areas) before broad trends in groundwater may be measured and associated with implementation of this Order. Farm evaluations will provide assurance that Members are implementing management practices to protect groundwater quality while trend data are collected.

The reporting of practices identified in the farm evaluation will allow the third-party and board to effectively implement the MPEP. Evaluating management practices at representative sites (in lieu of farm-specific monitoring) only works if the results of the monitored sites can be extrapolated to non-

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monitored sites. One of the key ways to extrapolate those results will be to have an understanding of which farming operations have practices similar to the site that is monitored. The reporting of practices will also allow the board to determine whether the GQMP is being implemented by Members according to the approved schedule.

In addition, reporting of practices will allow the third-party and board to evaluate changes in surface water quality relative to changes in practices. The SQMP will include a schedule and milestones for the implementation of practices to address identified surface water quality problems. The reporting of practices will allow the board to determine whether the SQMP is being implemented by Members according to the approved schedule. Absent information on practices being implemented by Members, the board would not be able to determine whether Members are complying with the Order.

The focus of the reporting is on parcels in high vulnerability areas. The board needs to have an understanding of whether Members are improving practices in those areas where surface or groundwater quality are most impacted (or potentially impacted). Reporting frequency is annual for all sizes of farming operations in high vulnerability areas. The reporting frequency is every five years for all farming operations in low vulnerability areas, however, the first report for small farming operations in low vulnerability areas is not due until 2017. The Executive Officer is given the discretion to reduce the reporting frequency for Members in high vulnerability areas, if there are minimal year to year changes in the practices reported. This discretion is provided, since the reporting burden would be difficult to justify given the costs if there were minimal year to year changes in the information provided.

While the focus of the reporting is on high vulnerability areas, the MPEP requirement affects management practices implemented in both high and low vulnerability areas. Management practices identified as protective of groundwater quality through the MPEP (or equivalent practices) must be implemented by Members, where applicable, whether the Member is in a high or low vulnerability area (see section IV.B.21 of the Order).

### **Nitrogen Management Plans**

Nitrate derived from both agricultural and non-agricultural sources has resulted in degradation and/or pollution of groundwater beneath agricultural areas in California's Central Valley.<sup>13</sup> As shown in Figure 6, there are a number of wells within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed area with nitrate concentrations that are higher than drinking water quality objectives. To address these concerns, the Order requires that Members implement practices that minimize excess nitrogen application relative to crop need. Proper nutrient management will work to reduce excess plant nutrients, such as nitrogen, from reaching state waters. Nitrogen management must take site-specific conditions into consideration in identifying steps that will be taken and practices that will be implemented to minimize nitrate movement through surface runoff and leaching past the root zone.

This Order requires the development of a nitrogen management plan template to assist Members with nitrogen management. The template must be approved by the Executive Officer, and will either be proposed by the third-party according to the criteria listed in the Order, or will be developed by the staff in consultation with the third-party based on those same criteria. The template should consider, to the extent appropriate, the major criteria established in Code 590 of the NRCS Nutrient Management document, including soil and plant tissue testing, nitrogen application rates, nitrogen application timing,

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<sup>13</sup> ICF International. 2011. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program - Program Environmental Impact Report*. Final and Draft. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA. Appendix A, page 46.

consideration of organic nitrogen fertilizer, consideration of irrigation water nitrogen levels to minimize surface and groundwater pollution and meet crop nitrogen requirements and crop yield potential.

Once the Executive Officer approves the nitrogen management plan template, all Members will be required to complete a nitrogen management plan according to the schedule in the Order. Growers in low vulnerability areas are required to prepare nitrogen management plans, but do not need to certify the plans or provide summary reports to the third-party. Should the groundwater vulnerability designation change from “low” to “high” vulnerability, those Members in the previously designated low vulnerability area would then need to have their nitrogen management plan certified and submit summary reports in accordance with a schedule issued by the Executive Officer.

Members with small farming operations are given an additional two years to complete their first nitrogen management plan. The plan must be maintained at the Member’s farming operations headquarters or primary place of business.

For Members located within a high vulnerability groundwater area, for which nitrate is identified as a constituent of concern, the plan must be certified in one of the following ways:

Self-certified by the Member who attends a California Department of Food and Agriculture or other Executive Officer approved training program for nitrogen plan certification. The Member must retain written documentation of their attendance in the training program; or

Self-certified by the Member that the plan adheres to a site-specific recommendation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the University of California Cooperative Extension. The Member must retain written documentation of the recommendation provided; or

Certified by a nitrogen management plan specialist as defined in Attachment E of this Order. Such specialists include Professional Soil Scientists, Professional Agronomists, Crop Advisors<sup>14</sup> certified by the American Society of Agronomy, or Technical Service Providers certified in nutrient management in California by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Certified in an alternative manner approved by the Executive Officer. Such approval will be provided based on the Executive Officer’s determination that the alternative method for preparing the nitrogen management plan meets the objectives and requirements of this Order.

The Order requires nitrogen management reporting (nitrogen management plan summary reports) for Members in high vulnerability groundwater areas. The first nitrogen management plan summary report must be submitted one year after the first nitrogen management plan must be developed. The nitrogen management plan summary report provides information based on what was actually done the previous crop year, while the plan indicates what is planned for the upcoming crop year. Therefore, the first summary report is due the year following the implementation of the first nitrogen management plan. This reporting will provide the third-party and the Central Valley Water Board with information regarding individual Member implementation of the Order’s requirements. Without this information, the board would rely primarily on groundwater monitoring to determine compliance with water quality objectives. Groundwater monitoring alone would not provide a real-time indication as to whether all Members are managing nutrients to protect groundwater. Improved nitrogen management may take place relatively quickly, although it may take many years before broad trends in nitrate reduction in groundwater may be

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<sup>14</sup> Should the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Certified Crop Adviser’s establish a specific nitrogen management certification, any Certified Crop Adviser who certifies a nitrogen management plan must have a nitrogen management certification.

measured. Nitrogen management reporting will provide assurance that Members are managing nutrients to protect groundwater quality while trend data are collected.

### ***Spatial Resolution of Nitrogen Management Plan and Farm Evaluation Information***

The Order requires reporting to the Central Valley Water Board of nitrogen management information and management practices identified through the farm evaluation. These data are required to be associated with the township (36 square mile area) where the farm is located. The spatial resolution by township provides a common unit that should facilitate analysis of data and comparisons between different areas.

The nitrogen management data collected by the third-party from individual Members will be aggregated by the township where the enrolled parcel is located and will not be associated with the Member or their enrolled parcel. For example, the third-party may have information submitted for 180 different parcels in a given township. At a minimum, the board would receive a statistical summary of those 180 data records describing the range, percentiles (10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup>), and any outliers for similar soil conditions and similar crops in that township. A box and whisker plot or equivalent tabular or graphical presentation of the data approved by the Executive Officer may be used. Based on this analysis, the Central Valley Water Board intends to work with the third-party to ensure that those Members who are not meeting the nitrogen management performance standards identified in the Order improve their practices. As part of its annual review of the monitoring report submitted by the third-party, the board will evaluate the effectiveness of third-party outreach efforts and trends associated with nitrogen management. The board intends to request information from the third-party for those Members who, based on the board's evaluation of available information, do not appear to be meeting nitrogen management performance standards. The reporting of nitrogen management data may be adjusted based on the outcomes of the efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board's Expert Panel and the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting System Task Force (see Finding 47 and the State Water Board's Report to the Legislature<sup>15</sup>).

In order to determine whether growers in a given township are improving their practices, the third-party will need to assess the data and evaluate trends. The third-party's assessment and evaluation, along with the data used to make the evaluation, will be provided in the third-party's annual monitoring report. Since a report on management practice information and nitrogen management summary reports will be provided annually, the board will be able to determine what the trends are, if any. If the data suggest that growers are not improving their practices, the Executive Officer can require the third-party to submit the management practice or nitrogen management plan summary information for individual Members.

### **Sediment and Erosion Control Plans**

The Order requires that Members with the potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters prepare a sediment and erosion control plan. Control of sediment discharge will work to achieve water quality objectives associated with sediment and also water quality objectives associated with sediment bound materials such as pesticides. To ensure that water quality is being protected, this Order requires that sediment and erosion control plans be prepared in one of the following ways:

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<sup>15</sup> State Water Board Resources Control Board. 2013. Report to the Legislature, Recommendations Addressing Nitrate in Groundwater <[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/nitrate\\_project/docs/nitrate\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/nitrate_project/docs/nitrate_rpt.pdf)>

- The sediment and erosion control plan must adhere to the site-specific recommendation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), NRCS technical service provider, the University of California Cooperative Extension, the local Resource Conservation District; or conform to a local county ordinance applicable to erosion and sediment control on agricultural lands. The Member must retain written documentation of the recommendation provided and certify that they are implementing the recommendation; or
- The plan must be prepared and self-certified by the Member, who has completed a training program that the Executive Officer concurs provides necessary training for sediment and erosion control plan development; or
- The plan must be written, amended, and certified by a qualified sediment and erosion control plan developer possessing one of the registrations shown in Table 3 below; or
- The plan must be prepared and certified in an alternative manner approved by the Executive Officer. Such approval will be provided based on the Executive Officer's determination that the alternative method for preparing the plan meets the objectives and requirements of this Order.

**Table 3. Qualified Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Developers**

<b>Title/Certification</b>	<b>Certifier</b>
Professional Civil Engineer	State of California
Professional Geologist or Engineering Geologist	State of California
Landscape Architect	State of California
Professional Hydrologist	American Institute of Hydrology
Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control™ (CPESC)	Enviro Cert International Inc.
Certified Professional in Storm Water Quality™ (CPSWQ)	Enviro Cert International Inc.
Certified Soil Scientist	American Society of Agronomy

The sediment and erosion control plan will: (1) help identify the sources of sediment that affect the quality of storm water and irrigation water discharges; and (2) describe and ensure the implementation of water quality management practices to reduce or eliminate sediment and other pollutants bound to sediment in storm water and irrigation water discharges. The plan must be appropriate for the Member's operations and will be developed and implemented to address site specific conditions. Each farming operation is unique and requires specific description and selection of water quality management practices needed to address waste discharges of sediment. The plan must be maintained at the farming operations headquarters or primary place of business.

The Order requires development of a sediment and erosion control plan template to assist Members and qualified developers in completing the plan. The Order establishes prioritization for Member completion of the plan based on farm size. Small farming operations will have additional time to complete the plan.

To assist Members in determining whether they need to prepare a sediment and erosion control plan, the third-party must prepare a sediment and erosion control assessment report that identifies the areas susceptible to erosion and the discharge of sediment that could impact receiving waters. In addition, the Executive Officer may identify areas requiring such plans based on evidence of ongoing erosion or sediment control problems.



## **Small Farming Operations**

In counties within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, small farming operations are operated by approximately 61 percent of the growers, but account for approximately 6% of the total irrigated lands.<sup>16</sup> During the development of the Order, concerns were raised regarding the ability of small farms to comply with the requirements of the Order. Although there were recommendations to exempt small farms from this Order, no evidence was provided to demonstrate that small farms could not affect water quality and, therefore, justify an exemption from being governed by waste discharge requirements. In addition, there was no evidence presented to suggest that, on a per acre basis, small farming operations would have a reduced impact on water quality than larger farmers.

However, the board recognizes that small farming operations have more limited resources and access to technical experts. The additional time provided for small farming operations to initially prepare applicable farm evaluations, nitrogen management plans, and sediment and erosion control plans should allow small farmers to more feasibly access available technical resources, such as their third-party, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of California Cooperative Extension, and local resource conservation districts.

These changes should not impact the board's ability to determine progress for the watershed as a whole, since most of the irrigated acreage in the watershed is managed by large farming operations. However, small farming operations may prove to have significant localized impacts, so this Order does not preclude the Executive Officer from obtaining information from small farming operations to address such impacts.

To accommodate differing requirements for small farming operations, the board needs to know who is farming a given parcel. Although the landowner can be the Member of the third-party, the landowner must still identify the lessee, if the landowner is not also the farmer. This requirement is necessary to avoid a situation in which multiple parcels of less than 60 acres are farmed by the same farming operation, but are incorrectly identified as associated with "small farming operations" based on the individual landowners being the Members rather than the farm operator.

## **Technical Reports**

The surface water and trend groundwater quality monitoring under the Order is regional in nature instead of individual field discharge monitoring. The benefits of regional monitoring include the ability to determine whether water bodies accepting discharges from numerous irrigated lands are meeting water quality objectives. Regional monitoring also allows the Central Valley Water Board to determine, at the regional level, whether practices are protective of water quality. There are limitations to regional monitoring when trying to determine possible sources of water quality problems.

Therefore, through the Management Practices Evaluation Program and the Surface Water Quality Management Plans and Groundwater Quality Management Plans, the third-party must evaluate the effectiveness of management practices in protecting water quality. In addition, Members must report the practices they are implementing to protect water quality. Through the evaluations and studies conducted by the third-party, the reporting of practices by the Members, and the board's compliance and enforcement activities, the board will be able to determine whether a Member is complying with the Order.

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<sup>16</sup> Data are for Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne Counties; United States Department of Agriculture. 2007. *Census of Agriculture*.

An effective method of determining compliance with water quality objectives is water quality monitoring at the individual level. Individual monitoring may also be used to help determine sources of water quality problems. Individual monitoring of waste discharges is required under many other Water Board programs. Examples of such programs include regulation of wastewater treatment plants and the Central Valley Water Board's Dairy Program.<sup>17</sup> The costs of individual monitoring would be much higher than regional surface and groundwater quality monitoring required under the Order. Regional monitoring provides a general measure of compliance over a large area, reducing the number of samples collected.

This Order requires the third-party to provide technical reports. These reports may include special studies at the direction of the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer may require special studies where regional monitoring is ineffective in determining potential sources of water quality problems or to identify whether management practices are effective. Special studies help ensure that the potential information gaps described above under the Order's regional monitoring requirements may be filled through targeted technical reports, instead of more costly individual monitoring programs.

### **Approach to Implementation and Compliance and Enforcement**

The board has been implementing the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program since 2003. The implementation of the program has included compliance and enforcement activities to ensure growers have the proper regulatory coverage and are in compliance with the applicable board orders. The following section describes the state-wide policy followed by the board, as well as how the board intends to implement and enforce the Order.

The State Water Board's Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy) defines an enforcement process that addresses water quality in an efficient, effective, and consistent manner<sup>18</sup>. A variety of enforcement tools are available in response to noncompliance. The Enforcement Policy endorses the progressive enforcement approach which includes an escalating series of actions from informal to formal enforcement. Informal enforcement actions are any enforcement taken by staff that is not defined in statute or regulation, such as oral, written, or electronic communication concerning violations. The purpose of informal enforcement is to quickly bring an actual, threatened, or potential violation to the discharger's attention and to give the discharger an opportunity to return to compliance as soon as possible. Formal enforcement includes statutorily based actions that may be taken in place of, or in addition to, informal enforcement. Formal enforcement is recommended as a first response to more significant violations, such as the highest priority violations, chronic violations, and/or threatened violations. There are multiple options for formal enforcement, including Administrative Civil Liabilities (ACLs) imposed by a Regional Water Board or the State Water Board. A 30-day public comment period is required prior to the settlement or imposition of any ACL and prior to settlement of any judicial civil liabilities.

#### ***Compliance/Enforcement Related to Grower Participation***

To facilitate grower participation in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) under the Conditional Waiver, the Central Valley Water Board staff engaged in outreach and followed the progressive enforcement series of actions. For example, staff had sent outreach postcards informing non-participating landowners who potentially require coverage under the ILRP. Water Code Section 13267 Orders for technical reports had been issued to landowners who first received an outreach postcard and

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<sup>17</sup> The dairy program requires individual monitoring of surface water discharges and allows for a "representative" groundwater monitoring in lieu of individual groundwater monitoring.

<sup>18</sup> State Water Resources Control Board. 2010. Water Quality Enforcement Policy.  
<[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/enforcement/docs/enf\\_policy\\_final111709.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/enforcement/docs/enf_policy_final111709.pdf)>

did not respond. Landowners were required to respond to postcards or 13267 Orders by obtaining the required regulatory coverage, or claiming an exemption from the ILRP requirements. The Central Valley Water Board staff routinely conducted inspections to verify landowner exemption claims; occasionally the outcome of inspections led to an enforcement action for failure to obtain appropriate regulatory coverage.

Upon the adoption of this original Order in December 2012, staff sent letters to thousands of landowners who may now require regulatory coverage, since this Order addresses discharge to both groundwater and surface water. Parcels that potentially need regulatory coverage are identified from readily available information sources, such as county tax assessor records; aerial photography; and the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The staff also conducts inspections in the field to verify that parcels have an irrigated agricultural operation. The Executive Officer sends Water Code Section 13260 Directives when inspections verify that parcels require coverage under the ILRP, when growers who used to be third-party members are no longer listed on the annual membership lists, or when growers who received Executive Officer approval to join a third-party have not done so. The 13260 Directives require growers to enroll or re-instate their membership with a third-party, obtain coverage for their discharges under other applicable general waste requirements, or submit a Report of Waste Discharge to the Central Valley Water Board. As the highest level of informal enforcement, Notices of Violation (NOV's) are sent to growers who fail to respond to Orders and Directives, and direct the recipients obtain the proper regulatory coverage for their waste discharges. The board intends to issue Administrative Civil Liability Complaints to those growers who do not respond to the NOV. In addition, the board may enroll those growers under the general WDRs for dischargers not participating in a third-party group (R5-2013-0100), after such growers are provided an opportunity for a hearing.

#### ***Compliance/Enforcement Related to Water Quality Violations***

The board intends to respond promptly to complaints and conduct field inspections on a routine basis to identify potential water quality violations. Complaints will generally result from local residents contacting the board based on their observations of sediment plumes, fish kills, or odor problems. The board will generally contact and coordinate with the third-party, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the local county agricultural commissioner depending on the nature of the problem.

In addition, the board staff will conduct field inspections of individual grower's operations to determine whether practices protective of groundwater are in place. Such practices include backflow prevention devices; well head protection; and those practices found protective through the Management Practices Evaluation Program. The field inspections will also include a review of whether implemented practices are protective of surface water, and may include sampling of runoff. The informal and formal enforcement process described above will be used should any violations of the Order be identified through field inspections.

#### ***Compliance/Enforcement Related to Information Collected***

As a part of field inspections, and with the consent of the Member, owner or authorized representative as required by applicable laws, staff may also review information and farm plans prepared by Members. The Executive Officer will request information, as necessary, from Members and the third-party to audit the quality and accuracy of information being submitted. The Executive Officer will regularly report to the board on the results of any audits of the information reported by the third-party, the outcome of any field verification inspections of information submitted by the Members, and make recommendations regarding changes to the reporting requirements and the information submittal process, if needed.

The findings of this Order provide a further description of the enforcement priorities and process for addressing violations.

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## **Reports and Plans**

This Order is structured such that the Executive Officer is to make determinations regarding the adequacy of reports and information provided by the Dischargers and allows the Executive Officer to approve such reports. All plans and reports required for approval by the Executive Officer will be posted on the board's website upon approval. In addition, this Order identifies specific reports and Executive Officer's decisions that must be posted for public comment and review. It is the right of any interested person to request the Central Valley Water Board to review any of the aforementioned Executive Officer decisions.

## **Water Quality Objectives**

Surface water and groundwater receiving water limitations in section III of the Order specify that waste discharge from irrigated lands may not cause or contribute to an exceedance of water quality objectives in surface water or underlying groundwater, unreasonably affect beneficial uses, or cause a condition of pollution or nuisance.

Water quality objectives that apply to surface water are described in the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins* (Basin Plan). Applicable water quality objectives include, but are not limited to, (1) the numeric objectives, including the bacteria objective, the chemical constituents objective (includes listed chemicals and state drinking water standards, i.e., maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) promulgated in Title 22 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Division 4, Chapter 15 sections 64431 and 64444 that are applicable through the Basin Plan to waters designated as municipal and domestic supply), dissolved oxygen objectives, pH objectives, the salinity objectives, and the turbidity objectives; and (2) the narrative objectives, including the biostimulatory substances objective, the chemical constituents objective, and the toxicity objective. The Basin Plan also contains numeric water quality objectives that apply to specifically identified water bodies, such as specific temperature objectives. Federal water quality criteria that apply to surface water are contained in federal regulations referred to as the California Toxics Rule and the National Toxics Rule. See 40 CFR sections 131.36 and 131.38.

Water quality objectives that apply to groundwater include, but are not limited to, (1) numeric objectives, including the bacteria objective and the chemical constituents objective (includes state MCLs promulgated in Title 22 CCR Division 4, Chapter 15 section 64431 and 64444 and are applicable through the Basin Plan to municipal and domestic supply), and (2) narrative objectives including the chemical constituents, taste and odor, and toxicity objectives.

The requirements that waste discharge not unreasonably affect beneficial uses or cause a condition of pollution or nuisance are prescribed pursuant to sections 13263 and 13241 of the California Water Code. Section 13263 of the California Water Code requires Regional Water Boards, when establishing waste discharge requirements, to consider the need to prevent nuisance and the provisions in section 13241 of the California Water Code. Section 13241 requires Regional Water Boards to consider several factors when establishing water quality objectives including prevention of nuisance and reasonable protection of beneficial uses.

### ***Implementation of Water Quality Objectives***

The Basin Plan includes numeric and narrative water quality objectives. The narrative toxicity objective states: "*All waters shall be maintained free of toxic substances in concentrations that produce detrimental physiological responses in human, plant, animal, or aquatic life.*" The Basin Plan states that material and relevant information, including numeric criteria, and recommendations from other agencies and scientific

literature will be utilized in evaluating compliance with the narrative toxicity objective. The narrative chemical constituent objective states that waters shall not contain chemical constituents in concentrations that adversely affect beneficial uses. At a minimum, “...*water designated for use as domestic or municipal supply (MUN) shall not contain concentrations of chemical constituents in excess of the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs)*” in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). The Basin Plan further states that, to protect all beneficial uses, the Regional Water Board may apply limits more stringent than MCLs. The narrative tastes and odors objective states: “*Water shall not contain taste- or odor-producing substances in concentrations that impart undesirable tastes or odors to domestic or municipal water supplies or to fish flesh or other edible products of aquatic origin, or that cause nuisance, or otherwise adversely affect beneficial uses.*”

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Basin Plan at page IV-16.00, contains an implementation policy, “Policy for Application of Water Quality Objectives,” that specifies that the Central Valley Water Board “*will, on a case-by-case basis, adopt numerical limitations in orders which will implement the narrative objectives.*” With respect to narrative objectives, the Regional Water Board must establish limitations using one or more of three specified sources, including: (1) U.S. EPA’s published water quality criteria, (2) a proposed state criterion (i.e., water quality objective) or an explicit state policy interpreting its narrative water quality criteria (i.e., the Regional Water Board’s “Policy for Application of Water Quality Objectives”), or (3) an indicator parameter. For purposes of this Order, all three sources will be used as part of the process described below.

Implementation of numeric and narrative water quality objectives under the Order involves an iterative process. The Order’s MRP establishes management plan trigger limits that are equivalent to the applicable Basin Plan numeric water quality objectives. For constituents that are not assigned Basin Plan numeric water quality objectives, board staff will develop trigger limits in consultation with the Department of Pesticide Regulation (for pesticides) and other agencies as appropriate. Board staff will provide interested parties, including the third-party representing Members, with an opportunity to review and comment on the trigger limits. The Executive Officer will then provide the trigger limits to the third-party. Those trigger limits will be considered the numeric interpretation of the applicable narrative objectives. In locations where trigger limits are exceeded, water quality management plans must be developed that will form the basis for reporting which steps have been taken by growers to achieve compliance with numeric and narrative water quality objectives.

### **Non-Point Source (NPS) Program**

This Order regulates waste discharges from irrigated agricultural lands to state waters as an NPS program. Accordingly, the waste discharge requirements must implement the provisions of the State Water Board’s *Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program* (NPS Policy). Under the NPS Policy, the Regional Water Board must find that the program will promote attainment of water quality objectives. The nonpoint-source program also must meet the requirements of five key structural elements. These elements include (1) the purpose of the program must be stated and the program must address NPS pollution in a manner that achieves and maintains water quality objectives and beneficial uses, including any applicable antidegradation requirements; (2) describe the practices to be implemented and processes to be used to select and verify proper implementation of practices; (3) where it is necessary to allow time to achieve water quality requirements, include a specific time schedule, and corresponding quantifiable milestones designed to measure progress toward reaching specified requirements; (4) feedback mechanisms to determine whether the program is achieving its purpose; and (5) the consequences of failure to achieve the stated purpose.

This Order addresses each of the five key elements, as described below.

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- (1) The purpose of the long-term irrigated lands regulatory program, of which this Order is an implementing mechanism, is stated above under the section titled “Goals and Objectives of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.”<sup>19</sup> The program goals and objectives include meeting water quality objectives. The requirements of this Order include requirements to meet applicable water quality objectives and the requirements of State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16 (antidegradation requirements). Further discussion of this Order’s implementation of antidegradation requirements is given below under the section titled “State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16.”
- (2) The board is prevented by Water Code section 13360 from prescribing specific management practices to be implemented. However, it may set forth performance standards and require dischargers to report on what practices they have or will implement to meet those standards. Examples of the types of practices that irrigated agricultural operations may implement to meet program goals and objectives have been described in the Economics Report<sup>20</sup> and evaluated in the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)<sup>21</sup> for the long-term ILRP. This Order requires each individual operation to develop a farm evaluation that will describe their management practices in place to protect surface water and groundwater quality. This Order also requires the development of surface/groundwater quality management plans (SQMPs/GQMPs) in areas where there are exceedances of water quality objectives. The requirements for SQMPs and GQMPs include that the third-party identify management practices and develop a process for evaluating the effectiveness of such practices. The requirements of this Order are consistent with Key Element 2.
- (3) This Order requires the development of SQMPs/GQMPs in areas where water quality objectives are not met. SQMPs/GQMPs must include time schedules for implementing the plans and meeting the surface and groundwater receiving water limitations (section III of the Order) as soon as practicable, but within a maximum of 10 years for surface and groundwater. The time schedules must be consistent with the requirements for time schedules set forth in this Order. The time schedules must include quantifiable milestones that will be reviewed by the Executive Officer and the public prior to approval. The time schedule requirements in this Order are consistent with Key Element 3.
- (4) To provide feedback on whether program goals are being achieved, this Order requires surface and groundwater quality monitoring, tracking of management practices, and evaluation of effectiveness of implemented practices. This feedback will allow iterative implementation of practices to ensure that program goals are achieved. This feedback mechanisms required by this Order are consistent with Key Element 4.
- (5) This Order establishes the following consequences where requirements are not met:
  - (a) The third-party or Members will be required, in an iterative process, to conduct additional monitoring and/or implement management practices where water quality objectives are not being met;

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<sup>19</sup> The goals and objectives were developed as part of the ILRP Program Environmental Impact Report, ICF International. 2011. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program - Program Environmental Impact Report*. Final and Draft. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>20</sup> ICF International. 2010. *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program*. July. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>21</sup> ICF International. 2011. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program - Program Environmental Impact Report*. Final and Draft. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA.

- (b) Appropriate Central Valley Water Board enforcement action where the iterative management practices process is unsuccessful, program requirements are not met, or time schedules are not met;
- (c) Require noncompliant Members, or all Members where the third-party fails to meet the requirements of this Order, to submit a report of waste discharge to obtain individual waste discharge requirements from the Central Valley Water Board (i.e., revoke coverage under this Order).

This Order describes consequences for failure to meet requirements and is consistent with Key Element 5.

### **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

For the purposes of adoption of this Order, the Central Valley Water Board is the lead agency pursuant to CEQA (Public Resources Code sections 21100 et seq.). The Central Valley Water Board has prepared a Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)<sup>22</sup> that analyzes the potential environmental impacts of six program alternatives for a long term ILRP. As described more fully in Attachment D, this Order relies upon the PEIR for CEQA compliance. The requirements of the Order include regulatory elements that are also contained in the six alternatives analyzed in the PEIR. Therefore, the actions by Members to protect water quality in response to the requirements of this Order are expected to be similar to those described for Alternatives 2-6 of the PEIR (Alternative 1 does not include groundwater protection).

The PEIR describes that potential environmental impacts of all six alternatives are associated with implementation of water quality management practices, construction of monitoring wells, and impacts to agriculture resources (e.g., loss of production of prime farmland) due to increased regulatory costs. Under this Order, Members will be required to implement water quality management practices to address water quality concerns. The PEIR describes and evaluates potential impacts of practices likely to be implemented to meet water quality and other management goals on irrigated lands. These water quality management practices include:

- Nutrient management
- Improved water management
- Tailwater recovery system
- Pressurized irrigation
- Sediment trap, hedgerow, or buffer
- Cover cropping or conservation tillage
- Wellhead protection

These practices are examples of the types of practices that would be broadly applied by irrigated agricultural operations throughout the Central Valley and are considered representative of the types of practices that would have potential environmental impacts. It is important to note that the evaluated practices are not required; operators will have the flexibility to select practices to meet water quality goals. This Order represents one order in a series of orders that will be developed, based on the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR for all irrigated agriculture within the Central Valley. The requirements of this Order would lead to implementation of the above practices within the Eastern San Joaquin River

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<sup>22</sup> ICF International. 2011. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Final Program Environmental Impact Report*. Final and Draft. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA

Watershed to a similar degree as is described for Alternatives 2-6 analyzed in the PEIR. Also, the requirements of this Order will require installation of monitoring wells (with the extent depending on the adequacy of existing wells for water quality monitoring).

As described in the PEIR for Alternatives 2-6, the combination of an operator's choice of management practice and where that practice is implemented (i.e., located within a sensitive resource area) may result in significant environmental impacts for the following resource areas:

- Cultural resources: Potential loss of resources from construction and operation of management practices and monitoring wells.
- Noise and vibration: Exposure of sensitive land uses to noise from construction and operation of management practices (e.g., construction of tailwater return system, pump noise) and monitoring wells.
- Air quality: Generation of construction and operational emissions from management practices and monitoring wells (e.g., equipment and pump emissions generated during construction and continued operation of practices).
- Climate change: Cumulative, from a potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Vegetation and wildlife: Loss of habitat, wildlife, and wetland communities from reduced surface water discharge and construction and operation of practices and monitoring wells (e.g., loss of habitat if a practice is sited in a previously undisturbed area). Cumulative loss of habitat.
- Fisheries: Loss of habitat from construction of management practices, monitoring wells, and toxicity attributable to coagulant additives.
- Agriculture resources: Loss of farmland from increased regulatory cost. Cumulative loss of agriculture resources.

\* The above is a generalized summary of affected resource areas. The reader is directed to the Attachment D, Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, of this Order for specific impacts and discussion. Attachment D provides a listing of the above impacts, the written findings regarding those impacts consistent with § 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines, and the explanation for each finding.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

The impacts described above, except for agriculture resources, cumulative climate change, and cumulative vegetation and wildlife can be reduced to a less than significant level through the employment of alternate practices or by choosing a location that avoids sensitive areas (e.g., installing a sedimentation basin in a portion of the property that is already developed rather than in an area that provides riparian habitat). Where no alternate practice or less sensitive location for a practice exists, this Order requires that the third-party and Members choosing to employ these practices to avoid impacts to sensitive resources by implementing the mitigation measures described in Attachment C. A CEQA Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is included in Attachment B of this Order, Monitoring and Reporting Program R5-2012-0116-R4.

### **Statement of policy with respect to maintaining high quality waters in California (State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16)**

This section of the Information Sheet first provides background on State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16 *Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California* (Resolution No. 68-16). Following the background discussion, the Information Sheet describes how the various provisions in the WDR and MRP collectively implement Resolution No. 68-16. In summary, the requirements of Resolution No. 68-16 are met through a combination of upfront planning and

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implementation at the farm level; regional monitoring and assessments to determine whether trends in degradation are occurring; and regional planning and on-farm implementation when trends in degradation are identified.

Initially, all Members will need to conduct an on-farm evaluation to determine whether their practices are protective of water quality and whether they are meeting the established farm management performance standards. Through the process of becoming aware of effective management practices; evaluating their practices; and implementing improved practices; Members are expected to meet the farm management performance measures and, thereby, achieve best practicable treatment or control (BPTC), where applicable. All Members must prepare and implement a farm-specific nitrogen management plan. In addition, each Member with the potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters must prepare and implement a sediment and erosion control plan. Implementation of the sediment/erosion control plan should result in achieving BPTC for sediment associated pollutants. Implementation of the nitrogen management plan should result in achieving BPTC for nitrates discharged to groundwater.

Regional trend monitoring of surface water and groundwater together with periodic assessments of available surface water and groundwater information is required to determine compliance with water quality objectives and determine whether any trends in water quality improvement or degradation are occurring. If trends in such degradation are identified that could result in impacts to beneficial uses, a surface (or groundwater) quality management plan must be prepared by the third-party. The plan must include the identification of practices that will be implemented to address the trend in degradation and an evaluation of the effectiveness of those practices in addressing the degradation. The third-party must report on the implementation of practices by their Members. Failure to implement practices or address the degradation by individual Members will result in further direct regulation by the board, including, but not limited to, requiring individual farm water quality management plans; regulating the individual grower directly through WDRs for individual farmers; or taking other enforcement action.

As discussed further below, the combination of these requirements fulfill the requirements of Resolution 68-16 for any degradation of high quality waters authorized by this Order.

### **Background**

Basin Plan water quality objectives are developed to ensure that ground and surface water beneficial uses are protected. The quality of some state ground and surface waters is higher than established Basin Plan water quality objectives. For example, nutrient levels in good, or “high quality” waters may be very low, or not detectable, while existing water quality standards for nutrients may be much higher. In such waters, some degradation of water quality may occur without compromising protection of beneficial uses. State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16 *Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California* (Resolution No. 68-16) was adopted in October of 1968 to address high quality waters in the state. Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 131.12—Antidegradation Policy (40 CFR 131.12) was developed in 1975 to ensure water quality necessary to protect existing uses in waters of the United States. Resolution No. 68-16 applies to discharges to all high quality waters of the state, including groundwater and surface water (Water Code section 13050[e]); 40 CFR 131.12 applies only to surface waters.

The requirement to implement the Antidegradation Policy is contained in Resolution No. 68-16 (provision 2 presented below) and in the Basin Plan. The Basin Plan states that the Central Valley Water Board actions must conform with State Water Board plans and policies and among these policies is Resolution No. 68-16, which requires that:

1. *"Whenever the existing quality of water is better than the quality established in policies as of the date on which such policies become effective, such existing high quality will be maintained until it has been demonstrated to the State that any change will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the State, will not unreasonably affect present and anticipated beneficial use of such water and will not result in water quality less than that prescribed in the policies."*
2. *"Any activity which produces or may produce a waste or increased volume or concentration of waste and which discharges or proposes to discharge to existing high quality waters will be required to meet waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to assure that (a) a pollution or nuisance will not occur and (b) the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the State will be maintained."*

For discharges to surface waters only, the Federal Antidegradation Policy (Section 131.12, Title 40, CFR) requires:

1. *"Existing instream water uses and the level of water quality necessary to protect the existing uses shall be maintained and protected."*
2. *Where the quality of the waters exceed levels necessary to support propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and recreation in and on the water, that quality shall be maintained and protected unless the State finds, after full satisfaction of the intergovernmental coordination and public participation provisions of the State's continuing planning process, that allowing lower water quality is necessary to accommodate important economic or social development in the area in which the waters are located. In allowing such degradation or lower water quality, the State shall assure water quality adequate to protect existing uses fully. Further, the State shall assure that there shall be achieved the highest statutory and regulatory requirements for all new and existing point sources and all cost-effective and reasonable best management practices for nonpoint source control."*
3. *When high quality waters constitute an outstanding National resource, such as waters of National and State parks and wildlife refuges and waters of exceptional recreational or ecological significance, that water quality shall be maintained and protected."*
4. *In those cases where potential water quality impairment associated with a thermal discharge is involved, the antidegradation policy and implementing method shall be consistent with section 316 of the Act."*

The State Water Board has interpreted Resolution No. 68-16 to incorporate the Federal Antidegradation Policy in situations where the policy is applicable. (SWRCB Order WQ 86-17.). The application of the Federal Antidegradation Policy to nonpoint source discharges (including discharges from irrigated agriculture) is limited.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 40 CFR 131.12(a)(2) requires that the "State shall assure that there shall be achieved the highest statutory and regulatory requirements for all new and existing point sources and *all cost-effective and reasonable best management practices for nonpoint source control.*" The EPA Handbook, Chapter 4, clarifies this as follows: "Section 131.12(a)(2) does not mandate that States establish controls on nonpoint sources. The Act leaves it to the States to determine what, if any, controls on nonpoint sources are needed to provide attainment of State water quality standards (See CWA Section 319). States may adopt enforceable requirements, or voluntary programs to address nonpoint source pollution. Section 40 CFR 131.12(a)(2) does not require that States adopt or implement best management practices for nonpoint sources prior to allowing point source degradation of a high quality water. However, States that have adopted nonpoint source controls must assure that such controls are properly implemented before authorization is granted to allow point source degradation of water quality." Accordingly, in the context of nonpoint discharges, the BPTC standard established by state law controls.

Administrative Procedures Update 90-004, Antidegradation Policy Implementation for NPDES Permitting, provides guidance for the Regional Water Boards in implementing Resolution No. 68-16 and 40 CFR 131.12, as these provisions apply to NPDES permitting. APU 90-004 is not applicable in the context of this Order because nonpoint discharges from agriculture are exempt from NPDES permitting.

A number of key terms are relevant to application of Resolution No. 68-16 and 40 CFR 131.12 to this Order. These terms are described below.

**High Quality Waters:** Resolution No. 68-16 applies whenever “existing quality of water is better than quality established in policies as of the date such policies become effective,”<sup>24</sup> and 40 CFR 131.12 refers to “quality of waters [that] exceed levels necessary to support propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and recreation.” Such waters are “high quality waters” under the state and federal antidegradation policies. In other words, high quality waters are waters with a background quality of better quality than that necessary to protect beneficial uses.<sup>25</sup> The Water Code directs the State Water Board and the Regional Water Boards to establish water quality objectives for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses. Therefore, where water bodies contain levels of water quality constituents or characteristics that are better than the established water quality objectives, such waters are considered high quality waters.

Both state and federal guidance indicates that the definition of high quality waters is established by constituent or parameter [State Water Board Order WQ 91-10; U.S. EPA Water Quality Handbook, Chapter 4 Antidegradation (40 CFR 131.12) (“EPA Handbook”)]. Waters can be of high quality for some constituents or beneficial uses but not for others. With respect to degraded groundwater, a portion of the aquifer may be degraded with waste while another portion of the same aquifer may not be degraded with waste. The portion not degraded is high quality water within the meaning of Resolution No. 68-16. See State Water Board Order WQ 91-10.

In order to determine whether a water body is a high quality water with regard to a given constituent, the background quality of the water body unaffected by the discharge must be compared to the water quality objectives. If the quality of a water body has declined since the adoption of the relevant policies and that subsequent lowering was not a result of regulatory action consistent with the state antidegradation policy, a baseline representing the historically higher water quality may be an appropriate representation of background.<sup>26</sup> However, if the decline in water quality was permitted consistent with state and federal antidegradation policies, the most recent water quality resulting from permitted action constitutes the relevant baseline for determination of whether the water body is high quality. See, e.g., SWRCB Order WQ 2009-0007 at 12. Additionally, if water quality conditions have improved historically, the current higher water quality would again be the point of comparison for determining the status of the water body as a high quality water.

**Best Practicable Treatment or Control:** Resolution No. 68-16 requires that, where degradation of high quality waters is permitted, best practicable treatment or control (BPTC) limits the amount of degradation that may occur. Neither the Water Code nor Resolution No. 68-16 defines the term “best practicable treatment or control.”

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<sup>24</sup> Such policies would include policies such as State Water Board Resolution No. 88-63, Sources of Drinking Water Policy, establishing beneficial uses, and water quality control plans.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. EPA Water Quality Handbook, Chapter 4 Antidegradation (40 CFR 131.12), defines “high quality waters” as “those whose quality exceeds that necessary to protect the section 101(a)(2) goals of the Act [Clean Water Act], regardless of use designation.”

<sup>26</sup> The state antidegradation policy was adopted in 1968, therefore water quality as far back as 1968 may be relevant to an antidegradation analysis. For purposes of application of the federal antidegradation policy only, the relevant year would be 1975.

Despite the lack of a BPTC definition, certain State Water Board water quality orders and other documents provide direction on the interpretation of BPTC. The State Water Board has stated: “one factor to be considered in determining BPTC would be the water quality achieved by other similarly situated dischargers, and the methods used to achieve that water quality.” (See Order WQ 2000-07, at pp. 10-11). In a “Questions and Answers” document for Resolution No. 68-16 (the Questions and Answers Document), BPTC is interpreted to additionally include a comparison of the proposed method to existing proven technology; evaluation of performance data (through treatability studies); comparison of alternative methods of treatment or control, and consideration of methods currently used by the discharger or similarly situated dischargers.<sup>27</sup> The costs of the treatment or control should also be considered. Many of the above considerations are made under the “best efforts” approach described later in this section. In fact, the State Water Board has not distinguished between the level of treatment and control required under BPTC and what can be achieved through “best efforts.”

The Regional Water Board may not “specify the design, location, type of construction, or particular manner in which compliance may be had with [a] requirement, order, or decree” (Water Code 13360). However, the Regional Water Board still must require the discharger to demonstrate that the proposed manner of compliance constitutes BPTC (SWRCB Order WQ 2000-7). The requirement of BPTC is discussed in greater detail below.

**Maximum Benefit to People of the State:** Resolution No. 68-16 requires that where degradation of water quality is permitted, such degradation must be consistent with the “maximum benefit to people of the state.” Only after “intergovernmental coordination and public participation” and a determination that “allowing lower water quality is necessary to accommodate important economic or social development in the area in which the waters are located” does 40 CFR 131.12 allow for degradation.

As described in the Question and Answers Document, factors considered in determining whether degradation of water quality is consistent with maximum benefit to people of the State include economic and social costs, tangible and intangible, of the proposed discharge, as well as the environmental aspects of the proposed discharge, including benefits to be achieved by enhanced pollution controls. Closely related to the BPTC requirement, consideration must be given to alternative treatment and control methods and whether lower water quality can be abated or avoided through reasonable means, and the implementation of feasible alternative treatment or control methods should be considered.

U.S. EPA guidance clarifies that the federal antidegradation provision “is not a ‘no growth’ rule and was never designed or intended to be such. It is a policy that allows public decisions to be made on important environmental actions. Where the state intends to provide for development, it may decide under this section, after satisfying the requirements for intergovernmental coordination and public participation, that some lowering of water quality in “high quality waters” is necessary to accommodate important economic or social development” (EPA Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters, Chapter 4). Similarly, under Resolution No. 68-16, degradation is permitted where maximum benefit to the people of the state is demonstrated.

**Water Quality Objectives and Beneficial Uses:** As described above, Resolution No. 68-16 and Section 40 CFR 131.12 are both site-specific evaluations that are not easily employed to address large areas or broad implementation for classes of discharges. However, as a floor, any degradation permitted under the antidegradation policies must not cause an exceedance of water quality objectives or a pollution or nuisance. Furthermore, the NPS Policy establishes a floor for all water bodies in that

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<sup>27</sup> See *Questions and Answers, State Water Resources Control Board, Resolution No. 68-16* (February 16, 1995).

implementation programs must address NPS pollution in a manner that achieves and maintains water quality objectives and beneficial uses.

**Waters that are Not High Quality: The “Best Efforts” Approach:** Where a water body is at or exceeding water quality objectives already, it is not a high quality water and is not subject to the requirements of the antidegradation policy. As stated previously, data collected by the Central Valley Water Board, dischargers, educational institutions, and others demonstrate that many water bodies in the Central Valley Region are already impaired for various constituents associated with irrigated agricultural activities.

Where a water body is not high quality and the antidegradation policies are accordingly not triggered, the Central Valley Water Board should, under State Water Board precedent, set limitations more stringent than the objectives set forth in the Basin Plan. The State Water Board has directed that, “where the constituent in a groundwater basin is already at or exceeding the water quality objective, . . . the Regional Water Board should set limitations more stringent than the Basin Plan objectives if it can be shown that those limitations can be met using ‘best efforts.’” SWRCB Order WQ 81-5; see also SWRCB Orders Nos. WQ 79-14, WQ 82-5, WQ 2000-07. Finally, the NPS Policy establishes standards for management practices.

The “best efforts” approach involves the Regional Water Board establishing limitations expected to be achieved using reasonable control measures. Factors which should be analyzed under the “best efforts” approach include the effluent quality achieved by other similarly situated dischargers, the good faith efforts of the discharger to limit the discharge of the constituent, and the measures necessary to achieve compliance. SWRCB Order WQ 81-5, at p. 7. The State Water Board has applied the “best efforts” factors in interpreting BPTC. (See SWRCB Order Nos. WQ 79-14, and WQ 2000-07).

In summary, the board may set discharge limitations more stringent than water quality objectives even outside the context of the antidegradation policies. The “best efforts” approach must be taken where a water body is not “high quality” and the antidegradation policies are accordingly not triggered.

#### ***Application of Resolution 68-16 Requirements to this Order***

The determination of a high quality water within the meaning of the antidegradation policies is water body and constituent-specific. Very little guidance has been provided in state or federal law with respect to applying the antidegradation policy to a program or general permit where multiple water bodies are affected by various discharges, some of which may be high quality waters and some of which may, by contrast, have constituents at levels that already exceed water quality objectives. Given these limitations, the board has used readily available information regarding the water quality status of surface and ground waters in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed to construct provisions in this Order to meet the substantive requirements of Resolution 68-16.

This Order regulates discharges from thousands of individual fields to a very large number of water bodies within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. There is no comprehensive, waste constituent-specific information available for all surface waters and groundwater aquifers accepting irrigated agricultural wastes that would allow site-specific assessment of current conditions. Likewise, there is no comprehensive historic data.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Irrigated lands discharges have been regulated under a conditional waiver since 1982, but comprehensive data as to trends under the waiver are not available.

However, data collected by the Central Valley Water Board, dischargers, educational institutions, and others demonstrate that many water bodies within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed are already impaired for various constituents that are or could be associated with irrigated agricultural activities. As described above, there are surface water quality management plan requirements for the following constituents and indicators: ammonia, arsenic, chlorpyrifos, copper, DDE, diazinon, diuron, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, *E. coli*, lead, molybdenum, nitrate, pH, simazine, total dissolved solids, thiobencarb, algae toxicity, sediment toxicity, fathead minnow toxicity, and water flea toxicity. Those same data collection efforts also indicate that surface water bodies within the watershed meet objectives for particular constituents and would be considered “high quality waters” with respect to those constituents.

Similarly, as described above in the “Groundwater Quality Monitoring” section, 22 percent of sampled square mile sections (i.e., sections containing wells for which sampling information is available) had a maximum nitrate level above applicable water quality objectives. The groundwater represented by these wells may not be considered “high quality” with respect to nitrates. However, it is unknown when the degradation occurred. Available data show that currently existing quality of certain water bodies is better than the water quality objectives; for example, deeper groundwaters, represented by municipal supply wells, are generally high quality with respect to pesticides and nitrates. Degradation of such waters can be permitted only consistent with the state and federal antidegradation policies.

Given the significant variation in conditions over the broad areas covered by this Order, any application of the antidegradation requirements must account for the fact that at least some of the waters into which agricultural discharges will occur are high quality waters (for some constituents). Further, the Order provisions should also account for the fact that even where a water body is not high quality (such that discharge into that water body is not subject to the antidegradation policy), the board should, under State Water Board precedent, impose limitations more stringent than the objectives set forth in the Basin Plan, if those limits can be met by “best efforts.”

### ***Consistency with BPTC and the “Best Efforts” Approach***

Due to the numerous commodities being grown on irrigated agricultural lands and varying geological conditions within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, identification of a specific technology or treatment device as BPTC or “best efforts” has not been accomplished. By contrast, there are a variety of technologies that have been shown to be effective in protecting water quality. For example, Chapter 5 of the Irrigated Lands Program Existing Conditions Report<sup>29</sup> (ECR) describes that there are numerous management practices that Members could implement to achieve water quality protection goals. The Central Valley Water Board recognizes that there is often site-specific, crop-specific, and regional variability that affects the selection of appropriate management practices, as well as design constraints and pollution-control effectiveness of various practices.

Growers need the flexibility to choose management practices that best achieve a management measure’s performance expectations given their own unique circumstances. Management practices developed for agriculture are to be used as an overall system of measures to address nonpoint-source pollution sources on any given site. In most cases, not all of the practices will be needed to address the nonpoint sources at a specific site. Operations may have more than one constituent of concern to address and may need to employ two or more of the practices to address the multiple sources. Where more than one source exists, the application of the practices should be coordinated to produce an overall system that adequately addresses all sources for the site in a cost-effective manner.

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<sup>29</sup> California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, and Jones and Stokes. 2008. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*. Sacramento, CA.

There is no specific set of technologies, practices, or treatment devices that can be said to achieve BPTC/best efforts universally in the watershed. This Order, therefore, establishes a set of performance standards that must be achieved and an iterative planning approach that will lead to implementation of BPTC/best efforts. The iterative planning approach will be implemented as two distinct processes, 1) establishment of a baseline set of universal farm water quality management standards combined with upfront evaluation, planning and implementation of management practices to attain those goals, and 2) additional planning and implementation measures where degradation trends are observed that threaten to impair a beneficial use or where beneficial uses are impaired (i.e., water quality objectives are not being met). Taken together, these processes are considered BPTC/best efforts. The planning and implementation processes that growers must follow on their farms should lead to the on-the-ground implementation of the optimal practices and control measures to address waste discharge from irrigated agriculture.

#### 1. Farm Management Performance Standards

This Order establishes on farm standards for implementation of management practices that all Members must achieve. The selection of appropriate management practices must include analysis of site-specific conditions, waste types, discharge mechanisms, and crop types. Considering this, as well as the Water Code 13360 mandate that the Regional Water Board not specify the manner of compliance with its requirements, selection must be done at the farm level. Following are the performance standards that all Members must achieve:

- a. minimize waste discharge offsite in surface water,
- b. minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels,
- c. minimize percolation of waste to groundwater,
- d. minimize excess nutrient application relative to crop need,
- e. prevent pollution and nuisance,
- f. achieve and maintain water quality objectives and beneficial uses,
- g. protect wellheads from surface water intrusion.

BPTC is not defined in Resolution No. 68-16. However, the State Water Board describes in their 1995 Questions and Answers, Resolution No. 68-16: "To evaluate the best practicable treatment or control method, the discharger should compare the proposed method to existing proven technology; evaluate performance data, e.g., through treatability studies; compare alternative methods of treatment or control; and/or consider the method currently used by the discharger or similarly situated dischargers." Available state and federal guidance on management practices may serve as a measure of the types of water quality management goals for irrigated agriculture recommended throughout the state and country (e.g., water quality management goals for similarly situated dischargers). This will provide a measure of whether implementation of the above performance standards will lead to implementation of BPTC/best efforts.

- As part of California's Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program, the State Water Board, California Coastal Commission, and other state agencies have identified seven management measures to address agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution that affect state waters (*California's Management Measures for Polluted Runoff*, referred to below as "Agriculture

Management Measures”).<sup>30</sup> The agricultural management measures include practices and plans installed under various NPS programs in California, including systems of practices commonly used and recommended by the USDA as components of resource management systems, water quality management plans, and agricultural waste management systems.

- U.S. EPA’s National Management Measures to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution from Agriculture (EPA 841-B-03-004, July 2003;),<sup>31</sup> *“is a technical guidance and reference document for use by State, local, and tribal managers in the implementation of nonpoint source pollution management programs. It contains information on the best available, economically achievable means of reducing pollution of surface and ground water from agriculture.”*

Both of the above guidance documents describe a series of management measures, similar to the farm management performance standards and related requirements of the Order. The agricultural management measures described in the state and U.S. EPA reference documents generally include: 1) erosion and sediment control, 2) facility wastewater and runoff from confined animal facilities, 3) nutrient management, 4) pesticide management, 5) grazing management, 6) irrigation water management, and 7) education and outreach. A comparison of the recommendations with the Order’s requirements is provided below.

*Management measure 1, erosion and sediment control.* Practices implemented to minimize waste discharge offsite and erosion (performance standards a and b) are consistent with this management measure to achieve erosion and sediment control. The Order requires that all Members implement sediment discharge and erosion prevention practices to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels. Those Members that have the potential to cause erosion and discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters must develop a farm-specific sediment and erosion control plan.

*Management measure 2 is not applicable,* as this Order does not address waste discharges from confined animal facilities.

*Management measure 3, nutrient management.* As described in the State’s Agricultural Management Measures document, *“this measure addresses the development and implementation of comprehensive nutrient management plans for areas where nutrient runoff is a problem affecting coastal waters and/or water bodies listed as impaired by nutrients.”* Nutrient management practices implemented to meet performance standard d are consistent with this measure. The Order also requires nitrogen management plans to be developed by Members within both high vulnerability and low vulnerability groundwater areas. Nitrogen management plans require Members to document how their fertilizer use management practices meet performance standard d. Finally, where nutrients are causing exceedances of water quality objectives in surface waters, this Order would require development of a detailed SQMP which would address sources of nutrients and require implementation of practices to manage nutrients. Collectively, these requirements work together in a manner consistent with management measure 3.

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<sup>30</sup> *California’s Management Measures for Polluted Runoff*

(<[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/nps/docs/cammpr/info.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/nps/docs/cammpr/info.pdf)>)

<sup>31</sup> (<[http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/agriculture/agmm\\_index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/agriculture/agmm_index.cfm)>)



*Management measure 4, pesticide management.* As described in the State's Agricultural Management Measures document, this measure "*is intended to reduce contamination of surface water and groundwater from pesticides.*" Performance standards a, c, e, f, and g are consistent with this management measure, requiring Members to implement practices that minimize waste discharge to surface and groundwater (such as pesticides), prevent pollution and nuisance, achieve and maintain water quality objectives, and implement wellhead protection measures.

*Management measure 5, grazing management.* As described in the state Agriculture Management Measures document, this measure is "*intended to protect sensitive areas (including streambanks, lakes, wetlands, estuaries, and riparian zones) by reducing direct loadings of animal wastes and sediment.*" While none of the Order's farm management goals directly address grazing management, performance standards a, b, e and f, when considered by an irrigated pasture operation would lead to the same management practices, e.g., preventing erosion, discharge of sediment, and ensuring that animal waste loadings do not cause pollution, nuisance, and achieve water quality objectives. The Order also requires that all Members implement sediment discharge and erosion prevention practices to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels.

*Management measure 6, irrigation water management.* As described in the state Agricultural Management Measures document, this measure "*promotes effective irrigation while reducing pollutant delivery to surface and ground waters.*" Performance standards a and c, requiring Members to minimize waste discharge to surface and groundwater will lead to practices that will also achieve this management measure. For example, a Member may choose to implement efficient irrigation management programs (e.g., timing, uniformity testing), technologies (e.g., spray, drip irrigation, tailwater return), or other methods to minimize discharge of waste to surface water and percolation to groundwater.

*Management measure 7, education and outreach.* The Order requires that third-party groups conduct education and outreach activities to inform Members of program requirements and water quality problems.

Implementation of practices to achieve the Order's water quality requirements described above is consistent with the state and federal guidance for management measures. Because these measures are recommended for similarly situated dischargers (e.g., agriculture), compliance with the requirements of the Order will lead to implementation of BPTC/best efforts by all Members.

## 2. Additional Planning and Implementation Measures (SQMP/GQMPs)

This Order requires development of water quality management plans (surface or groundwater) where degradation trends are observed that threaten to impair a beneficial use or where beneficial uses are impaired (i.e., water quality objectives are not being met). SQMPs/GQMPs include requirements to investigate sources, develop strategies to implement practices to ensure waste discharges are meeting the Orders surface and groundwater receiving water limitations, and develop a monitoring strategy to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the management plan. In addition, the SQMPs/GQMPs must include actions to "Identify, validate, and implement management practices to reduce loading of COC's [constituents of concern] to surface water or groundwater, as applicable, thereby improving water quality" (see Appendix MRP-1). Under these plans, additional management practices will be implemented in an iterative manner, to ensure that the management practices represent BPTC/best efforts and that degradation does not threaten beneficial uses. The SQMPs/GQMPs need to meet the

performance standards set forth in this Order. The SQMPs/GQMPs are also reviewed periodically to determine whether adequate progress is being made to address the degradation trend or impairment. If adequate progress is not being made, then the Executive Officer can require field monitoring studies, on-site verification of implementation of practices, or the board may revoke the coverage under this Order and regulate the discharger through an individual WDR.

In cases where effectiveness of practices in protecting water quality is not known, the data and information gathered through the SQMP/GQMP and MPEP processes will result in the identification of management practices that meet the performance standards and represent BPTC/best efforts. Since the performance standards also apply to low vulnerability areas with high quality waters, those data and information will help inform the Members and board of the types of practices that meet performance standard requirements.

It is also important to note that in some cases, other agencies may establish performance standards that are equivalent to BPTC and may be relied upon as part of a SQMP or GQMP. For example, the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) has established Groundwater Protection Areas within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that require growers to implement specific groundwater quality protection requirements for certain pesticides. The practices required under DPR's Groundwater Protection Program are considered BPTC for those pesticides requiring permits in groundwater protection areas, since the practices are designed to prevent those pesticides from reaching groundwater and they apply uniformly to similarly situated dischargers in the area.

The State Water Board indicates in its Questions and Answers, Resolution No. 68-16: "To evaluate the best practicable treatment or control method, the discharger should...evaluate performance data, e.g., through treatability studies..." Water quality management plans, referred to as SQMPs/GQMPs above, institute an iterative process whereby the effectiveness of any set of practices in minimizing degradation will be periodically reevaluated as necessary and/or as more recent and detailed water quality data become available. This process of reviewing data and instituting additional practices where necessary will continue to assure that BPTC/best efforts are implemented and will facilitate the collection of information necessary to demonstrate the performance of the practices. This iterative process will also ensure that the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained.

Resolution No. 68-16 does not require Members to use technology that is better than necessary to prevent degradation. As such, the board presumes that the performance standards required by this Order are sufficiently achieving BPTC where water quality conditions and management practice implementation are already preventing degradation. Further, since BPTC determinations are informed by the consideration of costs, it is important that discharges in these areas not be subject to the more stringent and expensive requirements associated with SQMPs/GQMPs. Therefore, though Members in "low vulnerability" areas must still meet the farm management performance standards described above, they do not need to incur additional costs associated with SQMPs/GQMPs where there is no evidence of their contributing to degradation of high quality waters.

### 3. Management Practices Evaluation Program (MPEP) and Other Reporting and Planning Requirements

In addition to the SQMPs/GQMPs, the Order includes a comprehensive suite of reporting requirements that should provide the board with the information it needs to determine whether the necessary actions are being taken to achieve BPTC and protect water quality, where applicable. In high vulnerability groundwater areas, the third-party must develop and implement a Management Practices Evaluation

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Program (MPEP). The MPEP will include evaluation studies of management practices to determine whether those practices are protective of groundwater quality (e.g., that will not cause or contribute to exceedances of water quality objectives) for identified constituents of concern under a variety of site conditions. If the management practices are not protective, new practices must be developed, implemented, and evaluated. Any management practices that are identified as being protective of water quality, or those that are equally effective, must be implemented by Members who farm under similar conditions (e.g., crop type, soil conditions) (see provision IV.B.21 of the Order).

Farm management performance standards are applicable to both high and low vulnerability areas. The major difference in high and low vulnerability areas is the priority for action. High vulnerability areas may contain both high and low quality waters with respect to constituents discharged by irrigated agriculture, and the MPEP and other reporting, planning, and implementation requirements will determine and require actions to achieve BPTC and best efforts for high and low quality waters, respectively. Because low vulnerability areas present less of a threat of degradation or pollution, additional time is provided, or a lower level of review and certification is required, for some of the planning and reporting requirements. Also, while an MPEP is not required for the low vulnerability areas, the actions required by the MPEP must be implemented as applicable by Members in both high and low vulnerability areas, and will therefore result in the implementation of BPTC and best efforts in high and low vulnerability areas, and will inform evaluation of compliance with performance standards in all areas. The Order requires implementation of actions that achieve BPTC and best efforts for both high and low quality waters, respectively.

To determine whether a degradation trend is occurring, the Order requires surface water monitoring of specific “core” monitoring sites on a rotating basis. The data gathered from the surface water monitoring effort will allow the board to determine whether there is a trend in degradation of water quality related to discharges from irrigated agriculture. For groundwater, a trend monitoring program is required in both “low vulnerability” and “high vulnerability” areas. The trend monitoring for the low vulnerability areas is required to help the board determine whether any trend in degradation of groundwater quality is occurring. For pesticides in groundwater, the board will initially rely on the information gathered through the Department of Pesticide Regulation’s (DPR) monitoring efforts to determine whether any degradation related to pesticides is occurring. If the available groundwater quality data (e.g., nitrates, pesticides) in a low vulnerability area suggests that degradation is occurring that could threaten to impair beneficial uses, then the area would be re-designated as a high vulnerability area.

The third-party is required to prepare a Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) and update that report every five years. The GAR will include an identification of high vulnerability and low vulnerability areas, including identification of constituents that could cause degradation. The initial submittal of the GAR will include a compilation of water quality data, which the board and third-party will use to evaluate trends. The periodic updates to the GAR will require the consideration of data collected by the third-party, as well as other organizations, and will also allow the board and third-party to evaluate trends. The GAR will provide a reporting vehicle for the board to periodically evaluate water quality trends to determine whether degradation is occurring. If the degradation triggers the requirement for a GQMP, then the area in which the GQMP is required would be considered “high vulnerability” and all of the requirements associated with a high vulnerability area would apply to those Members.

All Members will also need to report on their management practices through the farm evaluation process. In addition, all members will need to prepare nitrogen management plans prepared in accordance with the nitrogen management plan templates approved by the Executive Officer. The plans require Members to document how their fertilizer use management practices minimize excess nutrient application relative to crop need. The planning requirements are phased according to threat level such that members in low vulnerability areas have more time to complete their plans than those in high vulnerability areas. Members in high vulnerability areas will need to submit nitrogen management plan summary reports. Through the farm evaluation, the Member must identify "...on-farm management practices implemented to achieve the Order's farm management performance standards." (see Attachment B, section VI.A). In addition, the nitrogen management plan summary reports required in high vulnerability areas will include, at a minimum, information on the ratio of total nitrogen available for crop uptake to the estimated crop consumption of nitrogen. Nitrogen management plans and nitrogen management plan summary reports provide indicators as to whether the Member is meeting the performance standard to minimize excess nutrient application relative to crop need for nitrogen. The MPEP study process would be used to determine whether the nitrogen consumption ratio meets the performance standard of the Order.

### **Summary**

Members are required to implement practices to meet the above goals and periodically review the effectiveness of implemented practices and make improvements where necessary. Members in both high and low vulnerability areas will identify the practices they are implementing to achieve water quality protection goals as part of farm evaluations and nitrogen management plans. Members in high vulnerability areas have additional requirements associated with the SQMPs/GQMPs; preparing sediment and erosion control plans; implementing practices identified as protective through the MPEP studies; and reporting on their activities more frequently.

Also, the Order requires water quality monitoring and assessments aimed to identify trends, evaluate effectiveness of management practices, and detect exceedances of water quality objectives. The process of periodic review of SQMPs/GQMPs provides a mechanism for the board to better ensure that Members are meeting the requirements of the Order, if the third-party led efforts are not effective in ensuring BPTC is achieved, where applicable.

Requirements for individual farm evaluations, nitrogen management plans, sediment and erosion control plans, management practices tracking, and water quality monitoring and reporting are designed to ensure that degradation is minimized and that management practices are protective of water quality. These requirements are aimed to ensure that all irrigated lands are implementing management practices that minimize degradation, the effectiveness of such practices is evaluated, and feedback monitoring is conducted to ensure that degradation is limited. Even in low vulnerability areas where there is no information indicating degradation of a high quality water, the farm management performance standards act as a preventative requirement to ensure degradation does not occur. The information and evaluations conducted as part of the GQMP/SQMP process will help inform those Members in low vulnerability areas of the types of practices that meet the performance standards. In addition, even Members in low vulnerability groundwater areas must implement practices (or equivalent practices) that are identified as protective through the MPEP studies (where these practices are applicable to the Members site conditions). The farm evaluations and nitrogen management plan requirements for low vulnerability areas provide indicators as to whether Members are meeting applicable performance standards. The required monitoring and periodic reassessment of vulnerability designations will allow

the board to determine whether degradation is occurring and whether the status of a low vulnerability area should be changed to high vulnerability.

The Order is designed to achieve site-specific antidegradation and antidegradation-related requirements through implementation of BPTC/best efforts as appropriate and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to confirm the effectiveness of the BPTC/best efforts measures in achieving their goals. The Order relies on implementation of practices and treatment technologies that constitute BPTC/best efforts, based to the extent possible on existing data, and requires monitoring of water quality and evaluation studies to ensure that the selected practices in fact constitute BPTC where degradation of high quality waters is or may be occurring, and best efforts where waters are already degraded. Because the State Water Board has not distinguished between the level of treatment and control required under BPTC and what can be achieved through best efforts, the requirements of this Order for BPTC/best efforts apply equally to high quality waters and already degraded waters.

This Order allows limited degradation of existing high quality waters. This limited degradation is consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state for the following reasons:

- At a minimum, this Order requires that irrigated agriculture achieve and maintain compliance with water quality objectives and beneficial uses;
- The requirements implementing the Order will result in use of BPTC where irrigated agricultural waste discharges may cause degradation of high quality waters; where waters are already degraded, the requirements will result in the pollution controls that reflect the “best efforts” approach. Because BPTC will be implemented, any lowering of water quality will be accompanied by implementation of the most appropriate treatment or control technology;
- Central Valley communities depend on irrigated agriculture for employment (PEIR, Appendix A);
- The state and nation depend on Central Valley agriculture for food (PEIR, Appendix A);
- Consistent with the Order’s and PEIR’s stated goal of ensuring that irrigated agricultural discharges do not impair access to safe and reliable drinking water, the Order protects high quality waters relied on by local communities from degradation of their water supplies by current practices on irrigated lands. The Order is designed to prevent irrigated lands discharges from causing or contributing to exceedances of water quality objectives, which include maximum contaminant levels for drinking water. The Order also is designed to detect and address exceedances of water quality objectives, if they occur, in accordance with the compliance time schedules provided therein. Therefore, local communities should not incur any additional treatment costs associated with the limited degradation authorized by this Order; and
- The Order includes performance standards that would work to prevent further degradation of surface and groundwater quality.

The requirements of the Order and the limited degradation that would be allowed are consistent with State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16. The requirements of the Order will result in the implementation of BPTC necessary to assure the highest water quality consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the state. The receiving water limitations in section III of the Order, the compliance schedules in section XII, and the Monitoring and Reporting Program’s requirements to track compliance with the Order, are designed to ensure that the limited degradation will not cause or contribute to exceedances of water quality objectives, unreasonably affect beneficial uses, or cause a condition of pollution or nuisance. Finally, the iterative process of reviewing data and instituting additional management practices where necessary will ensure that the highest water quality consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the state will be maintained.

## California Water Code Sections 13141 and 13241

The total estimated annual cost of compliance with this Order, e.g., summation of costs for administration, monitoring, reporting, tracking, implementation of management practices, is expected to be approximately \$4.10 per acre greater than the cost associated with the protection of surface water only under the Coalition Group Conditional Waiver. The total estimated cost of compliance associated with continuation of the previous Coalition Group Conditional Waiver within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed is expected to be approximately 96 million dollars per year (\$114.45 per acre annually). The total estimated cost of this Order is 99 million dollars per year (\$118.55 per acre annually).

Approximately \$113.34 of the estimated \$118.55 per acre annual cost of the Order is associated with implementation of water quality management practices (see discussion below for a breakdown of estimated costs). This Order does not require that Members implement specific water quality management practices.<sup>32</sup> Many of the management practices that have water quality benefits can have other economic and environmental benefits (e.g., improved irrigation can reduce water and energy consumption, as well as reduce runoff). Management practice selection will be based on decisions by individual Members in consideration of the unique conditions of their irrigated agricultural lands; water quality concerns; and other benefits expected from implementation of the practice. As such, the cost estimate is an estimate of potential, not required costs of implementing specific practices. Any costs for water quality management practices will be based on a market transaction between Members and those vendors or individuals providing services or equipment and not based on an estimate of those costs provided by the board. The cost estimates include estimated fees the third-party may charge to prepare the required reports and conduct the required monitoring, as well as annual permit fees that are charged to permitted dischargers for permit coverage. In accordance with the State Water Board's Fee Regulations, the current annual permit fee charged to members covered by this Order is \$0.56/acre. The combined total estimated costs that include third-party and state fees are estimated to be \$4.50 /acre annually or less than 5% of the total estimated cost of \$118.55 per acre. There are a number of funding programs that may be available to assist growers in the implementation of water quality management practices through grants and loans (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program, State Water Board Agricultural Drainage Management Loan Program). Following is a discussion regarding derivation of the cost estimate for the Order.

This Order, which implements the long-term ILRP within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed, is based mainly on Alternatives 2 and 4 of the PEIR, but does include elements from Alternatives 2-5. The Order contains the third-party lead entity structure, regional surface and groundwater management plans, and regional surface water quality monitoring approach similar to Alternative 2 of the PEIR; farm planning, management practices tracking, nitrogen tracking, and regional groundwater monitoring similar to Alternative 4 of the PEIR; sediment and erosion control plan (under Alternative 3, "farm plan") recommendation/ certification requirements similar to Alternative 3; prioritized installation of groundwater monitoring wells similar to Alternative 5; and a prioritization system based on systems described by Alternatives 2 and 4. Therefore, potential costs of the Order are estimated using the costs for these components of Alternatives 2-5 given in Tables 2-19, 2-20, 2-21, and 2-22 of the *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program* (Economics Report).<sup>33</sup> Estimated costs of management practices are based on costs for Alternatives 2 and 4. Table 4 summarizes the major regulatory elements of the Order and provides reference to the PEIR alternative basis.

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<sup>32</sup> Per Water Code section 13360, the Central Valley Water Board may not specify the manner in which a Member complies with water quality requirements.

<sup>33</sup> ICF International. 2010. *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program*. Draft. July. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA

**Table 4. Summary of regulatory elements**

Order elements	Equivalent element from Alternatives 2-5
Third-party administration	Alternative 2
Farm evaluation Sediment and erosion control plan Nitrogen management plans	Alternative 4: farm water quality management plan and certified nutrient management plan
Recommended/ certified sediment and erosion plans	Alternative 3: certification of farm water quality plans
Surface and groundwater management plans	Alternative 2 surface and groundwater management plans
Regional surface water monitoring	Alternative 2 regional surface water monitoring
Regional trend groundwater monitoring	Alternative 4 regional groundwater monitoring
Management practices evaluation program	Alternative 4 regional groundwater monitoring, targeted site-specific studies to evaluate the effects of changes in management practices on groundwater quality and Alternative 5 installation of groundwater monitoring wells at prioritized sites
Management practice reporting	Alternative 4 tracking of practices
Nitrogen management plan summary reporting	Alternative 4 nutrient tracking
Management practices implementation	Alternative 2 or 4 costs of management practice implementation

The administrative costs of the Order are estimated to be similar to the costs shown for Alternative 2 in Table 2-19 of the Economics Report. Farm evaluation, sediment and erosion control plan and nitrogen management planning (farm plans) costs are estimated to be similar to the costs shown for Alternative 4 for farm planning (Table 2-21, Economics Report). Alternative 3's cost estimate for certification of individual farm water quality plans is included to estimate the potential cost of recommended/certified sediment and erosion control plans (Table 2-20, Economics Report). Total surface water monitoring and reporting costs are estimated to be similar to the costs shown for Alternative 2 –essentially a continuation of the current regional surface water monitoring approach. Total regional groundwater monitoring and reporting costs are estimated to be similar to the costs shown for Alternative 4 in Table 2-21 of the Economics Report minus the “Tier 3 individual monitoring.” Costs for installation of groundwater monitoring wells are estimated to be similar to the costs shown for Alternative 5 in Table 2-22 of the Economics Report. Tracking costs of management practices and nitrogen management plan information are estimated to be similar to the costs shown for Alternative 4 in Table 2-21 of the economics report – under “tracking.” Estimated management practices costs are equal under Alternatives 2 and 4. Estimated average annualized costs per acre of the Order relative to full implementation of the current waiver program in the San Joaquin River Watershed (per acre costs are applicable to the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed) are summarized below in Table 5.

**Table 5. Estimated annual average per acre cost of the Order relative to full implementation of the current program (PEIR Alternative 1) in the San Joaquin River Watershed (applicable to the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed)**

	Order	Current program	Change
Administration	0.84	0.77	0.07
Farm plans	0.71	--	0.71
Monitoring/reporting/tracking	3.66	1.18	2.48
Management practices	113.34	112.50	0.84
Total	118.55	114.45	4.10

	Order	Current program	Change
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\* Totals may not sum due to rounding. Estimated cost figures are from Tables 2-18, 2-19, 2-20, 2-21, and 2-22 of the Economics Report for the San Joaquin River Watershed. Per acre costs have been developed using the acres in the San Joaquin River Watershed (est. 2,126,028, Table 3-3, Economics Report).

\*\* These costs are an estimate of *potential*, not required costs of implementing specific practices.

The Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basin Plan includes an estimate of potential costs and sources of financing for the long-term irrigated lands program. The estimated costs were derived by analyzing the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR using the cost figures provided in the Economics Report. The Basin Plan cost estimate is provided as a range applicable to implementation of the program throughout the Central Valley. The Basin Plan's estimated total annualized cost of the irrigated lands program is \$216 million to \$1.3 billion, or \$27 to \$168 per acre.<sup>34</sup> The estimated total annual cost of this Order of \$99 million dollars (\$118.55 per acre) falls within the estimated cost range for the irrigated lands program as described in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basin Plan when considering per acre costs (\$27-\$168 per acre).

The estimated total annual cost per acre of Alternative 4 in the San Joaquin River Watershed is \$121 (applicable to the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed). The Order, based substantially on Alternative 4, has a similar cost and is expected to have similar overall economic impacts, as described in the Economics Report.

### California Water Code Section 13263

California Water Code section 13263 requires that the Central Valley Water Board consider the following factors, found in section 13241, when considering adoption of waste discharge requirements.

(a) *Past, present, and probable future beneficial uses of water*

The Central Valley Water Board's Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins (Basin Plan) identifies applicable beneficial uses of surface and groundwater within the Sacramento River Basin. The Order protects the beneficial uses identified in the Basin Plan. Applicable past, present, and probable future beneficial uses of Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basin waters were considered by the Central Valley Water Board as part of the Basin Planning process and are reflected in the Basin Plans themselves. The Order is a general order applicable to a wide geographic area. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider beneficial uses as identified in the Basin Plan and applicable policies, rather than a site specific evaluation that might be appropriate for WDRs applicable to a single discharger.

(b) *Environmental characteristics of the hydrographic unit under consideration, including the quality of water available thereto*

Environmental characteristics of the Eastern San Joaquin River Basin have been considered in the development of irrigated lands program requirements as part of the Central Valley Water Board's 2008 *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report* and the PEIR. In these reports, existing water quality and other environmental conditions throughout the Central Valley have been considered in the evaluation of six program alternatives for regulating waste discharge from irrigated lands. This Order's requirements are based on the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR.

<sup>34</sup> Per acre average cost calculated using an estimate for total irrigated agricultural acres in the Central Valley (7.9 million acres, Table 3-3, Economics Report).



(c) *Water quality conditions that could reasonably be achieved through the coordinated control of all factors which affect water quality in the area*

This Order provides a process to review these factors during implementation of water quality management plans (SQMPs/GQMPs). The Order requires that discharges of waste from irrigated lands to surface water and groundwater do not cause or contribute to an exceedance of applicable water quality objectives. SQMPs and GQMPs are required in areas where water quality objectives are not being met –where irrigated lands are a potential source of the concern, and in areas where irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to a trend of degradation that may threaten applicable beneficial uses. GQMPs are also required in high vulnerability groundwater areas. Under these plans, sources of waste must be estimated along with background water quality to determine what options exist for reducing waste discharge to ensure that irrigated lands are not causing or contributing to the water quality problem. The SQMPs and GQMPs must be designed to ensure that waste discharges from irrigated lands do not cause or contribute to an exceedance of a water quality objective and meet other applicable requirements of the Order, including, but limited to, section III.

(d) *Economic considerations*

The PEIR was supported by the *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program* (Economics Report). An extensive economic analysis was presented in this report to estimate the cost and broader economic impact on irrigated agricultural operations associated with the five alternatives for the irrigated lands program, including the lands regulated by this Order. Staff was also able to use that analysis to estimate costs of a sixth alternative, since the sixth alternative fell within the range of the five alternatives. This cost estimate is found in Appendix A of the PEIR. This Order is based on the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR, which is part of the administrative record. Therefore, potential economic considerations related to the Order have been considered as part of the overall economic analysis for implementation of the long-term irrigated lands program. This Order is a single action in a series of actions to implement the ILRP in the Central Valley region. Because the Order has been developed from the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR, economic effects will be within the range of those described for the alternatives.

One measure considered in the PEIR is the potential loss of Important Farmland<sup>35</sup> due to increased regulatory costs. This information has been used in the context of this Order to estimate potential loss of Important Farmland within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. It is estimated that approximately 56 thousand acres of Important Farmland within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed potentially would be removed from production under full implementation of the previous conditional waiver program (Conditional Waiver Order R5-2006-0053); it is estimated that an additional 4,100 acres of Important Farmland may be removed from production due to increased regulatory costs of this Order (total of approximately 60 thousand acres, as described in Attachment D of this Order). As described in the Economics Report, most of the estimated losses would be to lower value crop land, such as irrigated pasture and forage crops.

(e) *The need for developing housing within the region*

This Order establishes waste discharge requirements for irrigated lands in the eastern San Joaquin River Basin. The Order is not intended to establish requirements for any facilities that accept wastewater from residences or stormwater runoff from residential areas. This Order will not affect the development of housing within the region.

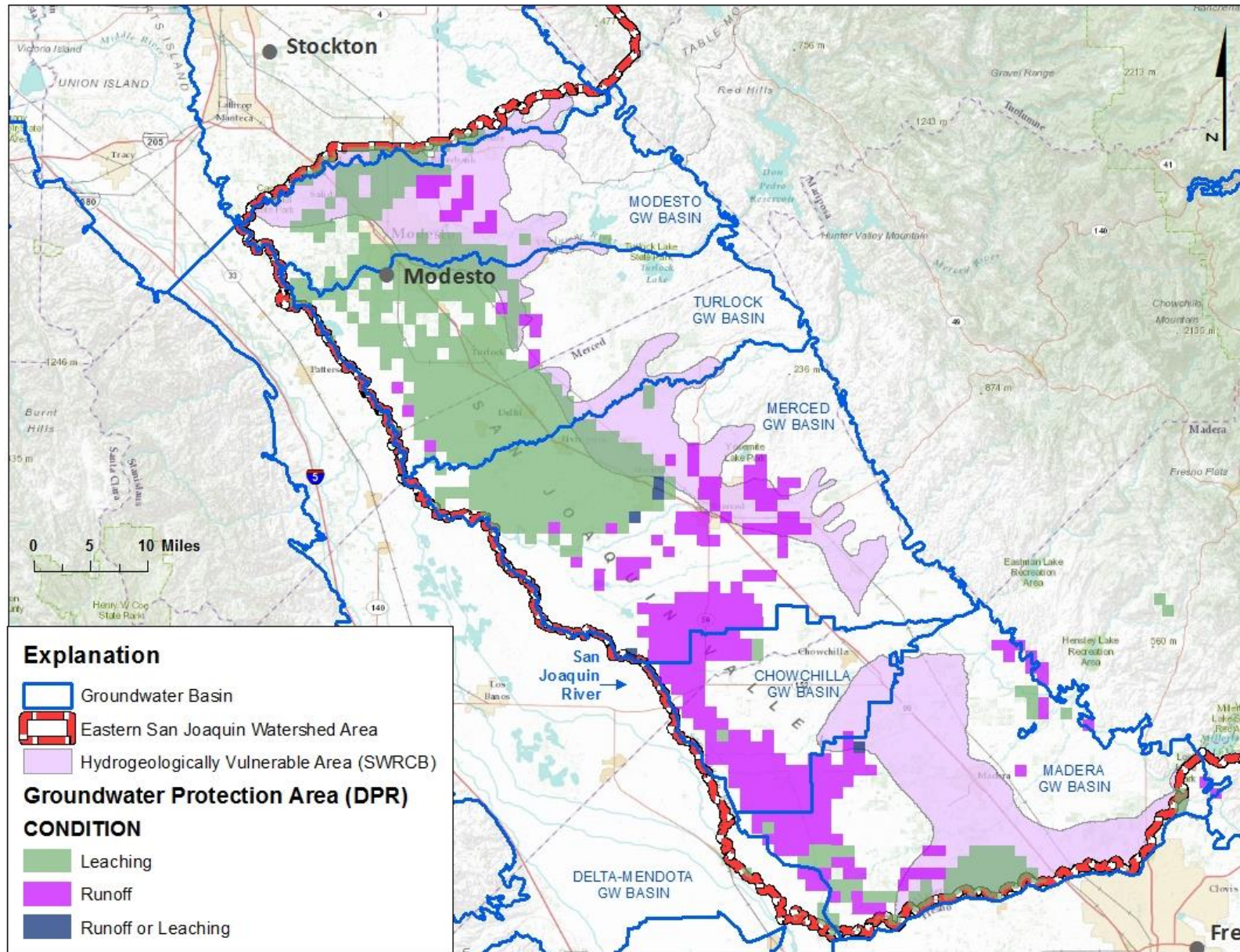
(f) *The need to develop and use recycled water*

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<sup>35</sup> *Important Farmland* is defined in the PEIR as farmland identified as prime, unique, or of statewide importance by the California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.

This Order does not establish any requirements for the use or purveyance of recycled wastewater. Where an agricultural operation may have access to recycled wastewater of appropriate quality for application to fields, the operation would need to obtain appropriate waste discharge requirements from the Central Valley Water Board prior to initiating use. This need to obtain additional waste discharge requirements in order to recycle wastewater on agricultural fields instead of providing requirements under this Order may complicate potential use of recycled wastewater on agricultural fields. However, the location of agricultural fields in rural areas generally limits access to large volumes of appropriately treated recycled wastewater. As such, it is not anticipated that there is a need to develop general waste discharge requirements for application of recycled wastewater on agricultural fields in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

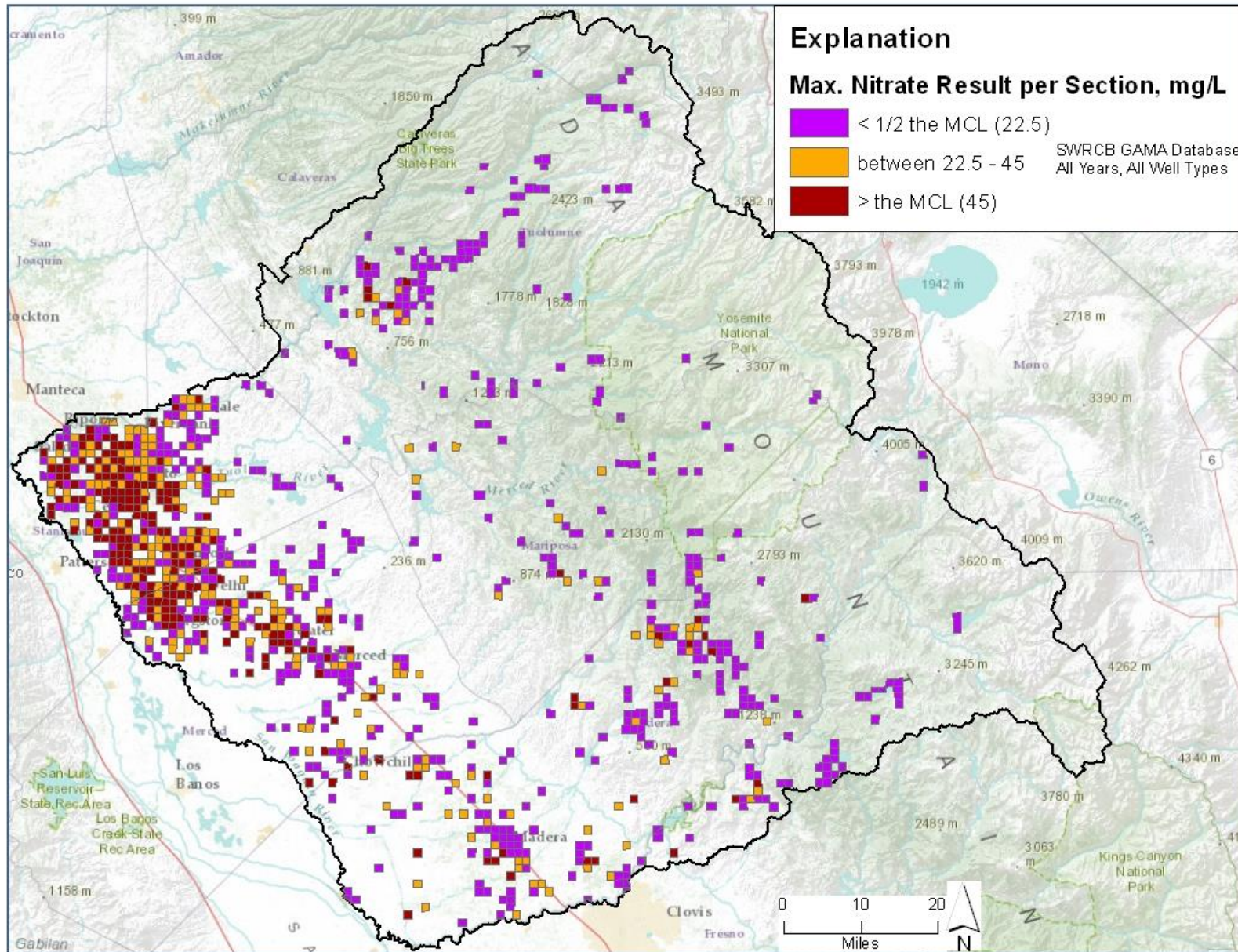
**Figure 5. Groundwater Protection Areas and Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed Area.**



December 2012 – Revised October 2013



**Figure 6. Maximum Nitrate Concentrations per Square Mile Section of Land for Samples with Nitrate Detections. GAMA Database, 1978-2011.**



December 2012 – Revised October 2013

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

**ORDER R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~  
ATTACHMENT B TO ORDER R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~  
MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER  
FOR  
GROWERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATERSHED  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

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Appendix MRP-1: Third-Party Management Plan Requirements

Appendix MRP-2: Monitoring Well Installation and Sampling Plan and Completion Report

## I. Introduction

This Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) is issued pursuant to California Water Code (Water Code) section 13267 which authorizes the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (hereafter Central Valley Water Board or “board”), to require preparation and submittal of technical and monitoring reports. This MRP includes requirements for a third-party representative entity assisting individual irrigated lands operators or owners that are members of the third-party (Members), as well as requirements for individual Members subject to and enrolled under Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group, Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ (hereafter referred to as the “Order”). The requirements of this MRP are necessary to monitor Member compliance with the provisions of the Order and determine whether state waters receiving discharges from Members are meeting water quality objectives. Additional discussion and rationale for this MRP’s requirements are provided in Attachment A of the Order.

This MRP establishes specific surface and ground water monitoring, reporting, and electronic data deliverable requirements for the third-party. Due to the nature of irrigated agricultural operations, monitoring requirements for surface waters and groundwater will be periodically reassessed to determine if changes should be made to better represent irrigated agriculture discharges to state waters. The monitoring schedule will also be reassessed so that constituents are monitored during application and/or release timeframes when constituents of concern are most likely to affect water quality. The third-party shall not implement any changes to this MRP unless the Central Valley Water Board or the Executive Officer issues a revised MRP.

## II. General Provisions

This Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) conforms to the goals of the Non-point Source (NPS) Program as outlined in *The Plan for California’s Nonpoint Source Pollution (NSP) Program* by:

- tracking, monitoring, assessing and reporting program activities,
- ensuring consistent and accurate reporting of monitoring activities,
- targeting NPS Program activities at the watershed level,
- coordinating with public and private partners, and
- tracking implementation of management practices to improve water quality and protect existing beneficial uses.

Monitoring data collected to meet the requirements of the Order must be collected and analyzed in a manner that assures the quality of the data. The third-party must follow sampling and analytical procedures as specified in Attachment C, Order No. R5-2008-0005, Coalition Group Monitoring Program Quality Assurance Project Plan Guidelines (QAPP Guidelines) and any revisions thereto approved by the Executive Officer.<sup>1</sup>

To the extent feasible, all technical reports required by this MRP must be submitted electronically in a format specified by the Central Valley Water Board that is reasonably available to the third-party.

This MRP requires the third-party to collect information from its Members and allows the third-party to report the information to the board in a summary format. The third-party must submit specific Member information collected as part of the Order and this MRP when requested by the Executive Officer or as specified in the Order.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Valley Water Board staff will circulate proposed revisions of the QAPP Guidelines for public review and comment prior to Executive Officer consideration for approval.



This MRP Order becomes effective on 7 December 2012. The Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer may revise this MRP as necessary. Upon the effective date of this MRP, the third-party, on behalf of the individual Members, shall implement the following monitoring and reporting.

### **III. Surface Water Quality Monitoring Requirements**

The third-party may elect to participate in an Executive Officer approved Regional Monitoring Program (RMP) [such as the Delta RMP]. If the third-party elects to participate in a RMP, the third-party may submit a proposal to the Executive Officer for approval to reduce some elements of the surface water monitoring requirements described below and instead provide funding and/or in-kind support to an approved RMP. Participation in a Regional Monitoring Program by a third-party shall consist of providing funds and/or in-kind services to the Regional Monitoring Program at least equivalent to discontinued individual monitoring and study efforts. Written approval of the third-party's request, by the Executive Officer, is required prior to discontinuing any monitoring. Approval by the Executive Officer is not required prior to participating in a Regional Monitoring Program.

If the third-party participates in an Executive Officer approved Regional Monitoring Program in lieu of conducting individual surface water monitoring, the third-party shall continue to participate in the Regional Monitoring Program until such time as the third-party informs the Board that participation in the Regional Monitoring Program will cease and the monitoring prior to approved reductions is reinstituted. Executive Officer approved reduced monitoring may continue so long as the third-party adequately supports the Regional Monitoring Program. If the Discharger fails to adequately support the Regional Monitoring Program, as defined by the Regional Monitoring Program, the third-party shall reinstitute monitoring required prior to approved reductions upon written notice from the Executive Officer.

#### **A. Surface Water Monitoring Sites**

There are three different types of monitoring sites described below: 1) Core sites; 2) Represented sites; and 3) Special Project sites. Core sites are monitored comprehensively on an ongoing basis to track trends in surface water quality and to identify water quality problems. Represented sites generally have characteristics similar to, and are, therefore, represented by the Core sites within their common zone.<sup>2</sup> When a water quality problem is identified at a Core site, the represented sites are evaluated and potentially monitored to determine whether the water quality problem is also occurring at the Represented site (some represented water bodies may not have a monitoring site, e.g. in cases when there is no access). Special Project sites are identified and monitored to investigate identified water quality problems. A Core site or Represented site may also be a Special Project site.

#### **1. Core Site Monitoring**

At a minimum, surface water monitoring (as described in section III.C.1) within each zone shall be conducted at one of the designated Core sites (see Table 1) for two consecutive years, followed by two years of monitoring at the second Core monitoring site. Core site monitoring shall alternate continuously between the two Core sites. When a water quality objective or trigger limit at a

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<sup>2</sup> As part of their 25 August 2008 Monitoring and Reporting Program Plan (2008 MRPP), the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (the Coalition) designated six zones within its area based on hydrology, crop types, land use, soil types, and rainfall. The zones identified in the 2008 MRPP are the same zones as those identified in Table 1.



monitored Core site is exceeded, the parameter associated with the exceedance must be monitored for a third consecutive year.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Represented Site Monitoring

When a water quality objective or trigger limit is exceeded at a Core site, the third-party must evaluate the potential for similar risks or threats to water quality associated with that parameter at the sites represented by the Core site (Represented sites). The evaluation must be included in the Monitoring Report (see section V below). If pesticide use information or other factors indicate a risk, monitoring for that parameter must be performed in the appropriate Represented water bodies. The proposed monitoring plan must be included in the Monitoring Plan Update (see section III.C below). Any such monitoring must occur for a minimum of two years during the time period of highest risk of exceedance of water quality objectives for that parameter. When a water quality objective at a monitored Represented site is exceeded, the parameter associated with the exceedance must be monitored for a third consecutive year.<sup>4</sup>

Any watershed area that does not contain a monitoring site due to issues of access or location downstream of urban influence must be represented by the Core sites in that zone. Any applicable surface water quality management plan (SQMP) actions associated with the Core site must take place in these watershed areas (represented drainages without monitoring sites).

## 3. Special Project Sites

In addition to Core and Represented sites, the third-party may designate Special Project sites as needed in a surface water quality management plan (SQMP) to evaluate commodity or management practice-specific effects on identified water quality problems,<sup>5</sup> or to evaluate sources of identified water quality problems.

The Executive Officer may require the third-party to conduct local or site-specific monitoring to address a parameter associated with a management plan or TMDL (see section III.C.5. below). Core sites and Represented sites located in areas where management plans are required will also be considered Special Project sites for the parameter(s) subject to the management plan(s).

## B. Monitoring Locations

The location of Core and monitored Represented sites are identified in Table 1 below. The third-party may submit written requests (including technical justification) for removal/addition of monitoring sites for approval by the Executive Officer.

**Table 1. Third-party Core and Monitored Represented\* Sites By Zone**

ID	Zone	Site Type	Site Name	Station Code	Latitude	Longitude
B	1	Core	Dry Creek @ Wellsford Rd	535XDCAWR	37.6602	-120.8743
	1	Core	TBD <sup>6</sup>			

<sup>3</sup> If two exceedances have occurred within the two years the Core site is being monitored, a third year of monitoring is not required. However, the parameter would need to be monitored in accordance with the Management Plan for that parameter and site.

<sup>4</sup> If two exceedances have occurred within the two years the Represented site is being monitored, a third year of monitoring is not required. However, the parameter would need to be monitored in accordance with the Management Plan for that parameter and site.

<sup>5</sup> "Water quality problem" is defined in Attachment E.

<sup>6</sup> "To be determined" (TBD) monitoring sites will be established by the third-party and the Water Board.

**Table 1. Third-party Core and Monitored Represented\* Sites By Zone**

ID	Zone	Site Type	Site Name	Station Code	Latitude	Longitude
F	2	Core	Prairie Flower Drain @ Crows Landing Rd	535XPFDCL	37.4422	-121.0024
	2	Core	TBD			
D	3	Core	Highline Canal @ Hwy 99	535XHCHNN	37.4153	-120.7557
	3	Core	TBD			
E	4	Core	Merced River @ Santa Fe	535XMRSFD	37.4271	-120.6721
	4	Core	TBD			
C	5	Core	Duck Slough @ Gurr Rd	535XDSAGR	37.2142	-120.5596
	5	Core	TBD			
A	6	Core	Cottonwood Creek @ Rd 20	545XCCART	36.8686	-120.1818
	6	Core	TBD			
1	6	Represented	Ash Slough @ Ave 21	545XASAAT	37.05450	-120.41580
2	4	Represented	Bear Creek @ Kibby Rd	535XBCAKR	37.31280	-120.41380
3	6	Represented	Berenda Slough along Ave 18 1/2	545XBSAAE	37.01820	-120.32650
4	4	Represented	Black Rascal Creek @ Yosemite Rd	535BRCAJR	37.33210	-120.39470
6	4	Represented	Canal Creek @ West Bellevue Rd	535CCAWBR	37.36075	-120.54941
7	5	Represented	Deadman Creek @ Gurr Rd	535XDCAGR	37.19360	-120.56120
8	5	Represented	Deadman Creek @ Hwy 59	535DMCAHF	37.19810	-120.48690
9	6	Represented	Dry Creek @ Rd 18	545XDCARE	36.98180	-120.21950
11	2	Represented	Hatch Drain @ Tuolumne Rd	535XHDATR	37.51490	-121.01220
12	3	Represented	Highline Canal @ Lombardy Ave	535XHCHNN	37.45560	-120.72070
13	2	Represented	Hilmar Drain @ Central Ave	535XHDACA	37.39060	-120.95820
14	4	Represented	Howard Lateral @ Hwy 140	535XHLAHO	37.30790	-120.78200
15	2	Represented	Lateral 2 1/2 near Keyes Rd	535LTHNKR	37.54780	-121.09274
16	2	Represented	Lateral 5 1/2 @ South Blaker Rd	535LFHASB	37.45823	-120.96726
17	2	Represented	Lateral 6 and 7 @ Central Ave	535LSSACA	37.39779	-120.95971
18	2	Represented	Levee Drain @ Carpenter Rd	535XLDACR	37.47903	-121.03012
19	4	Represented	Livingston Drain @ Robin Ave	535XLDARA	37.31690	-120.74230
20	2	Represented	Lower Stevinson @ Faith Home Rd	535LSAFHR	37.37238	-120.92318
21	4	Represented	McCoy Lateral @ Hwy 140	535XMLAHO	37.30945	-120.78759
22	5	Represented	Miles Creek @ Reilly Rd	535XMCARR	37.25820	-120.47550
35	1	Represented	Mootz Drain Downstream of Langworth Pond	535XMDDL	37.70551	-120.89438

December 2012 – Revised October 2013, March 2014, ~~and~~ April 2015, and February 2018.

**Table 1. Third-party Core and Monitored Represented\* Sites By Zone**

ID	Zone	Site Type	Site Name	Station Code	Latitude	Longitude
24	3	Represented	Mustang Creek @ East Ave	535XMCAEA	37.49180	-120.68390
26	1	Represented	Rodden Creek @ Rodden Rd	535XRCARD	37.79042	-120.80790
30	2	Represented	Unnamed Drain @ Hogin Rd	535XUDAGR	37.43129	-120.99380
31	4	Represented	Unnamed Drain @ Hwy 140	535XUDARO	37.31331	-120.89217
33	2	Represented	Westport Drain @ Vivian Rd	535WDAVR	37.53682	-121.04861

\*Monitored Represented sites in the table are not an exhaustive list; the Executive Officer may require the third-party to add monitoring sites for represented water bodies as necessary to meet the requirements of the Order.

## C. Monitoring Requirements and Schedule

### 1. Surface Water Monitoring

Surface water monitoring must provide sufficient data to describe irrigated agriculture's impacts on surface water quality and to determine whether existing or newly implemented management practices comply with the receiving water limitations of the Order. Surface water monitoring shall include a comprehensive suite of constituents (also referred to as "parameters") monitored periodically in a manner that allows for an evaluation of the condition of a water body and determination of whether irrigated agriculture operations in the Eastern San Joaquin Watershed are causing or contributing to any surface water quality problems.

Surface water assessment monitoring shall be conducted at Core sites and shall consist of the general water quality parameters, nutrients, pathogen indicators, water column and sediment toxicity, pesticides, and metals identified in section III.C.3. By 1 August of the calendar year in which monitoring begins the third-party shall identify a specific set of monitoring parameters (Monitoring Plan Update) for each site that is scheduled to be monitored (see section III.C.3 below).<sup>7</sup> The third-party shall continue monitoring as described in the Coalition's 25 August 2008 Monitoring and Reporting Program Plan (2008 MRPP) until the Executive Officer has approved the Monitoring Plan Update. If there are no proposed or required changes to the previous Monitoring Program Plan or Monitoring Plan Update, the third-party is not required to submit the Monitoring Plan Update.

*Follow-up sampling:* The Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer may request that a parameter(s) of concern continue to be monitored at a specific Core or Represented site during non-scheduled years. Parameters of concern may include, but are not limited to, parameters that exceed an applicable water quality objective or water quality trigger (see section VIII).

Sampling events shall be scheduled to capture at least two storm runoff events per year, except where a different frequency has been required or approved by the Executive Officer. The third-party shall identify storm runoff monitoring criteria that are based on precipitation levels and knowledge of soils or other factors affecting when storm runoff is expected to occur at monitoring sites. The collection of storm runoff samples shall not be contingent upon the timing of other sampling events and could result in monitoring more than once during a month.

<sup>7</sup> A monitoring year is defined according to water year, which is 1 October through 30 September.

## **2. Monitoring Schedule and Frequency**

The third-party shall identify the appropriate monitoring periods (e.g., months, seasons) for all parameters that require testing (Table 2), including a discussion of the rationale to support the proposed schedule.

For metals, pesticides, and aquatic toxicity, the monitoring periods shall be determined utilizing previous monitoring results, knowledge of agricultural use patterns (if applicable), pesticide use trends, chemical characteristics, and other applicable criteria. All other required parameters shall be monitored according to an approved schedule and frequency during the years in which monitoring is conducted at the Core and Represented sites.

Monitoring must be conducted when the pollutant is most likely to be present. If there is a temporal or seasonal component to the beneficial use, monitoring must also be conducted when beneficial use impacts could occur. The frequency of data collection must be sufficient to allow determination of compliance with the relevant numeric water quality objective(s) or water quality triggers. The third-party may submit written requests for the removal or addition of monitoring sites or parameters, or to modify the monitoring schedule and frequency, for approval by the Executive Officer.

## **3. Monitoring Parameters**

Water quality and flow monitoring shall be used to assess the wastes in discharges from irrigated lands to surface waters and to evaluate the effectiveness of management practice implementation. Water quality is evaluated with both field-measured parameters and laboratory analytical data as listed on Table 2 of this MRP. The pesticides identified as “to be determined” (TBD) on Table 2 shall be identified as part of a process that includes input from qualified scientists and coordination with the Department of Pesticide Regulation. Based on this process, the Executive Officer will provide the third-party with a list of pesticides that require monitoring in areas where they are applied and have the potential to impair water quality.

Parameters that are part of an adopted TMDL that is in effect and for which irrigated agriculture is a source within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed shall be monitored in accordance with the adopted Basin Plan provisions or as directed by the Executive Officer. Current adopted TMDLs within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed for which irrigated agriculture is a source include the San Joaquin River Deep Water Ship Channel dissolved oxygen; San Joaquin River salt, boron, selenium, diazinon, and chlorpyrifos.

The metals to be monitored at sites within each site subwatershed shall be determined through an evaluation of several factors. The evaluation will provide the basis for including or excluding each metal. Evaluation factors shall include, but not be limited to: documented use of the metal applied to lands for irrigated agricultural purposes in the last three years; prior monitoring results; geological or hydrological conditions; and mobilization or concentration by irrigated agricultural operations. The third-party may also consider other factors such as acute and chronic toxicity thresholds and chemical characteristics of the metals. The third-party shall evaluate the monitoring parameters listed in Table 2 to determine which metals warrant monitoring for each site subwatershed. Documentation of the evaluations must be provided to the Central Valley Water Board as part of the Monitoring Plan Update.

The third-party shall identify in the Monitoring Plan Update all parameters to be monitored and the proposed monitoring periods and frequency at selected sites by 1 August of the year in which monitoring begins (monitoring period begins 1 October). If there are no changes from the previous Executive Officer approved monitoring (i.e., approved MRPP, or previously approved Monitoring

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Plan Update), the third-party is not required to submit the Monitoring Plan Update. The Monitoring Plan Update shall be subject to Executive Officer review and approval prior to the initiation of changes in monitoring activities.

**Table 2: Monitoring Parameters**

	Measured Parameter	Matrix	Required
Field Measurements	Estimated Flow (cfs)	Water	x
	Photo Documentation	Site	x
	Conductivity (at 25 °C) (µs/cm)	Water	x
	Temperature (°C)	Water	x
	pH	Water	x
	Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	Water	x
Drinking Water	<i>E. coli</i>	Water	x
	Total Organic Carbon (TOC)	Water	x
Gen Phys	Hardness (as CaCO <sub>3</sub> )	Water	TBD
	Total Suspended Solids (TSS)	Water	x
	Turbidity	Water	x
Metals	Arsenic (total)	Water	TBD
	Boron (total)	Water	TBD
	Cadmium (total and dissolved)**	Water	TBD
	Copper (total and dissolved)**	Water	TBD
	Lead (total and dissolved)**	Water	TBD
	Molybdenum (total)	Water	TBD
	Nickel (total and dissolved)**	Water	TBD
	Selenium (total)	Water	TBD
	Zinc (total and dissolved)**	Water	TBD
Nutrients	Total Ammonia (as N)	Water	x
	Unionized Ammonia (calc value)	Water	x
	Nitrogen, Nitrate+Nitrite	Water	x
	Soluble Orthophosphate	Water	x
Pesticides	Registered pesticides determined according to the process identified in section III.C.3.	Water	TBD

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**Table 2: Monitoring Parameters**

	Measured Parameter	Matrix	Required
303(d)	TMDL constituents required by the Basin Plan  303(d) listed constituents to be monitored if irrigated agriculture is identified as a contributing source within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed and requested by the Executive Officer.	Water or Sediment	TBD
Water Toxicity	<i>Ceriodaphnia dubia</i> <i>Pimephales promelas</i> <i>Selenastrum capricornutum</i> Toxicity Identification Evaluation	Water Water Water Water	x x x see section III.C.4
Sediment Toxicity	<i>Hyalella azteca</i>	Sediment	x
Pesticides & Sediment Parameters	Bifenthrin Cyfluthrin Cypermethrin Deltamethrin Esfenvalerate/Fenvalerate Fenpropathrin Lambda cyhalothrin Permethrin Piperonyl butoxide (PBO) Chlorpyrifos Total Organic Carbon Grain Size	Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment Sediment	As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* As needed* x x

\* For sediment samples measuring significant toxicity and < 80% organism survival compared to the control, the sediment pesticide analysis will be performed. Sediment pesticide analyses may be identified according to an evaluation of PUR data (see sediment toxicity testing requirements in section III.C.4 below).

\*\* Hardness samples shall be collected when sampling for these metals.

#### 4. Toxicity Testing

The purpose of toxicity testing is to: 1) evaluate compliance with the Basin Plan narrative toxicity water quality objective; 2) identify the causes of toxicity when and where it is observed (e.g. metals, pesticides, ammonia, etc.); and 3) evaluate any additive toxicity or synergistic effects due to the presence of multiple constituents.

##### a. Aquatic Toxicity

Aquatic toxicity testing shall include *Ceriodaphnia dubia*, *Pimephales promelas*, and *Selenastrum capricornutum* in the water column. Testing for *C. dubia* and *P. promelas* shall



follow the U.S. EPA acute toxicity testing methods.<sup>8</sup> Testing for *S. capricornutum* shall follow the U.S. EPA short-term chronic toxicity testing methods.<sup>9</sup> Toxicity test endpoints are survival for *C. dubia* and *P. promelas*, and growth for *S. capricornutum*.

Water column toxicity analyses shall be conducted on 100% (undiluted) sample for the initial screening. A sufficient sample volume shall be collected in order to allow the laboratory to conduct a Phase I Toxicity Identification Evaluation (TIE) on the same sample, should toxicity be detected, in an effort to identify the cause of the toxicity.

If a 50% or greater difference in *Ceriodaphnia dubia* or *Pimephales promelas* mortality in an ambient sample, as compared to the laboratory control, is detected at any time in an acceptable test, a TIE shall be initiated within 48 hours of such detection. If a 50% or greater reduction in *Selenastrum capricornutum* growth in an ambient sample, as compared to the laboratory control, is detected at the end of an acceptable test, a TIE shall be initiated within 48 hours of such detection.

At a minimum, Phase I TIE<sup>10</sup> manipulations shall be conducted to determine the general class(es) (e.g., metals, non-polar organics, and polar organics) of the chemical(s) causing toxicity. The laboratory report of TIE results submitted to the Central Valley Water Board must include a detailed description of the specific TIE manipulations that were utilized.

If within the first 96 hours of the initial toxicity screening, the mortality reaches 100%, a multiple dilution test shall be initiated. The dilution series must be initiated within 24 hours of the sample reaching 100% mortality, and must include a minimum of five (5) sample dilutions in order to quantify the magnitude of the toxic response. For the fathead minnow test, the laboratory must take the steps to procure test species within one working day, and the multiple dilution tests must be initiated the day fish are available.

#### *Ceriodaphnia dubia* and *Pimephales promelas* Media Renewal

Daily sample water renewals shall occur during all acute toxicity tests to minimize the effects of rapid pesticide losses from test waters. A feeding regime of 2 hours prior to test initiation and 2 hours prior to test renewal shall be applied. Test solution renewal must be 100% renewal for *Ceriodaphnia dubia* by transferring organisms by pipet into fresh solutions, as defined in the freshwater toxicity testing manual.

#### *Selenastrum capricornutum* Pre-Test Treatment

Algae toxicity testing shall not be preceded with treatment of the chelating agent EDTA. The purpose of omitting this agent is to ensure that metals used to control algae in the field are not removed from sample aliquots prior to analysis or during the initial screening.

### **b. Sediment Toxicity**

Sediment toxicity analyses shall be conducted according to EPA Method 600/R-99/064. Sampling and analysis for sediment toxicity testing utilizing *Hyalella azteca* shall be conducted at each monitoring location established by the third-party for water quality monitoring, if appropriate sediment (i.e. silt, clay) is present at the site. If appropriate sediment is not present

<sup>8</sup> U.S. EPA. 2002. Methods for Measuring the Acute Toxicity of Effluents and Receiving Waters to Freshwater and Marine Organisms, Fifth Edition. Office of Water, Washington, D.C. U.S. EPA-821-R-02-012.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. EPA. 2002. Short-term Methods for Estimating the Chronic Toxicity of Effluents and Receiving Waters to Freshwater Organisms, Fourth Edition. Office of Water, Washington, D.C. U.S. EPA-821-R-02-013.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. EPA. 1991. Methods for Aquatic Toxicity Identification Evaluations. Phase I Toxicity Characterization Procedures. Office of Research and Development, Washington DC. 20460. EPA-600-6-91-003.

at the designated water quality monitoring site, an alternative site with appropriate sediment shall be designated for all sediment collection and toxicity testing events. Sediment samples shall be collected and analyzed for toxicity twice per year, with one sample collected between 15 August and 15 October, and one sample collected between 1 March and 30 April, during each year of monitoring. The *H. azteca* sediment toxicity test endpoint is survival. The Executive Officer may request different sediment sample collection timing and frequency under a SQMP.

All sediment samples must be analyzed for total organic carbon (TOC) and grain size. Analysis for TOC is necessary to evaluate the expected magnitude of toxicity to the test species. Note that sediment collected for grain size analysis shall not be frozen. If the sample is not toxic to the test species, the additional sample volume can be discarded.

Sediment samples that show significant toxicity to *Hyalella azteca* at the end of an acceptable test and that exhibit < 80% organism survival compared to the control will require pesticide analysis of the same sample in an effort to determine the potential cause of toxicity. The third-party may use the previous three years of available PUR data to determine which of the parameters listed in Table 2 require testing in the sediment sample. Analysis at practical reporting limits of 1 ng/g on a dry weight basis for each pesticide is required to allow comparison to established lethal concentrations of these chemicals to the test species. This follow-up analysis must begin within five business days of when the toxicity criterion described above is exceeded. The third-party may also follow up with a sediment TIE when there is ≥ 50% reduction in test organism survival as compared to the laboratory control. Sediment TIEs are an optional tool.

## **5. Special Project Monitoring**

The Central Valley Water Board or Executive Officer may require the third-party to conduct local or site-specific monitoring where monitoring identifies a water quality problem (Special Project Monitoring). The studies shall be representative of the effects of changes in management practices for the parameters of concern. Once Special Project Monitoring is required, the third-party must submit a Special Project Monitoring proposal. The proposal must provide the justification for the proposed study design, specifically identifying how the study design will quantify irrigated agriculture's contribution to the water quality problem, identify sources, and evaluate management practice effectiveness. When such a study is required, the proposed study must include an evaluation of the feasibility of conducting commodity and management practice specific field studies for those commodities and irrigated agricultural practices that could be associated with the pollutants of concern. Special Project Monitoring studies will be designed to evaluate the effectiveness of practices used by multiple Members and will not be required of the third-party to evaluate compliance of an individual Member.

### **D. Surface Water Data Management Requirements**

All surface water field and laboratory data must be uploaded into the Central Valley Regional Data Center (CV RDC) database and will be exported to the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) once data have been approved as CEDEN comparable. The third-party will input its data into a replica of the CV RDC database following CV RDC and CEDEN business and formatting rules.

The third-party shall utilize the most current version of the database and update associated lookup lists on a routine basis. The third-party shall ensure that the data loaded meet the formatting and business rules as detailed in the most current version of the document "Format and Business Rules for the CV RDC CEDEN Comparable Database."

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The Central Valley Water Board has developed several tools to assist the third-party with processing and loading of its data. These tools, whether required or optional, will help the third-party to efficiently conduct data processing and loading and meet data management requirements.

CEDEN Comparable Field Sheets (Required)

The third-party shall use CEDEN comparable field sheets when entering data. An example CEDEN comparable field sheet can be found on the CV RDC webpage. This field sheet was designed to match the entry user interface within the CEDEN comparable database to allow for easier data entry of all sample collection information. Modified versions of the field sheet may be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer for approval.

Format Quick Guide (Optional Tool)

The Format Quick Guide is a guidance document for the formatting of data tailored specifically for the third-party. It contains a column by column guide for filling out the CV RDC data templates with the applicable required codes. The Central Valley Water Board CV RDC will provide this document, and updates to it, upon request based on an approved monitoring plan and associated QAPP.

EDD Checklist (Optional Tool)

The electronic data deliverable (EDD) checklist provides for a structured method for reviewing data deliverables from data entry staff or laboratories prior to loading. An updated checklist will be made available on the CV RDC website.

Online Data Checker (Optional Tool)

An online data checker was developed to automate the checking of the datasets against the current format requirements and business rules associated with CEDEN comparable data. The data checker can be accessed on the CV RDC webpage. Please note that data submission will not be accepted through this tool; however, the checker can still be used to check data for errors.

Electronic Quality Assurance Program Plan (eQAPP) (Required)

The third-party shall use an eQAPP when collecting and analyzing monitoring data. The eQAPP is a spreadsheet document containing the quality control requirements for each analyte and method as detailed in the most current version of the third-party's approved QAPP. Each analyte, method, extraction, units, recovery limits, QA sample requirement, etc. is included in this document using the appropriate codes required for the CEDEN comparable database. The third-party shall use the document to format the reported data and conduct a quality control review prior to loading. Data that do not meet the project quality assurance acceptance requirements must be flagged accordingly and must include brief notes detailing the problem within the provided comments field. Included in this file are also the most recent CEDEN comparable station name and code list as well as the applicable project CEDEN codes for retrieving data from the CEDEN website once data arrive there.

**IV. Groundwater Quality Monitoring and Management Practice Assessment, and Evaluation Requirements**

The groundwater quality monitoring, assessment, and evaluation requirements in this MRP have been developed in consideration of the critical questions developed by the Groundwater Monitoring Advisory Workgroup (questions are presented in the Information Sheet, Attachment A). The third-party must collect sufficient data to describe irrigated agricultural impacts on groundwater quality and to determine whether existing or newly implemented management practices comply with the groundwater receiving water limitations of the Order.

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The strategy for evaluating groundwater quality and protection consists of (1) Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring, (2) Groundwater Assessment Report, 2(3) Management Practices Evaluation Program, and 3(4) Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program.

1. Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring is designed to identify human health impacts of nitrate contamination and notifying well users of any well contaminations of nitrate above the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for drinking water wells located on agricultural property.

4-2. The Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) provides the foundational information necessary for design of the Management Practices Evaluation Program and the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program. The GAR also identifies the high vulnerability groundwater areas where a Groundwater Quality Management Plan must be developed and implemented.

2-3. The overall goal of the Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) is to evaluate the effectiveness of management practices in limiting ~~determine the effects, if any, irrigated agricultural practices have on first encountered groundwater under different conditions that could affect~~ the discharge of waste from irrigated lands to groundwater under different conditions (e.g., soil type, depth to groundwater, irrigation practice, crop type, nutrient management practice).

3-4. The overall objectives of the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring Program are to determine current water quality conditions of groundwater relevant to irrigated agriculture and develop long-term groundwater quality information that can be used to evaluate the regional effects of irrigated agricultural practices.

Each of these elements has its own specific objectives (provided below), and the design of each will differ in accordance with the specific objectives to be reached. While it is anticipated that these programs will provide sufficient groundwater quality and management practice effectiveness data to evaluate whether management practices of irrigated agriculture are protective of groundwater quality, the Executive Officer may also, pursuant to Water Code section 13267, order Members to perform additional monitoring or evaluations, where violations of this Order are documented or the irrigated agricultural operation is found to be a significant threat to groundwater quality.

#### **A. Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring**

After January 1, 2019, Members must initiate sampling of private drinking water supply wells located on their property, as described below. The requirements of this section will not take effect if, prior to January 1, 2019, the State Water Board determines that the legislature has established a comprehensive statewide program that assures that private drinking water wells will be routinely monitored for nitrate contamination and users of those wells will be notified of the results.

The purpose of Drinking Water Supply Well Monitoring is to identify drinking water supply wells that have nitrate concentrations exceeding the MCL and notify any well users of the potential for human health impact.

1. Members must conduct annual drinking water supply well sampling. Members may submit one or more annual drinking water supply well sampling results from one or more of the five prior years in lieu of one or more of the first three rounds of annual monitoring samples, provided sampling and testing for nitrates was completed using EPA approved methods and by an Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program certified laboratory. If the nitrate concentration

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is below 8 mg/L nitrate+nitrite as N in three consecutive annual samples. Members may conduct sampling every five years going forward. An alternative sampling schedule based on trending data for the well may be required by the Executive Officer at any time. Sampling may cease if a drinking water well is taken out of service or no longer provides drinking water, including where the well is taken out of service because sufficient replacement water is being supplied. The Members must keep any records (e.g. photos, bottled water receipts) establishing that the well is not used for drinking water.

2. Groundwater samples must be collected using proper sampling methods, chain-of-custody, and quality assurance/quality control protocols. Groundwater samples must be collected at or near the well head before the pressure tank and prior to any well head treatment. In cases where this is not possible, the water sample must be collected from a sampling point as close to the pressure tank as possible, or from a cold-water spigot located before any filters or water treatment systems.
3. Laboratory analyses for groundwater samples must be conducted by an Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program State certified laboratory according to the U.S. EPA approved methods; unless otherwise noted, all monitoring, sample preservation, and analyses must be performed in accordance with the latest edition of *Test Methods for Evaluating Solid Waste*, SW-846, United States Environmental Protection Agency, and analyzed as specified herein by the above analytical methods and reporting limits indicated. Certified laboratories can be found at the web link: [www.waterboards.ca.gov/elap](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/elap).
4. All drinking water supply well monitoring data, including any existing data, are to be submitted electronically to the State Water Board's GeoTracker Database by the testing laboratory. The data submitted shall include the APN where the drinking water supply well is located.
5. If groundwater monitoring determines that water in any well that is used for or may be used for drinking water exceeds 10 mg/L of nitrate+nitrite as N, the Member must provide notice to the users within 10 days of learning of the exceedance and send a copy of the notice to the Central Valley Water Board. If the Member is not the owner of the irrigated lands, the Member may provide notice instead to the owner within 24 hours of learning of the exceedance, and the owner must provide notice to the users within nine days and send a copy of the notice to the Central Valley Water Board.
6. Notice shall be given to users by providing them a copy of a Drinking Water Notification Template approved by the Executive Officer. The template shall be signed by the Member (or landowner if the member is not the owner) certifying notice has been provided to the users. A copy of the signed template shall be sent to the Central Valley Water Board and retained by the Member or non-Member owner.

## **B. Groundwater Quality Assessment Report**

The purpose of the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report (GAR) is to provide the technical basis informing the scope and level of effort for implementation of the Order's groundwater monitoring and implementation provisions. Three (3) months after receiving an NOA from the Central Valley Water Board, the third-party will provide a proposed outline of the GAR to the Executive Officer that describes data sources and references that will be considered in developing the GAR.

1. *Objectives.* The main objectives of the GAR are to:
  - Provide an assessment of all available, applicable and relevant data and information to determine the high and low vulnerability areas where discharges from irrigated lands may result in groundwater quality degradation.
  - Establish priorities for implementation of monitoring and associated studies within high vulnerability areas.

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- Provide a basis for establishing workplans to assess groundwater quality trends.
  - Provide a basis for establishing workplans and priorities to evaluate the effectiveness of agricultural management practices to protect groundwater quality.
  - Provide a basis for establishing groundwater quality management plans in high vulnerability areas and priorities for implementation of those plans.
2. *GAR components.* The GAR shall include, at a minimum, the following data components:
- Detailed land use information with emphasis on land uses associated with irrigated agricultural operations. The information shall identify the largest acreage commodity types in the third-party area, including the most prevalent commodities comprising up to at least 80% of the irrigated agricultural acreage in the third-party area.
  - Information regarding depth to groundwater, provided as a contour map(s).
  - Groundwater recharge information, including identification of areas contributing recharge to urban and rural communities where groundwater serves as a significant source of supply.
  - Soil survey information, including significant areas of high salinity, alkalinity and acidity.
  - Shallow groundwater constituent concentrations (potential constituents of concern include any material applied as part of the agricultural operation, including constituents in irrigation supply water [e.g., pesticides, fertilizers, soil amendments, etc.] that could impact beneficial uses or cause degradation).
  - Information on existing groundwater data collection and analysis efforts relevant to this Order (e.g., Department of Pesticide Regulation [DPR] United States Geological Survey [USGS] State Water Board Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment [GAMA], California Department of Public Health, local groundwater management plans, etc.). This groundwater data compilation and review shall include readily accessible information relative to the Order on existing monitoring well networks, individual well details, and monitored parameters. For existing monitoring networks (or portions thereof) and/or relevant data sets, the third-party should assess the possibility of data sharing between the data-collecting entity, the third-party, and the Central Valley Water Board.
3. *GAR data review and analysis.* To develop the above data components, the GAR shall include review and use, where applicable, of relevant existing federal, state, county, and local databases and documents. The GAR shall include an evaluation of the above data components to:
- Determine where known groundwater quality impacts exist for which irrigated agricultural operations are a potential contributor or where conditions make groundwater more vulnerable to impacts from irrigated agricultural activities.
  - Determine the merit and feasibility of incorporating existing groundwater data collection efforts, and their corresponding monitoring well systems for obtaining appropriate groundwater quality information to achieve the objectives of and support groundwater monitoring activities under this Order. This shall include specific findings and conclusions and provide the rationale for conclusions.
  - Prepare a ranking of high vulnerability areas to provide a basis for prioritization of workplan activities.
  - ~~The GAR shall d~~Discuss pertinent geologic and hydrogeologic information for the third-party area(s) and utilize GIS mapping applications, graphics, and tables, as appropriate, in order to clearly convey pertinent data, support data analysis, and show results.
4. *Groundwater vulnerability designations.* The GAR shall designate high/low vulnerability areas for groundwater in consideration of high and low vulnerability definitions provided in Attachment

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E of the Order. Vulnerability designations may be refined or updated periodically during the Monitoring Report process. The third-party must review and confirm or modify vulnerability designations every five (5) years after Executive Officer approval of the GAR. The vulnerability designations will be made by the third-party using a combination of physical properties (soil type, depth to groundwater, known agricultural impacts to beneficial uses, etc.) and management practices (irrigation method, crop type, nitrogen application and removal rates, etc.). The third-party shall provide the rationale for proposed vulnerability determinations. The Executive Officer will make the final determination regarding vulnerability designations.

If the GAR is not submitted to the board by the required deadline, the Executive Officer will designate default high/low vulnerability groundwater areas using such information as 1) those areas that have been identified by the State Water Board as Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas, 2) California Department of Pesticide Regulation groundwater protection areas, and 3) areas with exceedances of water quality objectives for which irrigated agriculture waste discharges may cause or contribute to the exceedance.

5. *Prioritization of high vulnerability groundwater areas.* The third-party may prioritize the areas designated as high vulnerability areas to comply with the requirements of this Order, including conducting monitoring programs and carrying out required studies. When establishing relative priorities for high vulnerability areas, the third-party may consider, but not be limited to, the following:
- Identified exceedances of water quality objectives for which irrigated agriculture waste discharges are the cause, or a contributing source.
  - The proximity of the high vulnerability area to areas contributing recharge to urban and rural communities where groundwater serves as a significant source of supply.
  - Existing field or operational practices identified to be associated with irrigated agriculture waste discharges that are the cause, or a contributing source.
  - The largest acreage commodity types comprising up to at least 80% of the irrigated agricultural acreage in the high vulnerability areas and the irrigation and fertilization practices employed by these commodities.
  - Legacy or ambient conditions of the groundwater.
  - Groundwater basins currently or proposed to be under review by CV-SALTS.
  - Identified constituents of concern, e.g., relative toxicity, mobility.

Additional information such as models, studies, and information collected as part of this Order may also be considered in designating and prioritizing vulnerability areas for groundwater. Such data includes, but is not limited to, 1) those areas that have been identified by the State Water Board as Hydrogeologically Vulnerable Areas, 2) California Department of Pesticide Regulation groundwater protection areas, and 3) areas with exceedances of water quality objectives for which irrigated agriculture waste discharges may cause or contribute to the exceedance.

The Executive Officer will review and may approve or require changes to any third-party proposed high/low vulnerability areas and the proposed priority ranking. The vulnerability areas, or any changes thereto, shall not be effective until third-party receipt of written approval by the Executive Officer. An interested person may seek review by the Central Valley Water Board of the Executive Officer's decision on the designation of high and low vulnerability areas associated with approval of the Groundwater Quality Assessment Report.



### **BC. Management Practice Evaluation Program**

The Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) shall initially focus on the determination of the crop-specific coefficients for conversion of yield to nitrogen removed and then on the determination of acceptable ranges for the multi-year A/R ratio target values by crop. Following the initial focus, ~~the goal of the Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) is to determine~~ evaluate the effectiveness, ~~if any of,~~ irrigated agricultural practices<sup>11</sup> ~~have with regard to~~ groundwater quality. A MPEP may prioritize the condition relevant is required in high vulnerability groundwater areas and must address the constituents of concern described in the GAR. This section provides the goals, objectives, and minimum reporting requirements for the MPEP. As specified in section IV.D of this MRP, the third-party is required to develop a workplan that will describe the methods that will be utilized to achieve the MPEP requirements.

1. *Objectives.* The objectives of the MPEP are to:

- Determine the crop-specific coefficients for conversion of a measured crop yield to nitrogen removed.
- Determine acceptable ranges for the multi-year A/R ratios by crop.
- Identify whether existing site-specific and/or commodity-specific management practices are protective of groundwater quality, ~~within high vulnerability groundwater areas,~~
- Determine if newly implemented management practices are improving or may result in improving groundwater quality.
- Develop an estimate of the effect of Members' discharges of constituents of concern on groundwater quality ~~in high vulnerability areas. A mass balance and conceptual model of the transport, storage, and degradation/chemical transformation mechanisms for the constituents of concern, or equivalent method approved by the Executive Officer, must be provided.~~
- Utilize the results of evaluated management practices to improve the ~~determine whether~~ practices implemented at represented on Member farms (~~i.e., those~~ not specifically evaluated, but having similar site conditions), ~~need to be improved.~~

Given the wide range of management practices/commodities that are used within the third-party's boundaries, it is anticipated that the third-party will rank or prioritize its high vulnerability areas and commodities, and present a phased approach to implement the MPEP. The Third Party may base such prioritization on high/low vulnerability distinctions.

2. *Implementation.* Since management practices evaluation may transcend watershed or third-party boundaries, this Order allows developing a MPEP on a watershed or regional basis that involves participants in other areas or third-party groups, provided the evaluation studies are conducted in a manner representative of areas to which it will be applied. The MPEP may be conducted in one of the following ways:

- By the third-party,
- by watershed or commodity groups within an area with known groundwater impacts or vulnerability, or
- by watershed or commodity groups that wish to determine the effects of regional or commodity driven management practices.

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<sup>11</sup> In evaluating management practices, the third-party is expected to focus on those practices that are most relevant to the Members' groundwater quality protection efforts.

A master schedule describing the rank or priority for the investigation(s) ~~of the high-vulnerability areas (or commodities within these areas)~~ to be examined under the MPEP shall be prepared and submitted to the Executive Officer as detailed in the Management Practices Evaluation Program Workplan section IV.D below.

3. *Report.* Reports of the MPEP must be submitted to the Executive Officer as part of the third-party's Monitoring Report or in a separate report due on the same date as the Monitoring Report. The report shall include all data<sup>12</sup> (including analytical reports) collected by each phase of the MPEP since the previous report was submitted. The report shall also contain a tabulated summary of data collected to date by the MPEP, including A/R and A-R data. The report shall summarize the activities conducted under the MPEP, and identify the number and location of installed monitoring wells relative to each other and other types of monitoring devices. Within each report, the third-party shall evaluate the data and make a determination whether groundwater is being impacted by activities at farms being monitored by the MPEP.

Each report shall also include an evaluation of whether the specific phase(s) of the Management Practices Evaluation Program is/are on schedule to provide the data needed to complete the Management Practices Evaluation Report (detailed below) by the required deadline. If the evaluation concludes that information needed to complete the Management Practices Evaluation Report may not be available by the required deadline, the report shall include measures that will be taken to bring the program back on schedule.

4. *Management Practices Evaluation Report.* No later than six (6) years after implementation of each phase of the MPEP, the third-party shall submit a Management Practices Evaluation Report (MPER) identifying management practices that are protective of groundwater quality for the range of conditions found at farms covered by that phase of the study. The identification of management practices for the range of conditions must be of sufficient specificity to allow Members of the third-party and staff of the Central Valley Water Board to identify which practices at monitored farms are appropriate for farms with the same or similar range of site conditions, and generally where such farms may be located within the third-party area (e.g., the summary report may need to include maps that identify the types of management practices that should be implemented in certain areas based on specified site conditions). The MPER must include an adequate technical justification for the conclusions that incorporates available data and reasonable interpretations of geologic and engineering principles to identify management practices protective of groundwater quality.

The report shall include an assessment of each management practice to determine which management practices are protective of groundwater quality. If monitoring concludes that management practices currently in use are not protective of groundwater quality based upon information contained in the MPER, and therefore are not confirmed to be sufficient to ensure compliance with the groundwater receiving water limitations of the Order, the third-party in conjunction with commodity groups and/or other experts (e.g., University of California Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service) shall propose and implement new/alternative management practices to be subsequently evaluated. Where applicable, existing GQMPs shall be updated by the third-party group to be consistent with the findings of the Management Practices Evaluation Report.

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<sup>12</sup> The data need not be associated with a specific parcel or Member.

#### **CD. Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring**

This section provides the objectives and minimum sampling and reporting requirements for Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring. As specified in section IV.E of this MRP, the third-party is required to develop a workplan that will describe the methods that will be utilized to achieve the trend monitoring requirements.

1. *Objectives.* The objectives of Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring are (1) to determine current water quality conditions of groundwater relevant to irrigated agriculture, and (2) to develop long-term groundwater quality information that can be used to evaluate the regional effects (i.e., not site-specific effects) of irrigated agriculture and its practices.
2. *Implementation.* To reach the stated objectives for the Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring program, the third-party shall develop a groundwater monitoring network that will (1) be implemented over both high and low vulnerability areas in the third-party area; and will (2) employ shallow wells, but not necessarily wells completed in the uppermost zone of first encountered groundwater. The use of existing wells is less costly than installing wells specifically designed for groundwater monitoring, while still yielding data which can be compared with historical and future data to evaluate long-term groundwater trends. The third-party may also consider using existing monitoring networks such as those used by AB 3030 and SB 1938 plans.

The third-party shall submit a proposed ~~Trend~~-Groundwater Trend Monitoring Workplan described in section IV.E below to the Central Valley Water Board. The proposed network shall consist of a sufficient number of wells to provide coverage in the third-party geographic area so that current water quality conditions of groundwater and composite regional effects of irrigated agriculture can be assessed according to the trend monitoring objectives. The rationale for the distribution of trend monitoring wells shall be included in the workplan.

3. *Reporting.* The results of trend monitoring are to be included in the third-party's Monitoring Report and shall include a map of the sampled wells, tabulation of the analytical data, and time concentration charts. Groundwater monitoring data are to be submitted electronically to the State Water Board's GeoTracker Database and to the Central Valley Water Board.

Following collection of sufficient data (sufficiency to be determined by the method of analysis proposed by the third-party) from each well, the third-party is to evaluate the data for trends. The methods to be used to evaluate trends shall be proposed by the third-party in the ~~Trend~~ Groundwater Trend Monitoring Workplan described in section IV.E below.

#### **DE. Management Practices Evaluation Workplan**

The third-party, either solely or in conjunction with a Management Practices Evaluation Group (watershed or commodity based), shall prepare a Management Practices Evaluation Workplan. The workplan shall be submitted to the Executive Officer for review and approval. The workplan must identify a reasonable number of evaluation locations, ~~-situated throughout the high vulnerability~~ It must also groundwater area(s), and encompassing the range of management practices used, the major agricultural commodities, and site conditions under which these commodities are grown. The workplan shall be designed to meet the objectives and minimum requirements described in section IV.B of this MRP.



1. *Workplan approach.* The workplan must include a scientifically sound approach to evaluating the effect of management practices on groundwater quality. The proposed approach may include:

- ~~groundwater monitoring,~~
- tracking applied and removed nitrogen,
- modeling,
- vadose zone sampling, or
- other scientifically sound and technically justifiable methods for meeting the objectives of the Management Practices Evaluation Program.

~~Where available, Sufficient~~<sup>13</sup> groundwater monitoring data should be collected ~~or available to confirm or~~ validate the conclusions regarding the effect on groundwater quality of the evaluated practices ~~on groundwater quality~~. Any shallow groundwater quality monitoring that is part of the workplan must be of first encountered groundwater. Monitoring of shallow first encountered groundwater more readily allows ~~identification of the area from which water entering a well originates than deeper wells and allows~~ identification of changes in groundwater quality from activities on the surface at the earliest possible time.

2. *Groundwater quality monitoring –constituent selection.* Where groundwater quality monitoring is proposed, the Management Practices Evaluation Workplan must identify:
  - the constituents to be assessed, and
  - the frequency of the data collection (e.g., groundwater quality or vadose zone monitoring; soil sampling) for each constituent.

The proposed constituents shall be selected based upon the information collected from the GAR and must be sufficient to determine if the management practices being evaluated are protective of groundwater quality. At a minimum, the baseline constituents for any groundwater quality monitoring must include those parameters required under trend monitoring.

3. *Workplan implementation and analysis.* The proposed Management Practices Evaluation Workplan shall contain sufficient information/justification for the Executive Officer to evaluate the ability of the evaluation program to identify whether existing management practices in combination with site conditions, are protective of groundwater quality. The workplan must explain how data collected at evaluated farms will be used to assess potential impacts to groundwater at represented farms that are not part of the Management Practices Evaluation Program's network. This information is needed to demonstrate whether data collected will allow identification of management practices that are protective of water quality at Member farms, including represented farms (i.e., farms for which on-site evaluation of practices is not conducted).
4. *Master workplan –prioritization.* If the third-party chooses to rank or prioritize ~~its high vulnerability~~ areas/commodities in its GAR, a single Management Practices Evaluation Workplan may be prepared which includes a timeline describing the priority and schedule for each of the areas/commodities to be investigated and the submittal dates for addendums proposing the details of each area's investigation.

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<sup>13</sup> Shallow groundwater in this context refers to groundwater located less than 10 feet below the soil surface, which will exhibit a rapid response to deep percolation (below the root zone) water and nitrate flows.

5. *Installation of monitoring wells.* Upon approval of the Management Practices Evaluation Workplan, the third-party shall prepare and submit a Monitoring Well Installation and Sampling Plan (MWISP), if applicable. A description of the MWISP and its required elements/submittals are presented as Appendix MRP-2. The MWISP must be approved by the Executive Officer prior to the installation of the MWISP's associated monitoring wells.
6. *Groundwater Protection Formula:* By July 1, 2020, the third-party shall amend the workplan to propose a Groundwater Protection Formula (GWP Formula) to the Executive Officer. The purpose of the GWP Formula is to generate a value (the Groundwater Protection Value or GWP Value), expressed as either a nitrogen loading number or a concentration of nitrate in water (e.g. mg/l) as appropriate,<sup>14</sup> reflecting the total applied nitrogen, total removed nitrogen, recharge conditions, and other relevant and scientifically supported variables that influence the potential average concentration of nitrate in water expected to reach groundwater in a given township over a given time period. The Executive Officer shall approve the proposed GWP Formula with any revisions after opportunity for public review and comment. The third-party shall use the GWP Formula to compute GWP Values for each township in high vulnerability areas as part of its GQMP. The GWP Values shall be subject to public review and comment and Executive Officer approval. GWP Values shall be developed and included in the GQMP no later than six months from Executive Officer approval of the GWP Formula.
7. *Groundwater Protection Targets by Township:* The first year following the third-party's inclusion of GWP Values in the GQMP, the third-party shall develop Groundwater Protection Targets (GWP Targets) for each township for which a GWP Values was computed the prior year. The purpose of the GWP Targets is to set a desired target that is intended to achieve compliance with the Receiving Water Limitations for groundwater described in Section III B of the Order within the time schedule for compliance specified in Section XII of the Order. The GWP Targets shall be informed by the GAR, the MPEP, and the trend groundwater monitoring program. The GWP Targets shall be reviewed and subject to approval by the Executive Officer after opportunity for public review and comment. The GWP Targets shall be reviewed and revised as necessary every five years.

#### **~~EE~~. Trend Monitoring Workplan**

The third-party shall develop a workplan for conducting trend monitoring within its boundaries that meets the objectives and minimum requirements described in section IV.C of this MRP. The workplan shall be submitted to the Executive Officer for review and approval. The Trend Monitoring Workplan shall provide information/details regarding the following topics:

1. *Workplan approach.* The Trend Monitoring workplan must include Aa discussion of the rationale for the number of proposed wells to be monitored and their locations. The rationale needs to consider: (1) the variety of agricultural commodities produced within the third-party's boundaries (particularly those commodities comprising the most irrigated agricultural acreage), (2) the conditions discussed/identified in the GAR related to the vulnerability prioritization within the third-party area, and (3) the areas identified in the GAR as contributing significant recharge to urban and rural communities where groundwater serves as a significant source of supply.
2. *Well details.* Details for wells proposed for trend monitoring, including:

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<sup>14</sup> The appropriate metric is to be determined as part of the workplan development.

- i. GPS coordinates;
  - ii. Physical address of the property on which the well is situated (if available);
  - iii. California State well number (if known);
  - iv. Well depth;
  - v. Top and bottom perforation depths;
  - vi. A copy of the water well drillers log, if available;
  - vii. Depth of standing water (static water level), if available (this may be obtained after implementing the program); and
  - viii. Well seal information (type of material, length of seal).
3. *Proposed sampling schedule.* Trend monitoring wells will be sampled, at a minimum, annually at the same time of the year for the indicator parameters identified in Table 3 below.
  4. *Workplan implementation and analysis.* Proposed method(s) to be used to evaluate trends in the groundwater monitoring data over time.

**Table 3: Trend Monitoring Constituents**

Annual Monitoring
Conductivity (at 25 °C)* (µmhos/cm)
pH* in pH units
Dissolved oxygen (DO)* (mg/L)
Temperature* (°C)
Nitrate as nitrogen (mg/L)
* field parameters
Trend monitoring wells are also to be sampled initially and once every five years thereafter for the following COCs:
Total dissolved solids (TDS) (mg/L)
General minerals (mg/L):
Anions (carbonate, bicarbonate, chloride, and sulfate)
Cations (boron, calcium, sodium, magnesium, and potassium)

## V. Third-Party Reporting Requirements

Reports and notices shall be submitted in accordance with section IX of the Order, Reporting Provisions.

The Third-Party shall develop Anonymous Member IDs and Anonymous APN IDs, as defined in Attachment E, for the reporting of data under Section C and D below.

### A. Quarterly Submittals of Surface Water Monitoring Results

Each quarter, the third-party shall submit the previous quarter's surface water monitoring results in an electronic format. The deadlines for these submittals are listed in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Quarterly Surface Water Monitoring Data Reporting Schedule**

<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Reporting Period</b>
1 March	Quarterly Monitoring Data Report	1 July through 30 September of previous calendar year
1 June	Quarterly Monitoring Data Report	1 October through 31 December of previous calendar year
1 September	Quarterly Monitoring Data Report	1 January through 31 March of same calendar year
1 December	Quarterly Monitoring Data Report	1 April through 30 June of same calendar year

Exceptions to due dates for submittal of electronic data may be granted by the Executive Officer if good cause is shown. The Quarterly Surface Water Monitoring Data Report shall include the following for the required reporting period:

1. An Excel workbook containing an export of all data records uploaded and/or entered into the CEDEN comparable database (surface water data). The workbook shall contain, at a minimum, those items detailed in the most recent version of the third-party's approved QAPP.
2. The most current version of the third-party's eQAPP.
3. Electronic copies of all field sheets.
4. Electronic copies of photos obtained from all surface water monitoring sites, clearly labeled with the CEDEN comparable station code and date.
5. Electronic copies of all applicable laboratory analytical reports on a CD.
6. For toxicity reports, all laboratory raw data must be included in the analytical report (including data for failed tests), as well as copies of all original bench sheets showing the results of individual replicates, such that all calculations and statistics can be reconstructed. The toxicity analyses data submittals must include individual sample results, negative control summary results, and replicate results. The minimum in-test water quality measurements reported must include the minimum and maximum measured values for specific conductivity, pH, ammonia, temperature, and dissolved oxygen.
7. For chemistry data, analytical reports must include, at a minimum, the following:
  - a. A lab narrative describing QC failures,
  - b. Analytical problems and anomalous occurrences,
  - c. Chain of custody (COCs) and sample receipt documentation,
  - d. All sample results for contract and subcontract laboratories with units, RLs and MDLs,
  - e. Sample preparation, extraction and analysis dates, and
  - f. Results for all QC samples including all field and laboratory blanks, lab control spikes, matrix spikes, field and laboratory duplicates, and surrogate recoveries.

Laboratory raw data such as chromatograms, spectra, summaries of initial and continuing calibrations, sample injection or sequence logs, prep sheets, etc., are not required for submittal, but must be retained by the laboratory in accordance with the requirements of section X of the Order, Record-keeping Requirements.

If any data are missing from the quarterly report, the submittal must include a description of what data are missing and when they will be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board. If data are not loaded into the CEDEN comparable database, this shall also be noted with the submittal.

## **B. Annual Groundwater Monitoring Results**

Annually, by 1 May, the third-party shall submit the prior year's groundwater monitoring results as an Excel workbook containing an export of all data records uploaded and/or entered into the State Water Board GeoTracker database. If any data are missing from the report, the submittal must include a description of what data are missing and when they will be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board. If data are not loaded into the GeoTracker database, this shall also be noted with the submittal.

## **C. Annual Management Practice Implementation Data**

By 1 July 2019 and annually thereafter, the third-party shall submit to the Central Valley Water Board management practice implementation data from the prior year's INMP Summary Reports and MPIRs in Excel workbook format. By 1 July 2019, and annually thereafter, the third-party shall also submit management practice implementation data from the most recently submitted Farm Evaluations. If any data are missing from the report, the submittal must include a description of what data are missing and when they will be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board. The third-party shall maintain an original electronic copy of all Farm Evaluations, INMP Summary Reports, and MPIRs, for ten years as required in Section X of the order.

The following data shall be reported to the Central Valley Water Board for each field:

1. Anonymous Member ID
2. Crop: If the Member has more than one field of a given crop, these may be identified by crop plus a number (e.g. tomato<sub>1</sub>, tomato<sub>2</sub>).

Data from the INMP Summary Report:

3. Whether Member was notified that Member was an outlier for AR data
4. INMP certification method
5. Irrigation method
6. Irrigation practices
7. Nitrogen management practices

Data from MPIR:

8. Whether the field is in a SQMP area
9. If so, management practices implemented consistent with the SQMP
10. Whether the field is in a GQMP area
11. If so, management practices implemented consistent with the GQMP

Data from Farm Evaluation:

12. Pest management practices
13. Sediment and erosion management practices
14. Whether there are irrigation wells
15. Whether there are abandoned wells

**D. Annual Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report Data**

The third-party shall submit certain data from the prior year's Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan (INMP) Summary Reports and certain additional calculations in three tables in Excel workbook format. If any INMP Summary Reports or data are missing, the submittal must include a description of what data are missing and when they will be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board.

The third-party shall submit the Individual Field AR Data by Anonymous Member ID Table beginning 1 July 2019, and annually thereafter.

The third-party shall submit Individual Field AR Data by Anonymous APN ID Table beginning 1 July 2021 and annually thereafter.

The third-party shall submit Township AR Data Table beginning 1 July 2019 and annually thereafter.

The third-party shall maintain all INMP Summary Reports received by the third-party and maintain all electronic database tables created from the INMP Summary Reports for a minimum of 10 years as required by section X of the order.

Concurrently with the data submission, the third-party shall identify the entries in the first two tables below that the third-party considers outliers for AR data, subject to follow up actions, and the standard used to make that determination.

The third-party shall calculate the following values and convert them to per acre values as indicated:

**Total Nitrogen Removed**

The total nitrogen removed shall be calculated from the total amount of material removed (harvested/sequestered) and multiplied by a crop-specific coefficient,  $C_N$ . The third-party shall determine, through literature review, nitrogen removed testing, and research, the most appropriate  $C_N$  coefficients for converting crop yield to nitrogen removed. The third-party shall publish  $C_N$  coefficients for crops that cover 95% of acreage within the third-party's boundaries in time to calculate Total Nitrogen Removed values based on yield values reported in the INMP Summary Reports due 1 March 2021. By 1 March 2023, the third-party shall publish  $C_N$  coefficients for crops that cover 99% of acreage within the third-party's boundaries. For the crops that cover the remaining 1% of acreage within the third-party's boundaries, it is acceptable to use estimated  $C_N$  coefficients based on similar crop types. The methods used to establish  $C_N$  coefficients must be approved by the Executive Officer. Until  $C_N$  coefficients have been established for a particular crop, the member will only report the crop yield in the INMP. Nitrogen Removed includes nitrogen removal via harvest and nitrogen sequestered in permanent wood of perennial crops.

**Nitrogen Applied/Nitrogen Removed Ratio (A/R Ratio)**

The A/R ratio shall be reported as the ratio of total nitrogen applied to total nitrogen removed (calculated above).

**Multi-Year Applied/Nitrogen Removed Ratio (A/R Ratio)**

For each field for which three consecutive years of A/R ratio is available, the multi-year A/R ratio shall be reported as the ratio of total nitrogen applied to total nitrogen removed (calculated above) for the three prior consecutive years.

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### Nitrogen Applied – Nitrogen Removed Difference (A-R Difference)

The A-R difference shall be reported as the numerical difference between total nitrogen applied and total nitrogen removed (calculated above).

The third-party shall review each Members' INMP Summary Reports and independently calculate and report both the A/R ratio and the A-R difference for the current reporting cycle (A/R<sub>1 year</sub> and A-R<sub>1 year</sub>). Beginning the third year of reporting, for those locations with data available for three years, the third-party shall calculate and report a three-year running total for both the A/R ratio and the A-R difference (A/R<sub>3 year</sub> and A-R<sub>3 year</sub>). The formulas for the A/R ratios and A-R differences are shown in the equations below.

$$A/R_{1 \text{ year}} \text{ Ratio} = \frac{\text{Nitrogen Applied during current reporting cycle}}{\text{Nitrogen Removed during current reporting cycle}}$$

$$A/R_{3 \text{ year}} \text{ Ratio} = \frac{\text{Sum of Nitrogen Applied during current and two previous reporting cycles}}{\text{Sum of Nitrogen Removed during current and two previous reporting cycles}} = \frac{(A_n + A_{n-1} + A_{n-2})}{(R_n + R_{n-1} + R_{n-2})}$$

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$$A-R_{1 \text{ year}} \text{ Difference} = \text{Nitrogen Applied (current reporting cycle)} - \text{Nitrogen Removed (current reporting cycle)}$$

$$A-R_{3 \text{ year}} \text{ Difference} = [\text{Sum of Nitrogen Applied (current and two previous reporting cycles)}]$$

$$\text{_____} - [\text{Sum of Nitrogen Removed (current and two previous reporting cycles)}]$$

$$\text{_____} = (A_n + A_{n-1} + A_{n-2}) - (R_n + R_{n-1} + R_{n-2})$$

Where n = current reporting cycle

The following data shall be reported to the Central Valley Water Board in three tables:

Individual Field-Level AR Data by Anonymous Member ID Table: One entry is made for each field or management unit reported.

1. Anonymous Member ID: Each Anonymous Member ID may be associated with more than one field.
2. Crop: If the Member has more than one field of a given crop, these may be identified by crop plus a number (e.g. tomato<sub>1</sub>, tomato<sub>2</sub>).<sup>15</sup>
3. Nitrogen applied via fertilizers (lbs/acre)
4. Nitrogen applied via organics and compost (lbs/acre)
5. Nitrogen applied via irrigation water (lbs/acre)
6. Total Nitrogen applied (lbs/acre) [sum of nitrogen from fertilizer (3), organics/compost (4), and irrigation water (5)]
7. Nitrogen removed per acre (lbs/acre)
8. A/R ratio
9. A-R difference (lbs/acre)
10. 3 year A/R ratio if available

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<sup>15</sup> We recognize that, if multiple crop types are grown in the same field over the course of a year or over several years, variations on field nomenclature and crop reporting will be necessary. For example, the field could be identified as the same field in an extra column and an extra row could be added for each crop. In addition, the three year A/R target range would likely need to be expressed as a weighted average of the crops grown during the three years.

Individual Field-Level AR Data by Anonymous APN ID Table: An entry for a field or management unit may be repeated if there is more than one Anonymous APN ID associated with the field or management unit.

1. Anonymous APN ID: List on a separate line each Anonymous APN ID assigned to parcels the field overlays completely or partially.
2. Associated groundwater basin or sub-basin
3. Crop: If there is more than one field of a given crop in the APN, these may be identified by crop plus a number (e.g. tomato<sub>1</sub>, tomato<sub>2</sub>)<sup>16</sup>
4. Nitrogen applied via fertilizers (lbs/acre)
5. Nitrogen applied via organics and compost (lbs/acre)
6. Nitrogen applied via irrigation water (lbs/acre)
7. Total Nitrogen applied (lbs/acre) [sum of nitrogen from fertilizer (3), organics/compost (4), and irrigation water (5)]
8. Nitrogen removed per acre (lbs/acre)
9. A/R ratio
10. A-R difference (lbs/acre)
11. 3 year A/R ratio if available

Township-Level Aggregated AR Data Table:

1. Township and range
2. Crop
3. Total acreage: sum for all the acreage for each unique crop within the township (acres)
4. Total nitrogen applied via fertilizer: sum for all acreage for each unique crop (total lbs)
5. Total nitrogen applied via organics and compost: sum for compost for each unique crop (total lbs)
6. Total nitrogen applied via irrigation water: sum for all acreage for each unique crop (total lbs)
7. Total nitrogen applied for each unique crop (total lbs) [sum of nitrogen from fertilizer (3), organics/compost (4), and irrigation water (5)]
8. Total nitrogen removed for each unique crop (total lbs)
9. A/R ratio for each unique crop
10. A-R difference for each unique crop (total lbs)

## **E. Monitoring Report**

The Monitoring Report shall be submitted by 1 May every year, with the first report due 1 May 2014, except for report components 17, 18, and 19 which will be due 1 July of each year. The report shall cover the monitoring periods from the previous hydrologic water year. A hydrologic water year is defined as 1 October through 30 September. The report shall include the following components ~~[the monitoring report components for the first report does not include Report Component (18), which shall be due by 1 July 2014]:~~

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<sup>16</sup> We recognize that, if multiple crop types are grown in the same field over the course of a year or over several years, variations on field nomenclature and crop reporting will be necessary. For example, the field could be identified as the same field in an extra column and an extra row could be added for each crop. In addition, the three year A/R target range would likely need to be expressed as a weighted average of the crops grown during the three years.



1. Signed transmittal letter;
2. Title page;
3. Table of contents;
4. Executive summary;
5. Description of the third-party geographical area;
6. Monitoring objectives and design;
7. Sampling site/monitoring well descriptions and rainfall records for the time period covered under the Monitoring Report;
8. Location map(s) of sampling sites/monitoring wells, crops and land uses;
9. Tabulated results of all analyses arranged in tabular form so that the required information is readily discernible;
10. Discussion of data relative to water quality objectives, and water quality management plan milestones, where applicable;
11. Sampling and analytical methods used;
12. Summary of Quality Assurance Evaluation results (as identified in the most recent version of the third-party's approved QAPP for Precision, Accuracy and Completeness);
13. Specification of the method(s) used to obtain estimated flow at each surface water monitoring site during each monitoring event;
14. Summary of exceedances of water quality objectives/trigger limits occurring during the reporting period and for surface water related pesticide use information;
15. Actions taken to address water quality exceedances that have occurred, including but not limited to, revised or additional management practices implemented;
16. Evaluation of monitoring data to identify spatial trends and patterns;
17. ~~INMP Summary Report Evaluation~~ Summary of Nitrogen Management Plan information submitted to the third-party;
18. Summary of management practice information collected as part of Farm Evaluations;
19. Summary comparison of township Groundwater Protection Targets and actual value achieved for each township;
- ~~19-20.~~ Summary of mitigation monitoring;
- ~~20-21.~~ Summary of education and outreach activities;
- ~~21-22.~~ Conclusions and recommendations.

Additional requirements and clarifications necessary for the above report components are described below.

#### **Report Component (1) —Signed Transmittal Letter**

A transmittal letter shall accompany each report. The transmittal letter shall be submitted and signed in accordance with the requirements of section IX of the Order, Reporting Provisions.

#### **Report Component (8) — Location Maps**

Location map(s) showing the sampling sites/monitoring wells, crops, and land uses within the third-party's geographic area must be updated (based on available sources of information) and included in the Monitoring Report. An accompanying GIS shapefile or geodatabase of monitoring site and monitoring well information must include the CEDEN comparable site code and name (surface water only) and Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates (surface water sites and wells used for monitoring). The map(s) must contain a level of detail that ensures they are informative and useful. GPS coordinates must be provided as latitude and longitude in the decimal degree coordinate system (at a minimum of five decimal places). The datum must be either WGS 1984 or NAD83, and clearly identified on the map. The source and date of all data layers must be identified

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on the map(s). All data layers/shapefiles/geodatabases included in the map shall be submitted with the Monitoring Report.

#### **Report Component (9) – Tabulated Results**

In reporting monitoring data, the third-party shall arrange the data in tabular form so that the required information is readily discernible. The data shall be summarized in such a manner to clearly illustrate compliance with the data collection requirements of the MRP.

#### **Report Component (10) — Data Discussion to Illustrate Compliance**

The report shall include a discussion of the third-party's compliance with the data collection requirements of the MRP. If a required component was not met, an explanation for the missing data must be included. Results must also be compared to water quality objectives and trigger limits.

#### **Report Component (12) — Quality Assurance Evaluation (Precision, Accuracy and Completeness)**

A summary of precision and accuracy results (both laboratory and field) is required in the report. The required data quality objectives are identified in the most recent version of the third-party's approved QAPP; acceptance criteria for all measurements of precision and accuracy must be identified. The third-party must review all QA/QC results to verify that protocols were followed and identify any results that did not meet acceptance criteria. A summary table or narrative description of all QA/QC results that did not meet objectives must be included. Additionally, the report must include a discussion of how the failed QA/QC results affect the validity of the reported data. The corrective actions to be implemented are described in the QAPP Guidelines.

In addition to precision and accuracy, the third-party must also calculate and report completeness. Completeness includes the percentage of all quality control results that meet acceptance criteria, as well as a determination of project completeness. For further explanation of this requirement, refer to the most recent version of the QAPP Guidelines. The third-party may ask the laboratory to provide assistance with evaluation of their QA/QC data, provided that the third-party prepares the summary table or narrative description of the results for the Monitoring Report.

#### **Report Component (14) — Summary of Exceedances**

A summary of the exceedances of water quality objectives or triggers that have occurred during the monitoring period is required in the Monitoring Report. In the event of exceedances for pesticides or toxicity in surface water, pesticide use data must be included in the Monitoring Report. Pesticide use information may be acquired from the agricultural commissioner. This requirement is described further in the following section on Exceedance Reports.

#### **Report Component (16) — Evaluation of Monitoring Data**

The third-party must evaluate its monitoring data in the Monitoring Report in order to identify potential trends and patterns in surface and groundwater quality that may be associated with waste discharge from irrigated lands. As part of this evaluation, the third-party must analyze all readily available monitoring data that meet program quality assurance requirements to determine deficiencies in monitoring for discharges from irrigated agricultural lands and whether additional sampling locations are needed. If deficiencies are identified, the third-party must propose a schedule for additional monitoring or source studies. Upon notification from the Executive Officer, the third-party must monitor any parameter in a watershed that lacks sufficient monitoring data (i.e., a data gap should be filled to assess irrigated agriculture's effects on water quality).

The third-party should incorporate pesticide use information, as needed, to assist in its data evaluation. Wherever possible, the third-party should utilize tables or graphs that illustrate and summarize the data evaluation.

### **Report Component (17) – ~~INMP Summary Report Evaluation~~**

~~In addition to submitting the INMP Summary Reports Data, as described in Section V.D above, the third-party shall submit an evaluation comparing individual field data collected from the Members' INMP Summary Reports. These comparisons shall include the ratio of Nitrogen Applied to Nitrogen Removed<sup>17</sup> and the difference between Nitrogen Applied and Nitrogen Removed for crops in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. Nitrogen Applied includes nitrogen from any sources, including, but not limited to, organic amendments, synthetic fertilizers, and irrigation water.~~

~~The third-party's evaluation of both the  $A/R_{1 \text{ year}}$  and  $A/R_{3 \text{ year}}$  ratios must include, at a minimum, a comparison of A/R ratios by crop type. As directed by the Executive Officer, initial further evaluations within each crop type comparing the irrigation method, the soil conditions, and the farming operation size shall be developed. The third-party shall evaluate the corresponding  $A-R_{1 \text{ year}}$  and  $A-R_{3 \text{ year}}$  differences by crop type. The third-party shall also evaluate any other A/R ratio or A-R difference comparisons as directed by the Executive Officer. For each comparison, the third-party must identify the mean and the standard deviation as well as develop a histogram plot of the data. A box and whisker plot comparing the A/R ratio and A-R difference for each comparison, or equivalent tabular or graphical presentation of the data approved by the Executive Officer, may also be used. The summary of nitrogen management data must include a quality assessment of the collected information (e.g. missing data, potentially incorrect/inaccurate reporting), and a description of corrective actions to be taken regarding any deficiencies in the quality of data submitted, if such deficiencies were identified. Spreadsheets showing the calculations used for data evaluation must also be submitted to the Executive Officer. The third-party may include any recommendations regarding future A/R ratio target values.~~

~~The third-party shall aggregate information from Members' Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Reports to characterize the input, uptake, and loss of nitrogen fertilizer applications by specific crops in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. The third-party's assessment of Nitrogen Management Plan information must include, at a minimum, comparisons of farms with the same crops, similar soil conditions, and similar practices (e.g., irrigation management). At a minimum, the statistical summary of nitrogen consumption ratios by crop or other equivalent reporting units and the estimated crop nitrogen needs for the different crop types and soil conditions will describe the range, percentiles (10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup>) and any outliers. A box and whisker plot or equivalent tabular or graphical presentation of the data approved by the Executive Officer may be used. The nitrogen consumption ratio is the ratio of total nitrogen available for crop uptake (from sources including, but not limited to, fertilizers, manures, composts, nitrates in irrigation supply water and soil) to the estimated crop consumption of nitrogen. The summary of nitrogen management data must include a quality assessment of the collected information by township (e.g. missing data, potentially incorrect/inaccurate reporting), and a description of corrective actions to be taken regarding any deficiencies in the quality of data submitted, if such deficiencies were identified. The third-party will also provide an aggregate of the data submitted by their Members in an electronic format, compatible with ArcGIS, identified to at least the township level.<sup>18</sup>~~

<sup>17</sup> ~~For some crops the information needed to determine nitrogen removed may not be readily available. This will be determined through N removed research and crop yield will serve as a placeholder until nitrogen removed data is made available.~~

<sup>18</sup> ~~The Member and their associated parcel need not be identified.~~

### **Report Component (18) – Summary of Management Practice Information**

The third-party ~~will~~shall aggregate and summarize information collected from Farm Evaluations.<sup>19</sup> The summary of management practice data must include a quality assessment of the collected information by township (e.g. missing data, potentially incorrect/inaccurate reporting), and a description of corrective actions to be taken regarding any deficiencies in the quality of data submitted, if such deficiencies were identified. ~~In addition to summarizing and aggregating the information collected, the third-party will provide the individual data records used to develop this summary in an electronic format, compatible with ArcGIS, identified to at least the township level.<sup>15</sup> For management practice information provided in Farm Evaluations by Members in their 1 May 2014 submittal to the third-party [per section VII.B.2. of the Waste Discharge Requirements], this Report Component must be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board as an addendum to the Monitoring Report by 1 July 2014.~~

### **Report Component (19) – GWP Target Summary Comparison**

For each township, the third-party shall compare the GWP Target for the township and the actual value achieved in the township based on the A and R reported in the INMP Summary Reports. The third-party shall also provide comparisons of the current year's results to those of the previous years to establish the cumulative trend for each township.

### **Report Component (~~19~~20) – Mitigation Monitoring**

As part of the Monitoring Report, the third-party shall report on the CEQA mitigation measures reported by Members to meet the provisions of the Order and any mitigation measures the third-party has implemented on behalf of Members. The third-party is not responsible for submitting information that Members do not send them directly by the 1 March deadline (see section VII.E of the Order for individual Discharger mitigation monitoring requirements). The Mitigation Monitoring Report shall include information on the implementation of CEQA mitigation measures (mitigation measures are described in Attachment C of the Order), including the measure implemented, identified potential impact the measure addressed, location of the mitigation measure (township, range, section), and any steps taken to monitor the ongoing success of the measure.

### **DE. Surface Water Exceedance Reports**

The third-party shall provide surface water exceedance reports if monitoring results show exceedances of adopted numeric water quality objectives or trigger limits, which are based on interpretations of narrative water quality objectives. For each surface water quality objective exceeded at a monitoring location, the third-party shall submit an Exceedance Report to the Central Valley Water Board. The estimated flow at the monitoring location and photographs of the site must be submitted in addition to the exceedance report but do not need to be submitted more than once. The third-party shall evaluate all of its monitoring data and determine exceedances no later than five (5) business days after receiving the laboratory analytical reports for an event. Upon determining an exceedance, the third-party shall send the Exceedance Report by email to the third-party's designated Central Valley Water Board staff contact by the next business day. The Exceedance Report shall describe the exceedance, the follow-up monitoring, and analysis or other actions the third-party may take to address the exceedance. Upon request, the third-party shall also notify the agricultural commissioner of the county in which the exceedance occurred and/or the director of the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

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<sup>19</sup> Note that the evaluation of the reported management practices information is discussed in Appendix MRP-1 and will be part of the annual Management Plan Progress Report.

*Surface water exceedances of pesticides or toxicity:* When any pesticide or toxicity exceedance is identified at a location that is not under an approved management plan for toxicity or pesticides, follow-up actions must include an investigation of pesticide use within the location's watershed area. For toxicity exceedances, the investigation must include all pesticides applied within the area that drains to the monitoring site during the four weeks immediately prior to the exceedance date. The pesticide use information may be acquired from the agricultural commissioner, or from information received from Members within the same drainage area. Results of the pesticide use investigation must be summarized and discussed in the Monitoring Report.

## VI. ~~Group Option~~ – **Templates – Third Party and Group Options**

The Order provides the option for the third-party to develop templates as an alternative to templates provided by the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer. This section describes the minimum requirements that must be met prior to approval of those templates.

Prior to Executive Officer approval of any template, the Central Valley Water Board will post the draft template on its website for a review and comment period. Stakeholder comments will be considered by Central Valley Water Board staff. Based on information provided by the third-party and after consideration of comments provided by other interested stakeholders, the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer will either: (1) approve the template; (2) conditionally approve the template or (3) disapprove the template. Review of the template and the associated action by the Executive Officer will be based on findings as to whether the template meets applicable requirements and contains all of the information required.

### A. **Farm Evaluation Template**

Should the third-party choose to develop ~~the a~~ Farm Evaluation Template per the Third-Party or Group Option outlined in section VIII.C.1 of the Order, the following provisions apply.

The third-party must develop a template or web-based information system to gather Farm Evaluation information from Members for each parcel enrolled. The goal of the template is to gather information on general site conditions and Member management practices in place to protect water quality. At a minimum, the template must be designed to collect the following information.

- Identification of the crops grown and acreage of each crop.
- Location of the farm.
- The number of drinking water supply wells associated with each enrolled APN.
- Identification of on-farm management practices, with the exception of irrigation methods and irrigation management practices and nitrogen management practices (which are to be reported on the INMP Summary Report) implemented to achieve the Order's farm management performance standards. Specifically track which management practices recommended in management plans have been implemented at the farm. On-farm management practices should include pest management application practices and sediment and erosion control practices.
- Identification of whether or not there is movement of soil during storm events and/or during irrigation drainage events (sediment and erosion risk areas) and a description of where this occurs.
- Identification of whether or not water leaves the property and is conveyed downstream and a description of where this occurs.
- Identification of whether or not one or more of the fields managed by the Member are in an area requiring a SQMP or GQMP.

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- Location of in-service wells and abandoned wells. Identification of whether wellhead protection and backflow prevention practices have been implemented.

As part of its submittal for approval, the third-party must identify the entities that participated in the development of ~~the~~ any proposed Farm Evaluation Template.

**B. Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan (INMP) and INMP Summary Report Templates**

Should the third-party choose to develop ~~the a~~ Nitrogen Management Plan Template per the Third-Party or Group Option outlined in section VIII.C.2 of the Order, the following provisions apply.

The third-party shall develop a template or web-based information system to gather Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan and Summary Report information from Members for each parcel enrolled. The goal of the template is to gather information needed to calculate the A/R ratio. At a minimum, the INMP template must be designed to collect the following information:

1. Crop year
2. Owner/Manager name
3. Whether Member was identified as an outlier for AR data in previous year
4. Irrigation management practices implemented
5. Nitrogen management practices implemented to minimize leaching past the root zone
6. Assessor Parcel Number (APN)
7. Field identification number
8. Acreage
9. Residual nitrogen in soil
10. Crop type
11. Crop production units
12. Crop age (permanent crops)
13. Total acreage
14. Irrigation method
15. Crop evapotranspiration (estimated)
16. Anticipated crop irrigation
17. Irrigation water nitrogen concentration
18. Projected yield (if appropriate to crop type)
19. Nitrogen recommended
20. Nitrogen applied in irrigation water
21. Applied fertilizers (products with guaranteed nutrient content)
22. Applied organic soil amendments (compost and manure where nutrient content is not guaranteed)

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23. Total nitrogen applied

24. Primary and secondary crop harvest yield

25. Plan certification information

The Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan template must be developed by the third-party in consultation with the Central Valley Water Board, and as appropriate, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the University of California Extension, and the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS). In developing the template, the third-party should consider, to the extent appropriate, the major criteria established in Code 590 of the NRCS Nutrient Management document, including soil and plant tissue testing, nitrogen application rates, nitrogen application timing, consideration of organic nitrogen fertilizer, consideration of irrigation water nitrogen levels.

**INMP Component (1) – Crop Year**

The crop year shall be reported for the calendar year in which the crop is harvested.<sup>20</sup>

**INMP Component (2) – Owner/Manager Name**

The owner/manager name shall be reported as the name of the individual completing the INMP form. This may be the individual that owns or manages the farm, or the individual certifying the INMP.

**INMP Component (3) – Outlier Status**

Whether the Member was notified by the third-party that it was an outlier for AR data the prior year shall be indicated

**INMP Component (4) – Irrigation Management Practices Implemented**

Irrigation management practices implemented in the prior year shall be reported for each field/management unit

**INMP Component (5) – Nitrogen Management Practices Implemented**

Nitrogen management practices implemented in the prior year to minimize discharge of nitrogen past the root zone shall be reported for each field/management unit

**INMP Component (6) – Assessor Parcel Number (APN)**

The Assessor Parcel Number (APN) shall be reported for each field /management unit.

**INMP Component (7) – Field Identification Number**

The field identification number shall be reported for each field/management unit and corresponding APN.

**INMP Component (8) – Acreage**

The acreage shall be reported for each field identified by APN and field identification number.

**INMP Component (9) – Residual Nitrogen in Soil**

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<sup>20</sup> Some crops such as winter cereal grains and some citrus should report information based on the calendar year that the crop is harvested, even if fertilization occurs in the previous calendar year; all nitrogen application information should be provided for the crop harvest year, which may or may not be the same calendar year.

The residual nitrogen in soil shall be reported as nitrogen available to the crop during the growing season. This is estimated by analyzing soil samples.

#### **INMP Component (10) – Crop Type**

The crop type shall be reported as the name of the harvested crop (i.e. almonds, walnuts, table grapes, wine grapes, raisin grapes, canning tomatoes, fresh market tomatoes, etc.)

#### **INMP Component (11) – Crop Production Units**

The crop production units shall be reported as the standard production units for the reported crop (tons, pounds, bushels, bales, etc.).

#### **INMP Component (12) – Crop Age (permanent crops)**

The crop age shall be reported for any permanent crop, including orchards and vineyards, and measured in years.

#### **INMP Component (13) – Total Acreage**

The total acreage is the sum of the acreage for each field/management unit reported on the INMP.

#### **INMP Component (14) – Irrigation Method**

The irrigation method that is used the most for crop irrigation during the growing season (drip, furrow, sprinkler, flood, etc.) shall be the method reported. For example, a grower that uses sprinkler irrigation to germinate a crop from seeds and then converts to drip irrigation for the remainder of the season would report drip irrigation as the irrigation method.

#### **INMP Component (15) – Crop Evapotranspiration**

The crop evapotranspiration shall be reported as the total crop-specific evapotranspiration for the reported crop during the applicable growing period. This may be estimated using reference evapotranspiration multiplied by an appropriate crop coefficient. Alternatively, the third-party may provide crop appropriate average evapotranspiration values for use by their members.

#### **INMP Component (16) – Anticipated Crop Irrigation**

The anticipated crop irrigation can be estimated using the crop evapotranspiration, subtracting the anticipated rainfall and adjusting accordingly for distribution uniformity and leaching requirement for salinity. A simplified way to adjust for these is to divide by 0.85 such that:

$$\text{Anticipated Crop Irrigation (in)} = \frac{\text{ET}_c - \text{rainfall}}{0.85}$$

#### **INMP Component (17) – Irrigation Water Nitrogen Concentration**

The irrigation water nitrogen concentration shall be reported as parts per million (ppm) of all available forms of nitrogen. The concentration is estimated by analyzing an irrigation water sample to determine the available nitrogen content.

#### **INMP Component (18) – Projected Yield**

The projected yield should be reported as the projected yield per acre for the field(s)/management unit(s) for the upcoming season. The projected yield expectations will guide nitrogen management decisions.

#### **INMP Component (19) – Nitrogen Recommended**

The nitrogen recommended shall be reported as the estimated amount of available nitrogen needed to meet the projected yield. Crop recommendations from CDFA, UCCE, NRCS, commodity groups,

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or site-specific knowledge based on previous experience are appropriate for estimating the amount of nitrogen needed.

#### **INMP Component (20) – Nitrogen Applied in Irrigation Water**

The nitrogen applied in irrigation water shall be reported, in pounds per acre, as the estimated amount of nitrogen applied via irrigation water application. This estimate may be based on the anticipated/actual crop irrigation and the irrigation water nitrogen concentration. This estimate should be reported as nitrogen available throughout the crop season based on the amount of irrigation water applied to the crop. For a crop with an irrigation water nitrate concentration in ppm (or mg/L) and a crop irrigation in inches, the multiplier to determine nitrogen applied in irrigation water is 0.052 lbs-N/acre-inch for nitrate measured as nitrate, and 0.226 lbs-N/acre-inch for nitrate measured as nitrogen. (e.g. A crop with 48 inches of applied water with a concentration of 5 ppm nitrate measured as nitrate would apply 5 ppm x 48 inches x 0.052 lbs-N/acre-inch, or 12.5 lbs-N/acre)

#### **INMP Component (21) – Applied Fertilizers**

The applied fertilizers are categorized as dry fertilizer, liquid fertilizer, organic fertilizer, foliar fertilizer, and any other type of fertilizer that has a guaranteed nutrient content, and shall be reported as the amount of the nitrogen portion of all applied synthetic fertilizers in pounds per acre.

#### **INMP Component (22) – Applied Organic Soil Amendments (Compost and Manure where nutrient content is not guaranteed)**

The applied organic soil amendments include compost and manure and should be reported as the amount of nitrogen available to the plant during the growing period in pounds per acre. Available nitrogen may be measured by testing the applied compost or manure materials or estimated using reference materials that are available for estimating nitrogen content. Caution should be exercised with land application of uncomposted materials, including uncomposted green waste, and other organic amendments containing a high carbon to nitrogen (C:N) ratio due to the potential for significant nitrogen sequestration. This sequestered nitrogen has the potential for bulk rapid release in a very short period of time. If the crop is not prepared to take up this rapid release, there is risk for nitrogen loss to the system.

#### **INMP Component (23) – Total Nitrogen Applied**

The total nitrogen applied shall be reported as the sum of the total nitrogen applied in irrigation water, synthetic fertilizers and organic soil amendments.

#### **INMP Component (24) – Primary and Secondary Crop Harvest Yield**

The crop harvest yield shall be reported for primary harvest and any secondary crop harvests. The harvest shall be reported in crop production units per acre (i.e. lbs/acre of almonds) and shall include all harvested materials removed from the field, including secondary harvests of rice straw or orchard prunings.

#### **INMP Component (25) – Nitrogen Sequestered in Wood of Perennial Crops**

The nitrogen sequestered in wood accounts for the storage of nitrogen in the woody growth of perennial crops such as almonds, peaches, pistachios, etc. The amount of nitrogen sequestered may vary depending on the age of the crop. This sequestered nitrogen shall be included in the nitrogen removed component of the A/R ratio. The third-party shall determine, through testing and research, or the review of existing research, the most appropriate values for annual nitrogen sequestration for those perennial crops that cover 95% of the acreage in perennial crops for use in the INMP Summary Reports due 1 March 2019.

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**INMP Component (26) – Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Certification Information**

The INMP certification information shall include the name of the plan certifier, the date of plan certification, and certification method used. Appropriate certification methods include certification as an INMP specialist,<sup>21</sup> self-certification via an approved training program, or self-certification by means of following site-specific recommendations provided by UCANR or NRCS.

The INMP certification shall include the following statement:

The person signing this Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan (INMP) certifies, under penalty of law, that the INMP was prepared under his/her direction and supervision, that the information and data reported is to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, true, accurate, and complete, and that he/she is aware that there are penalties for knowingly submitting false information. Where the person signing the INMP is not the Member,\* he/she may rely on the information and data provided by the Member and is not required to independently verify the information and data.

The person signing the INMP below further certifies that he/she used sound irrigation and nitrogen management planning practices to develop irrigation and nitrogen application recommendations and that the recommendations are informed by applicable training for meeting the crop's agronomic needs while minimizing nitrogen loss to surface water and groundwater. Where the person signing the INMP is not the Member, he/she is not responsible for any damages, loss, or liability arising from subsequent implementation of the INMP by the Member in a manner that is inconsistent with the INMP's recommendations for nitrogen application. This certification does not create any liability for claims for environmental violations.

Certification:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, certify this INMP in accordance with the statement above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

If the certifier is not the Member, the Member additionally agrees as follows:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, Member, have provided information and data to the certifier above that is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, accurate, and complete, that I understand that the certifier may rely on the information and data provided by me and is not required to independently verify the information and data, and that I further understand that the certifier is not responsible for any damages, loss, or liability arising from subsequent implementation of the INMP by me in a manner that is inconsistent with the INMP's recommendations for nitrogen application. I further understand that the certification does not create any liability for claims for environmental violations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\*The Member is the owner or operator of irrigated lands within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that is a member of the third-party group implementing this Order.

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<sup>21</sup> Described in section VII.D of the Order.

In addition to the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Template, the third-party must provide a template for the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report.

Select data from the INMP template will be used to complete the INMP Summary Report. Data collected from the INMP Summary Report will be reported annually to the third-party and the Central Valley Water Board. At a minimum, the INMP Summary Report template must collect the following information:

1. Crop Year
2. Owner/Manager name
3. Assessor Parcel Number (APN)
4. Field identifier
5. Acreage for each field identified
6. Acknowledgement of receipt of outlier notification
7. Crop type
8. Crop age (permanent crops)
9. Irrigation method
10. Irrigation management practices implemented
11. Nitrogen management practices implemented
12. Total Acreage
13. Nitrogen Applied (lbs/acre)
  - a. Irrigation Water
  - b. Synthetic Fertilizers
  - c. Organic Amendments
14. Crop Yield (units specified by third-party)
15. Certification method

~~The Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report Template must provide for reporting of the nitrogen consumption ratio for each crop grown for each parcel enrolled by the Member (this MRP requires reporting of this information to the board by township, Member/parcel need not be specified).~~

~~The Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report must also gather information required in the Monitoring Report and information needed for the Management Practices Evaluation Program.<sup>22</sup>~~

As part of its submittal for approval, the third-party must identify the entities that participated in the development of the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan Template.

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<sup>22</sup> ~~The Monitoring Report and MPEP will be developed by the third-party. This template is the mechanism by which the third-party will gather the information necessary to develop the Monitoring Report and conduct the MPEP. As such, this template will be a tool to facilitate Member reporting for third-party studies, analysis, and summary reporting to the board. Unless requested by the Executive Officer, Member completed templates will not be submitted directly to the board.~~

### **C. Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template**

Should the third-party choose to develop the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template per the Group Option outlined in section VIII.C of the Order, the following provisions apply.

The third-party will create a template to assist Members that must prepare a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan. The goal of the template shall be to assist Members in achieving the farm management performance standards of the Order, which include the requirement to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels. At a minimum, the template must be designed to facilitate Member consideration of the following.

- Identification of locations subject to erosion or locations subject to frequent water flow events that may mobilize sediment (sediment and erosion risk areas). Locations to be evaluated include the fields, roads or stream crossings within the enrolled parcel, and discharge points from the field.
- Identification of practices implemented at sediment and erosion risk areas to minimize or eliminate the discharge of sediment above background levels.

As part of its submittal for approval, the third-party must identify the entities that participated in the development of the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan Template.

## **VII. Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report**

The third-party shall prepare a Sediment Discharge and Erosion Assessment Report. The report shall be submitted to the Executive Officer for review. The goal of the report is to determine which irrigated agricultural areas within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed are subject to erosion and may discharge sediment that may degrade surface waters. The objective of the report is to determine which Member operations are within such areas, and need to develop a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan. The report must be developed to achieve the above goal and objective and must at a minimum, provide a description of the sediment and erosion areas as a series of ArcGIS shapefiles with a discussion of the methodologies utilized to develop the report.

## **VIII. Water Quality Triggers for Development of Management Plans**

This Order requires that Members comply with all adopted water quality objectives and established federal water quality criteria applicable to their discharges. The *Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins* (Basin Plan) contains numeric and narrative water quality objectives applicable to surface water and groundwater within the Order's watershed area. U.S. EPA's 1993 National Toxics Rule (NTR) and 2000 California Toxics Rule (CTR) contain water quality criteria which, when combined with Basin Plan beneficial use designations constitute numeric water quality standards. Table 5 of this MRP lists Basin Plan numeric water quality objectives and NTR/CTR criteria for constituents of concern that may be discharged by Members.

Table 5 does not include water quality criteria that may be used to interpret narrative water quality objectives, which shall be considered trigger limits. Trigger limits will be developed by the Central Valley Water Board staff through a process involving coordination with the Department of Pesticide Regulation (for pesticides) and stakeholder input. The trigger limits will be designed to implement narrative Basin Plan objectives and to protect applicable beneficial uses. The Executive Officer will make a final determination as to the appropriate trigger limits.

## **IX. Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)**

The third-party must develop and/or maintain a QAPP that includes watershed and site-specific information, project organization and responsibilities, and the quality assurance components in the QAPP Guidelines. Chemical, bacteriological, and bioassay analyses shall be conducted at a laboratory certified for such analyses by the California Department of Public Health (DPH), except where the DPH has not developed a certification program for the material to be analyzed.

The East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's existing QAPP was approved by the Executive Officer on 25 November 2008. The existing QAPP is acceptable for use by the third-party. Any necessary modifications to the QAPP for groundwater monitoring shall be submitted with the MPEP and groundwater trend monitoring workplans (section IV, MRP). Any proposed modifications to the approved QAPP must receive Executive Officer approval prior to implementation.

The Central Valley Water Board may conduct an audit of the third-party's contracted laboratories at any time in order to evaluate compliance with the most current version of the QAPP Guidelines. Quality control requirements are applicable to all of the constituents listed in the QAPP Guidelines, as well as any additional constituents that are analyzed or measured, as described in the appropriate method. Acceptable methods for laboratory and field procedures as well as quantification limits are described in the QAPP Guidelines.

Table 5. Basin Plan Numeric Water Quality Objectives for the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. \* Where more than one objective is applicable, the most stringent shall be applied.

Constituent / Parameter (Synonym)	Basin Plan Water Quality Objective	Source of Numeric Threshold (footnotes in parentheses are at bottom of table)	Numeric Threshold (a)	Units	G= Groundwater IS= Inland Surface Water	Numeric Threshold Protects Designated Beneficial Use(s) in the Water Body:							
						Groundwater			Inland Surface Waters				CAS Number
						MUN- MCL	MUN- Toxicity	AGR	MUN- MCL	MUN- Toxicity	Aquatic Life & Consump	AGR	
Boron, total	Chemical Constituents	Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (15 Mar – 15 Sep)	2,000	ug/L	IS							X	7440-42-8
		Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (15 Mar – 15 Sep)	800 (b)	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (16 Sep – 14 Mar)	2,600	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (16 Sep – 14 Mar)	1,000 (b)	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (critical year) (c)	1,300 (b)	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR from Sack Dam to mouth of Merced River	5,800	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR from Sack Dam to mouth of Merced River	2,000 (b)	ug/L	IS							X	
Chlorpyrifos	Pesticides	Basin Plan. SJR from Mendota Dam to Vernalis; 1-hour average	0.025	ug/L	IS						X		2921-88-2
		Basin Plan. SJR from Mendota Dam to Vernalis; 4-day average	0.015	ug/L	IS						X		
Coliform, fecal	Bacteria	Basin Plan (d) (e)	200/100	MPN/mL	IS				X				--
		Basin Plan (d) (f)	400/100	MPN/mL	IS				X				
Coliform, total	Bacteria	Basin Plan	2.2/100	MPN/mL	G	X							--
Conductivity at 25 C (Electrical conductivity)	Salinity	Basin Plan. SJR, Friant Dam to Mendota Pool	150	umhos/cm	IS								--
		California Secondary MCL	900-1600	umhos/cm	G & IS	X	X		X	X			
Copper	Chemical Constituents	California Secondary MCL (total copper)	1,000	ug/L	G & IS	X			X	X			7440-50-8
	Toxicity	California Toxics Rule (USEPA), (g) (dissolved copper)	variable	ug/L	IS						X		
Diazinon	Pesticides	Basin Plan. SJR from Mendota Dam to Vernalis; 1-hour average	0.16	ug/L	IS						X		50-29-3
		Basin Plan. SJR from Mendota Dam to Vernalis; 4-day average	0.10	ug/L	IS						X		
Dissolved Oxygen, minimum	Dissolved Oxygen	Basin Plan. Merced R from Cressy to New Exchequer Dam, all year	8.0	mg/L	IS						X		7782-44-7
		Basin Plan. Tuolumne R, Waterford to La Grange, 15 Oct – 15 Jun	8.0	mg/L	IS						X		
		Basin Plan. Waters designated WARM	5.0	mg/L	IS						X		
		Basin Plan. Waters designated COLD and/or SPWN	7.0	mg/L	IS						X		
Lead	Chemical Constituents	California Primary MCL (total lead)	15	ug/L	G & IS	X			X				7439-92-1
	Toxicity	California Toxics Rule (USEPA) (g) (dissolved lead)	variable	ug/L	IS						X		

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Constituent / Parameter (Synonym)	Basin Plan Water Quality Objective	Source of Numeric Threshold (footnotes in parentheses are at bottom of table)	Numeric Threshold (a)	Units	G= Groundwater IS= Inland Surface Water	Numeric Threshold Protects Designated Beneficial Use(s) in the Water Body:							
						Groundwater			Inland Surface Waters				CAS Number
						MUN- MCL	MUN- Toxicity	AGR	MUN- MCL	MUN- Toxicity	Aquatic Life & Consump	AGR	
Molybdenum, total	Chemical Constituents	Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis	15	ug/L	IS							X	7439-98-7
		Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (monthly mean)	10	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR, Sack Dam to mouth of Merced R	50	ug/L	IS							X	
		Basin Plan. SJR, Sack Dam to mouth of Merced R (monthly mean)	19	ug/L	IS							X	
Nitrate (as nitrogen)	Chemical Constituents	California Primary MCL	10	mg/L	G & IS	X	X		X	X			14797-55-8
Nitrite (as nitrogen)	Chemical Constituents	California Primary MCL	1	mg/L	G & IS	X	X		X	X			14797-65-0
Nitrate+Nitrite (as nitrogen)	Chemical Constituents	California Primary MCL	10	mg/L	G & IS	X	X		X	X			--
pH – minimum	pH	Basin Plan	6.5	units	G & IS	X	X		X	X			--
pH – maximum			8.5	units	G & IS	X	X		X	X			
Selenium, total	Chemical Constituents	Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis	12	ug/L									7782-49-2
		Basin Plan. SJR, mouth of Merced R to Vernalis (4-day mean)	5	ug/L									
		Basin Plan. SJR, Sack Dam to mouth of Merced R	20	ug/L									
		Basin Plan. SJR, Sack Dam to mouth of Merced R (4-day mean)	5	ug/L									
		California Primary MCL	50	ug/L	G & IS	X			X				
	Toxicity	National Toxics Rule (USEPA), 4-day mean	5	ug/L	IS						X		
Simazine	Chemical Constituents	California Primary MCL	4	ug/L	G & IS	X	X		X	X			122-34-9
Temperature	Temperature	Basin Plan ( h )	variable		IS								
Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)	Chemical Constituents	California Secondary MCL, recommended level	500 – 1,000	mg/L	G & IS	X	X		X	X			--
Turbidity	Turbidity	Basin Plan. Where natural turbidity is <1 NTU	2	NTU	IS								
		Where natural turbidity is between 1 and 5 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 1 NTU.	variable; 2-6	NTU	IS								
		Where natural turbidity is between 5 and 50 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 20%.	variable; 6 - 70	NTU	IS								

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Constituent / Parameter (Synonym)	Basin Plan Water Quality Objective	Source of Numeric Threshold (footnotes in parentheses are at bottom of table)	Numeric Threshold (a)	Units	G= Groundwater IS= Inland Surface Water	Numeric Threshold Protects Designated Beneficial Use(s) in the Water Body:							
						Groundwater			Inland Surface Waters				CAS Number
						MUN- MCL	MUN- Toxicity	AGR	MUN- MCL	MUN- Toxicity	Aquatic Life & Consump	AGR	
		Where natural turbidity is between 50 and 100 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 10 NTUs.	variable; 60-110	NTU	IS								
		Where natural turbidity is greater than 100 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 10%.	variable	NTU	IS								
Zinc	Chemical Constituents	California Secondary MCL (total zinc)	5,000	ug/L	G & IS	X			X				7440-66-6
Zinc	Toxicity	California Toxics Rule (USEPA) (g) (dissolved zinc)	variable	ug/L	IS						X		

Footnotes to Table 8:

a	Numeric thresholds are maximum levels unless noted otherwise.
b	Monthly mean.
c	See Basin Plan for definition of Critical Year.
d	Applies in waters designated for contact recreation (REC-1).
e	Geometric mean of the fecal coliform concentration based on a minimum of not less than five samples for any 30-day period shall not exceed this number.
f	No more than ten percent of the total number of samples taken during any 30-day period shall exceed this number.
g	These numeric thresholds are hardness dependent. As hardness increases, water quality objectives generally increase.
h	The natural receiving water temperature shall not be altered unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Water Board that such alteration does not adversely affect beneficial uses. However, at no time shall the temperature of WARM and COLD waters be increased more than 5 degrees F above natural receiving water temperature.
Abbreviations:	
CAS	Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Number
fw	freshwater
MCL	maximum contaminant limit
MUN	municipal and domestic supply
Beneficial Uses:	
AGR – Agricultural water uses, including irrigation supply and stock watering	

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Aquatic Life & Consump – Aquatic life and consumption of aquatic resources
MUN-MCL – Municipal or domestic supply with default selection of drinking water MCL when available
MUN-Toxicity – Municipal or domestic supply with consideration of human toxicity thresholds that are more stringent than drinking water MCLs

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# **Monitoring and Reporting Program R5-2012-0116-R~~4~~3**

## **Appendix MRP-1**

### **Management Plan Requirements**

### **Surface Water and Groundwater**

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**Appendix A to State Water Resources Control Board Order WQ 2018-0002**

## **MRP - 1: Management Plan Requirements for Surface Water and Groundwater**

### **I. Management Plan Development and Required Components**

This appendix describes requirements for the development of water quality management plans under Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group, Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ (hereafter "Order"). When a management plan has been triggered, the third-party shall ascertain whether or not irrigated agriculture is known to cause or contribute to the "water quality problem" (as defined in Attachment E). If the potential source(s) of the water quality exceedance(s) is unknown, the third-party may propose studies to be conducted to determine the cause, or to eliminate irrigated agriculture as a potential source (see Source Identification Study Requirements in section I.G. below).

When a Surface Water or Groundwater Quality Management Plan (SQMP/GQMP) has been triggered, the management plan shall contain the required elements presented and discussed in the following sections. The third-party may develop one SQMP or GQMP to cover all areas where plans have been triggered rather than developing separate management plans for each management area where plans have been triggered. The third-party would maintain the overarching plan as new information is collected, potentially triggering additional management areas and completion of other management areas.

If multiple constituents of concern (COCs) are to be included in a single management plan, a discussion of the prioritization process and proposed schedule shall be included in the plan. Prioritization schedules must be consistent with requirements described in section XII of the Order, Time Schedule for Compliance.

If a number of management plans are triggered, the third-party shall submit a SQMP/GQMP prioritization list to the Central Valley Water Board Executive Officer. This list may prioritize the order of SQMP/GQMP development based on, for example, 1) the potential to harm public health; 2) the beneficial use affected; and/or 3) the likelihood of meeting water quality objectives by implementing management practices. Prioritization schedules shall be consistent with requirements described in section XII of this Order, Time Schedule for Compliance. The third-party may continue to utilize the surface water quality prioritization process described in the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's Management Plan Strategy,<sup>1</sup> as approved by the Executive Officer. The Executive Officer may approve or require changes be made to the SQMP/GQMP priority list. The third-party shall implement the prioritization schedule approved by the Executive Officer.

### **A. Introduction and Background Section**

The introduction portion of the management plan shall include a discussion of the COCs that are the subject of the plan and the water quality objective(s) or trigger(s) requiring preparation of the management plan. The introduction shall also include an identification (both narrative and in map form) of the boundaries (geographic and surface water/ groundwater basin[s] or portion of a basin) to be covered by the management plan including how the boundaries were delineated.

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<sup>1</sup> The East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition Management Plan, with Addendum, was submitted on 24 November 2008 and approved by the Executive Officer on 25 November 2008. References to this Management Plan include the original 24 November 2008 submittal and subsequent changes and updates approved by the Executive Officer.

**For groundwater**, previous work conducted to identify the occurrence of the COCs (e.g., studies, monitoring conducted) should be summarized for the GQMP area.

## **B. Physical Setting and Information**

### **1. General Requirements**

The management plan needs to provide a discussion of the physical conditions that affect surface water (for a SQMP) or groundwater (for a GQMP) in the management plan area and the associated existing data. At a minimum, the discussion needs to include the following:

- a. Land use maps which identify the crops being grown in the SQMP watershed or GQMP area. For groundwater, these maps may already be presented in the Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR) and may be referenced and/or updated as appropriate. Map(s) must be in electronic format using standard Arc-geographic information system (ArcGIS shapefiles).
- b. Identification of the potential irrigated agricultural sources of the COC(s) for which the management plan is being developed. If the potential sources are not known, a study may be designed and implemented to determine the source(s) or to eliminate irrigated lands as a potential source. Requirements for source identification studies are given in section I.G below. In the alternative, instead of conducting a source identification study, the third-party may develop a management plan for the COC(s) that meets the management plan requirements as specified in this appendix.
- c. A list of the designated beneficial uses as identified in the applicable Basin Plan.
- d. A baseline inventory of identified existing management practices in use within the management plan area that could be affecting the concentrations of the COCs in surface water and/or groundwater (as applicable) and locations of the various practices.
- e. A summary, discussion, and compilation of available surface water and/or groundwater quality data (as applicable) for the parameters addressed by the management plan. Available data from existing water quality programs may be used, including but not limited to: Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), California State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Groundwater Ambient Monitoring Assessment (GAMA) Program, United States Geological Survey (USGS), California Department of Public Health (DPH), California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and local groundwater management programs. The GAR developed for the third-party's geographic area, and groundwater quality data compiled in that document, may serve as a reference for these data.

### **2. Surface Water – Additional Requirements**

The SQMP shall also include a description of the watershed areas and associated COC being addressed by the plan. For a water body that is representative of other water bodies, those areas being represented must also be identified in the SQMP.

### **3. Groundwater – Additional Requirements**

The GQMP shall include:

- a. Soil types and other relevant soils data as described by the appropriate Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey or other applicable studies. The soil unit descriptions and a map of their areal extent within the study area must be included. The GAR

developed for the third-party's geographic area, and the soils mapping contained in that document, may satisfy this requirement.

- b. A description of the geology and hydrogeology for the area covered by the GQMP. The description shall include:
  - i. Regional and area specific geology, including stratigraphy and existing published geologic cross-sections.
  - ii. Groundwater basin(s) and sub-basins contained within the GQMP area, including a discussion of their general water chemistry as known from existing publications, including the GAR (range of electrical conductivity [conductivity at 25 C, EC], concentrations of major anions and cations, nutrients, total dissolved solids [TDS], pH, dissolved oxygen and hardness). The discussion should reference and provide figures of existing Piper (tri-linear) diagrams, Stiff diagrams and/or Durov Diagrams for the GQMP area (see definitions contained in Attachment E of the Order).
  - iii. Known water bearing zones, areas of shallow and/or perched groundwater, as well as areas of discharge and recharge to the basin/sub-basin in the GQMP area (rivers, unlined canals, lakes, and recharge or percolation basins).
  - iv. Identification of which water bearing zones within the GQMP area are being utilized for domestic, irrigation, and municipal water production.
  - v. Aquifer characteristics such as depth to groundwater, groundwater flow direction, hydraulic gradient, and hydraulic conductivity, as known or estimated based on existing information (see definitions contained in Attachment E of the Order).
- c. Identification, where possible, of irrigation water sources (surface water origin and/or groundwater) and their available general water chemistry (range of EC, concentrations of major anions and cations, nutrients, TDS, pH, dissolved oxygen and hardness).

### **C. Management Plan Strategy**

This section provides a discussion of the strategy to be used in the implementation of the management plan and should at a minimum, include the following elements:

1. A description of the approach to be utilized by the management plan (e.g., multiple COC's addressed in a scheduled priority fashion, multiple areas covered by the plan with a single area chosen for initial study, or all areas addressed simultaneously [area wide]). Any prioritization included in the management plan must be consistent with the requirements in section XII of the Order, Time Schedule for Compliance.
2. The plan must include actions to meet the following goals and objectives:
  - a. Compliance with the Order's receiving water limitations (section III of the Order).
  - b. Educate Members about the sources of the water quality exceedances in order to promote prevention, protection, and remediation efforts that can maintain and improve water quality.
  - c. Identify, validate, and implement management practices to reduce loading of COC's to surface water or groundwater, as applicable, thereby improving water quality.
3. Identify the duties and responsibilities of the individuals or groups implementing the management plan. This section should include:

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- a. Identification of key individuals involved in major aspects of the project (e.g., project lead, data manager, sample collection lead, lead for stakeholder involvement, quality assurance manager).
- b. Discussion of each individual's responsibilities.
- c. An organizational chart with identified lines of authority.
4. Strategies to implement the management plan tasks.
  - a. Identify the entities or agencies that will be contacted to obtain data and assistance.
  - b. Identify management practices used to control sources of COCs from irrigated lands that are 1) technically feasible; 2) economically feasible; 3) proven to be effective at protecting water quality, and 4) will comply with sections III.A and B of the Order. Practices that growers will implement must be discussed, along with an estimate of their effectiveness or any known limitations on the effectiveness of the chosen practice(s); ineffective practices should also be discussed. Practices identified may include those that are required by local, state, or federal law. Where an identified constituent of concern is a pesticide that is subject to DPR's Groundwater Protection Program, the GQMP may refer to DPR's regulatory program for that pesticide and any requirements associated with the use of that pesticide provided that the requirement(s) are sufficient to meet water quality objectives.
  - c. Identify outreach that will be used to disseminate information to participating growers. This discussion shall include: the strategy for informing growers of the water quality problems that need to be addressed, method for disseminating information on relevant management practices to be implemented, and a description of how the effectiveness of the outreach efforts will be evaluated. The third-party may conduct outreach efforts or work with the assistance of the County Agricultural Commissioners, U.C. Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation District, California Department of Food and Agriculture, or other appropriate groups or agencies.
  - d. A specific schedule and milestones for the implementation of management practices and tasks outlined in the management plan. Items to be included in the schedule include: time estimated to identify new management practices as necessary to meet the Order's surface and groundwater receiving water limitations (section III of the Order); a timetable for implementation of identified management practices (e.g., at least 25% of growers identified must implement management practices by year 1; at least 50% by year 2).
  - e. Establish measureable performance goals that are aligned with the elements of the management plan strategy. Performance goals include specific targets that identify the expected progress towards meeting a desired outcome. The performance goals shall include any developed GWP Targets.

## **D. Monitoring Methods**

### **1. General Requirements**

The monitoring system must be designed to measure effectiveness at achieving the goals and objectives of the SQMP or GQMP and capable of determining whether management practice changes made in response to the management plan are effective and can comply with the terms of the Order.

Management practice-specific or commodity-specific field studies may be used to approximate the contribution of irrigated lands operations. Where the third-party determines that field studies are appropriate or the Executive Officer requires a technical report under CWC 13267 for a field study,

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the third-party must identify a reasonable number and variety of field study sites that are representative of the particular management practice being evaluated.

## **2. Surface Water – Additional Requirements**

The strategy to be used in the development and implementation of the monitoring methods for surface water should address the general requirements and, at a minimum, include the following elements:

- a. The location(s) of the monitoring site and schedule (including frequencies) for monitoring should be chosen to be representative of the COC discharge to the watershed.
- b. Surface water monitoring data must be submitted electronically per the requirements given in section III.D of the MRP.

## **3. Groundwater – Additional Requirements**

The third-party's Management Practice Evaluation Program and Groundwater Quality Trend Monitoring shall be evaluated to determine whether additional monitoring is needed in conjunction with the proposed management strategy(ies) to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy(ies). This may include commodity-based representative monitoring that is conducted to determine the effectiveness of management practices implemented under the GQMP. Refer to section IV of the MRP for groundwater monitoring requirements.

## **E. Data Evaluation**

Methods to be used to evaluate the data generated by SQMP/GQMP monitoring and to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented management practices must be described. The discussion should include at a minimum, the following:

1. Methods to be utilized to perform data analysis (graphical, statistics, modeling, index computation, or some combination thereof).
2. Identify the information necessary to quantify program effectiveness going forward, including the tracking of management practice implementation, A/R<sub>3 year</sub> ratio results, and GWP Targets where appropriate. The approach for determining the effectiveness of the management practices implemented must be described and when appropriate related to changes in A/R<sub>3 year</sub> results. Acceptable approaches include field studies of management practices at representative sites and modeling or assessment to associate the degree of management practice implementation to changes in water quality. The process for tracking implementation of management practices and A/R<sub>3 year</sub> ratio results must also be described. The process must include a description of how the information from the Farm Evaluation, Management Practice Implementation Report (MPIR), and INMP Summary Report will be collected from growers, ~~the type of information being collected,~~ how the information will be verified, and how the information will be reported.

## **F. Records and Reporting**

By 1 May of each year, the third-party must prepare a Management Plan Progress Report that summarizes the progress in implementing management plans. The Management Plan Progress Report must summarize the progress for the hydrologic water year.<sup>2</sup> The Management Plan Progress Report shall include the following components:

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<sup>2</sup> A hydrologic water year is defined as 1 October through 30 September.

- (1) Title page
- (2) Table of contents
- (3) Executive Summary
- (4) Location map(s) and a brief summary of management plans covered by the report
- (5) Updated table that tallies all exceedances for the management plans
- (6) A list of new management plans triggered since the previous report
- (7) Status update on preparation of new management plans
- (8) A summary and assessment of management plan monitoring data collected during the reporting period including a list of management practices recommended
- (9) A summary of management plan grower outreach conducted
- (10) A summary of the degree of implementation of management practices by growers within the management plan area
- (11) Results from evaluation of management practice effectiveness including the A/R<sub>3 year</sub> ratio when evaluating a GQMP
- (12) An evaluation of progress in meeting performance goals and schedules
- (13) Any recommendations for changes to the management plan

Pursuant to Section VII.G of the Order, the third-party must additionally require submission of a Management Practice Implementation Report (MPIR) by members according to a schedule to be specified by the third-party for each SQMP or GQMP and approved by the Executive Officer.

#### **G. Source Identification Study Requirements**

Should the third-party conduct a Source Identification Study to comply with this Order, the third-party must first receive approval from the Executive Officer. Once approved, the third party may proceed with its study.

The minimum components for a source identification study are:

- (1) An evaluation of the types of practices, commodities, and locations that may be a source
- (2) Continued monitoring at the management plan site/area and increased monitoring if appropriate.
- (3) An assessment of the potential pathways through which waste discharges can occur.
- (4) A schedule for conducting the study.

Commodity specific and/or management practice specific field studies (including edge-of field studies) may be required to approximate the contribution of irrigated agriculture. At a minimum, the third-party must evaluate the feasibility of field studies as part of their source identification study proposal.

Where field studies are deemed appropriate, the third-party should identify a reasonable number and variety of field study sites that are representative of the particular commodity or management practice being evaluated. If field studies are not proposed, the third-party must demonstrate how the alternative source identification method will produce data or information that will enable the determination of contributions from irrigated agricultural operations to the water quality problem.

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If an approved study shows that irrigated lands are not a source, then the third-party can request the Executive Officer to approve completion of the associated management plan. Where irrigated lands are identified as a source, a full SQMP/GQMP shall be prepared and implemented.

## **II. Approval and Review of the Management Plan**

The following discussion describes the review and approval process for draft management plans submitted to the Executive Officer for approval. Any proposed changes to the management plan must be approved by the Executive Officer prior to implementation.

- a. Water quality management plan approval – Prior to Executive Officer approval of any management plan, the Central Valley Water Board will post the draft management plan on its website for a review and comment period. Stakeholder comments will be considered by Central Valley Water Board staff. Based on information provided by the third-party and after consideration of comments provided by other interested stakeholders, the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer will either: (1) approve the management plan; (2) conditionally approve the management plan or (3) disapprove the management plan. Review of the management plan and the associated action by the Executive Officer will be based on findings as to whether the plan meets program requirements and goals and contains all of the information required for a management plan.
- b. Periodic review of water quality management plans – At least once every five years, the Central Valley Water Board intends to review available data to determine whether the approved management plan is resulting in water quality improvements. Central Valley Water Board staff will meet with the third-party and other interested parties to evaluate the sufficiency of management plans. Based on input from all parties, the Executive Officer will determine whether and how the management plan should be updated based on new information and progress in achieving compliance with the Order's surface or groundwater receiving water limitations, as applicable (see section III of the Order). The Executive Officer also may require revision of the management plan based on available information indicating that irrigated agriculture waste discharges are not in compliance with surface or groundwater receiving water limitations (as applicable) of the Order. The Executive Officer may also require revision to the management plan if available information indicates that degradation of surface and/or groundwater calls for the inclusion of additional areas, constituents of concern(s), or improved management practices in the management plan. During this review, the Executive Officer will make one of the findings described below:
  1. Adequate progress – The Executive Officer will make a determination of adequate progress in implementing the plan if water quality improvement milestones and compliance time schedules have been met or the surface/groundwater receiving water limitations of the Order are met.
  2. Inadequate progress – The Executive Officer will make a determination of inadequate progress in implementing the plan if the Order's surface or groundwater receiving water limitations are not being met; and water quality improvement milestones and compliance time schedules in the approved management plan have not been met.

The actions taken by the Executive Officer upon a determination of inadequate progress include, but are not limited to one or more of the following for the area in which inadequate progress has been made:

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- Management practice field monitoring studies – The third-party may be required to develop and implement a field monitoring study plan to characterize the commodity-specific discharge of the constituent of concern and evaluate the pollutant reduction efficacy of specific management practices. Based on the study and evaluation, the Executive Officer may require the SQMP/GQMP to be revised to include additional practices to achieve compliance with the Order's surface and groundwater receiving water limitations.
- Independent, on-site verification of implementation of management practices and evaluation of their adequacy.
- Individual WDRs or waiver of WDRs – The board may revoke the third-party coverage for individual irrigated agricultural operations and require submittal of a report of waste discharge.

### **III. Management Plan Completion**

Management Plans can be completed in one of two ways. The first way a Management Plan can be completed is if an approved source study shows that irrigated agriculture is not causing or contributing to the water quality problem. The second way a Management Plan can be completed is if the improved management practices have resolved the water quality problem.

The goal of all management plans is to identify the source(s) of COCs, track the implementation of effective management practices, and ultimately ensure that irrigated agriculture waste discharges are meeting the surface and groundwater receiving water limitations of the Order. If an approved source study shows that irrigated agriculture is not a source, then the third-party can request the Executive Officer to approve completion of the associated management plan.

A request for approval of completion of a management plan due to improved management practices will require credible evidence that the water quality problem has been resolved. The Executive Officer will evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis. The following key components must be addressed in the request:

- a) Demonstration through evaluation of monitoring data that the water quality problem is no longer occurring (i.e., 3 or more years with no exceedances during the times of the year when previous exceedances occurred) or demonstrated compliance with the Order's surface and groundwater receiving water limitations.
- b) Documentation of third-party education and outreach to applicable Members in the watershed where water quality impairment occurred.
- c) Documentation of Member implementation of management practices that address the water quality exceedances.
- d) Demonstration that the management practices implemented by Members are effective in addressing the water quality problem.

Management plans may be completed for all or some of the constituents that prompted preparation of the management plan. When Executive Officer approval is given for completion of one or more management plan constituents, each constituent shall revert to regular, ongoing monitoring requirements (as described in the MRP). The third-party must also continue tracking on-going implementation of appropriate management practices by growers, which may be done through the Farm Evaluation process.

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Requests for management plan completion must summarize and discuss all information and data being used to justify completion. The third-party shall not discontinue any of the associated management plan requirements prior to Executive Officer approval of its completion request.

# **Monitoring and Reporting Program R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~**

## **Appendix MRP-2**

### **Monitoring Well Installation and Sampling Plan and Monitoring Well Installation Completion Report**

#### **I. Introduction**

The provisions of Appendix MRP-2 are set out pursuant to the Central Valley Water Board's authority under California Water Code (CWC) section 13267. The purpose and requirements of the Management Practice Evaluation Program (MPEP) are set forth in Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~.

Implementation of the MPEP requires that the third-party develop and submit a Monitoring Well Installation and Sampling Plan (MWISP) to the Executive Officer for approval prior to installation of monitoring wells. Stipulations and required elements of the MWISP are presented in section II below.

Upon completion of any monitoring well network, the third-party shall submit to the Central Valley Water Board a Monitoring Well Installation Completion Report (MWICR) which describes the field activities performed during that phase of the work. Required elements to be included in the MWICR are presented in section III below.

#### **II. Monitoring Well Installation and Sampling Plan**

Prior to installation of groundwater monitoring wells, an MWISP and schedule prepared by, or under the direct supervision of, and certified by, a California registered civil engineer or a California registered geologist with experience in hydrogeology shall be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board for Executive Officer approval. If the third-party has chosen to rank or prioritize its high vulnerability areas, the initial MWISP must present an overview and justification for the phased approach. Separate MWISPs showing the proposed monitoring well locations are required prior to implementation of each phase (alternatively, the third-party may prepare a master MWISP covering all of the proposed phases of well installation). Installation of monitoring wells shall not begin until the Executive Officer notifies the third-party in writing that the MWISP is acceptable. The MWISP or an MWISP for the initial phase if the third-party has chosen to employ a phased approach must be submitted within 180 days after Executive Officer approval of the Management Practices Evaluation Workplan (see section IV of Monitoring and Reporting Program Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~, "MRP").

##### **A. Stipulations**

1. All monitoring wells shall be constructed in a manner that maintains the integrity of the monitoring well borehole and prevents the well (including the annular space outside of the well casing) from acting as a conduit for waste/contaminant transport. Each monitoring well shall be appropriately designed and constructed to enable collection of representative samples of the first encountered groundwater.

2. Where applicable, the third-party shall follow state, county or local agency standards with respect to water wells and groundwater quality when constructing new wells, modifying existing wells, or destroying wells. Absent such standards, at a minimum, the third-party shall follow the standards and guidelines described in the California Department of Water Resources' *Water Well Standards (Bulletins 74-81 & 74-90 combined)*. More stringent practices shall be implemented if needed to prevent the well from acting as a conduit for the vertical migration of waste constituents.
3. The horizontal and vertical position of each monitoring well shall be determined by a registered land surveyor or other qualified professional. The horizontal position of each monitoring well shall be measured with one-foot lateral accuracy using the North American Datum 1983 (NAD83 datum). The vertical elevations of each monitoring well, at the point where depth to groundwater shall be measured to an absolute accuracy of at least 0.5 feet and a relative accuracy between monitoring wells of 0.01 feet referenced to the North American Vertical Datum 1988 (NAVD88 datum).
4. Once the groundwater monitoring network is installed pursuant to an approved MWISP, the third-party shall sample monitoring wells for the constituents and at the frequencies as specified in the approved MPEP. Groundwater monitoring shall include monitoring during periods of the expected highest and lowest annual water table levels and be of sufficient frequency to allow for evaluation of any seasonal variations.
5. Groundwater samples from monitoring wells shall be collected as specified in an approved MWISP and in accordance with the third-party's approved QAPP.

## **B. MWISP Required Elements**

At a minimum, the MWISP must contain all of the information listed below.

1. General Information:
  - a. Topographic map showing any existing nearby (about 2,000 feet) domestic, irrigation, municipal supply, and known monitoring wells, utilities, surface water bodies, drainage courses and their tributaries/destinations, and other major physical and man-made features, as reasonably known and appropriate.
  - b. Site plan showing proposed well locations, other existing wells, unused and/or abandoned wells, and major physical site structures (such as tailwater retention systems, tile-drainage systems including discharge points, chemigation and/or fertigation tanks, flood control features, irrigation canals, etc.).
  - c. Rationale for the number of proposed monitoring wells, their locations and depths, and identification of anticipated depth to groundwater. This information must include an explanation of how the location, number, and depths of wells proposed will result in the collection of data that can be used to assess groundwater at farms not directly monitored by the MPEP and under a variety of hydrogeologic conditions.
  - d. Local permitting information (as required for drilling, well seals, boring/well abandonment).



- e. Drilling details, including methods and types of equipment for drilling and soils logging activities. Equipment decontamination procedures (as appropriate) should be described.
  - f. Health and Safety Plan.
2. Proposed Drilling Details:
- a. Drilling techniques.
  - b. Well/soil sample collection and logging method(s).
3. Proposed Monitoring Well Design - all proposed well construction information must be displayed on a construction diagram or schematic. For items f. through i., the vertical location of all annular materials (filter pack, seals, etc.) shall be shown and a description of the material and its method of emplacement given. The construction diagram or schematic shall accurately identify the following:
- a. Well depth.
  - b. Borehole depth and diameter.
  - c. Well construction materials.
  - d. Casing material and diameter - include conductor casing, if appropriate.
  - e. Location and length of perforation interval, size of perforations, and rationale.
  - f. Location and thickness of filter pack, type and size of filter pack material, and rationale.
  - g. Location, thickness, and composition of any intermediate seal.
  - h. Location, thickness, and composition of annular seal.
  - i. Surface seal depth and composition.
  - j. Type of well cap(s).
  - k. Type of well surface completion.
  - l. Well protection devices (such as below-grade water-tight vaults, locking steel monument, bollards, etc.).
4. Proposed Monitoring Well Development:
- a. Schedule for development (not less than 48 hours or more than 10 days after well completion).
  - b. Method of development.
  - c. Method of determining when development is complete.

- d. Parameters to be monitored during development.
- 5. Proposed Surveying:
  - a. How horizontal and vertical position of each monitoring well will be determined.
  - b. The accuracy of horizontal and vertical measurements to be obtained.
- 6. Proposed Groundwater Monitoring: refer to Monitoring and Reporting Program Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ and QAPP Guidelines.

### **III. Monitoring Well Installation Completion Report (MWICR)**

Within 60 days after completion of any monitoring well network, the third-party shall submit to the Executive Officer a Monitoring Well Installation Completion Report (MWICR) prepared by, or under the direct supervision of, and certified by, a California registered civil engineer or a California registered geologist with experience in hydrogeology. In cases where monitoring wells are completed in phases or completion of the network is delayed for any reason, monitoring well construction data are to be submitted within 90 days of well completion, even if this requires submittal of multiple reports. At a minimum, the MWICR shall summarize the field activities as described below.

- 1. General Information:
  - a. Brief overview of field activities including well installation summary (such as number, depths), and description and resolution of difficulties encountered during field program.
  - b. A site plan depicting the positions of the newly installed monitoring wells, other existing wells, unused and/or abandoned wells, and major physical site structures (such as tailwater retention systems, tile-drainage systems including discharge points, chemigation and/or fertigation holding tanks, flood control features, irrigation canals, etc.).
  - c. Period of field activities and milestone events (e.g., distinguish between dates of well installation, development, and sampling).
- 2. Monitoring Well Construction:
  - a. Number and depths of monitoring wells installed.
  - b. Monitoring well identification (i.e., numbers).
  - c. Date(s) of drilling and well installation.
  - d. Description of monitoring well locations including field-implemented changes (from proposed locations) due to physical obstacles or safety hazards.
  - e. Description of drilling and construction, including equipment, methods, and difficulties encountered (such as hole collapse, lost circulation, need for fishing).

- f. Name of drilling company, driller, and logger (site geologist/engineer to be identified).
  - g. As-builts for each monitoring well with the following details:
    - i. Well identification.
    - ii. Total borehole and well depth.
    - iii. Date of installation.
    - iv. Boring diameter.
    - v. Casing material and diameter (include conductor casing, if appropriate).
    - vi. Location and thickness of slotted casing, perforation size.
    - vii. Location, thickness, type, and size of filter pack.
    - viii. Location, thickness, and composition of any intermediate seal.
    - ix. Location, thickness, and composition of annular seal.
    - x. Surface seal depth and composition.
    - xi. Type of well cap.
    - xii. Type of surface completion.
    - xiii. Depth to water (note any rises in water level from initial measurement) and date of measurement.
    - xiv. Well protection device (such as below-grade water-tight vaults, stovepipe, bollards, etc.).
    - xv. Lithologic log and electric log (if conducted) of well borings
    - xvi. Results of all soil tests (e.g., grain size, permeability, etc.)
  - h. All depth to groundwater measurements during field program.
  - i. Field notes from drilling and installation activities (e.g., subcontractor dailies, as appropriate).
  - j. Construction summary table of pertinent information such as date of installation, well depth, casing diameter, screen interval, bentonite seal interval, and well elevation.
3. Monitoring Well Development:
- a. Date(s) and time of development.

- b. Name of developer.
  - c. Method of development.
  - d. Methods used to identify completion of development.
  - e. Development log: volume of water purged and measurements of temperature, pH, electrical conductivity, and any other parameters measured during and after development.
  - f. Disposition of development water.
  - g. Field notes (such a bailing to dryness, recovery time, number of development cycles).
4. Monitoring Well Survey:
- a. Identify coordinate system or reference points used.
  - b. Description of measuring points (e.g., ground surface, top of casing, etc.).
  - c. Horizontal and vertical coordinates of well casing with cap removed (measuring point where water levels are measured to nearest  $\pm 0.01$  foot).
  - d. Name, license number, and signature of California licensed professional who conducted survey.
  - e. Surveyor's field notes.
  - f. Tabulated survey data.

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

**ATTACHMENT C TO ORDER R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~  
CEQA MITIGATION MEASURES**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER  
FOR  
GROWERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATERSHED  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

**A. Cultural Resources**

**1. Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources**

The measure described below will reduce the severity of impacts on significant cultural resources, as defined and described in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.3 of the PEIR.<sup>1</sup> Avoidance of such impacts also can be achieved when Members choose the least impactful management practices that will meet the quality improvement goals and objectives of Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group, Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ (hereafter referred to as the “Order”). Note that these mitigation measures may not be necessary in cases where no ground-disturbing activities would be undertaken as a result of implementation of the Order.

Although cultural resource inventories and evaluations typically are conducted prior to preparation of a CEQA document, the size of the Order’s coverage area and the lack of specificity regarding the location and type of management practices that would be implemented following adoption of the Order rendered conducting inventories prior to release of the draft Order untenable. Therefore, where the Order’s water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without modifying or disturbing an area of land or existing structure to a greater degree than through previously employed farming practices, individual farmers or third-party representatives will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels.

- Where construction within areas that may contain cultural resources cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of the potential for damage to cultural resources prior to construction; this may include the hiring of a qualified cultural resources specialist to determine the presence of significant cultural resources.
- Where the assessment indicates that damage may occur, submit a non-confidential records search request to the appropriate CHRIS information center(s).

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<sup>1</sup> ICF International. 2011. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Final Program Environmental Impact Report*. Final and Draft. March. (ICF 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for: Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento, CA

- Implement the recommendations provided by the CHRIS information center(s) in response to the records search request.
- Where adverse effects to cultural resources cannot be avoided, undertake additional CEQA review and develop appropriate mitigation to avoid or minimize the potential impact.

In addition, California state law provides for the protection of interred human remains from vandalism and destruction. According to the California Health and Safety Code, six or more human burials at one location constitute a cemetery (section 8100), and the disturbance of Native American cemeteries is a felony (section 7052). section 7050.5 requires that construction or excavation be stopped in the vicinity of the discovered human remains until the County Coroner has been notified, according to PRC section 5097.98, and can determine whether the remains are those of Native American origin. If the coroner determines that the remains are of Native American origin, the coroner must contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours (Health and Safety Code section 7050[c]). The NAHC will identify and notify the most likely descendant (MLD) of the interred individual(s), who will then make a recommendation for means of treating or removing, with appropriate dignity, the human remains and any associated grave goods as provided in PRC section 5097.98.

PRC section 5097.9 identifies the responsibilities of the project proponent upon notification of a discovery of Native American burial remains. The project proponent will work with the MLD (determined by the NAHC) and a professional archaeologist with specialized human osteological experience to develop and implement an appropriate treatment plan for avoidance and preservation of, or recovery and removal of, the remains.

Members implementing management practices should be aware of the following protocols for identifying cultural resources.

- If built environment resources or archaeological resources, including chipped stone (often obsidian, basalt, or chert), ground stone (often in the form of a bowl mortar or pestle), stone tools such as projectile points or scrapers, unusual amounts of shell or bone, historic debris (such as concentrations of cans or bottles), building foundations, or structures are inadvertently discovered during ground-disturbing activities, the land owner should stop work in the vicinity of the find and retain a qualified cultural resources specialist to assess the significance of the resources. If necessary, the cultural resource specialist also will develop appropriate treatment measures for the find.
- If human bone is found as a result of ground disturbance, the land owner should notify the County Coroner in accordance with the instructions described above. If Native American remains are identified and descendants are found, the descendants may—with the permission of the owner of the land or his or her authorized representative—inspect the site of the discovery of the Native American remains. The descendants may recommend to the owner or the person responsible for the excavation work means for treating or disposing of the human remains and any associated grave goods, with appropriate dignity. The descendants will make their recommendation within 48 hours of inspection of the remains. If the NAHC is unable to identify a descendant, if the descendants identified fail to make a recommendation, or if the landowner rejects the

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recommendation of the descendants, the landowner will inter the human remains and associated grave goods with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further and future subsurface disturbance.

## **B. Vegetation and Wildlife**

### **1. Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources**

Implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures would ensure that the construction activities related to implementation of management practices and installation of monitoring wells on irrigated lands would minimize effects on sensitive vegetation communities (such as riparian habitat and wetlands adjacent to the construction area) and special-status plants and wildlife species as defined and listed in section 5.7.3 of the PEIR. In each instance where particular management practices could result in impacts on the biological resources listed above, Members should use the least impactful effective management practice to avoid such impacts. Where the Order's water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without incurring potential impacts, individual farmers or third-party representatives will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels.

- Where detention basins are to be abandoned, retain the basin in its existing condition or ensure that sensitive biological resources are not present before modification.
- Where construction in areas that may contain sensitive biological resources cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of habitat conditions and the potential for presence of sensitive vegetation communities or special-status plant and animal species prior to construction. This may include the hiring of a qualified biologist to identify riparian and other sensitive vegetation communities and/or habitat for special-status plant and animal species.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance of riparian and other sensitive vegetation communities.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance to areas containing special-status plant or animal species.
- Where adverse effects on sensitive biological resources cannot be avoided, undertake additional CEQA review where appropriate and develop a restoration or compensation plan to mitigate the loss of the resources.

### **2. Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands**

Prior to implementing any management practice that will result in the permanent loss of wetlands, conduct a delineation of affected wetland areas to determine the acreage of loss in accordance with current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) methods. For compliance with the federal Clean Water Act section 404 permit and WDRs protecting state waters from unauthorized fill, compensate for the permanent loss (fill) of wetlands and ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. Compensation ratios will be determined through coordination with the Central Valley Water Board and USACE as part of the permitting process. Such process will include additional compliance with CEQA, as

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necessary. Compensation may be a combination of mitigation bank credits and restoration/creation of habitat, as described below:

- Purchase credits for the affected wetland type (e.g., perennial marsh, seasonal wetland) at a locally approved mitigation bank and provide written evidence to the resource agencies (USFWS, NMFS) that compensation has been established through the purchase of mitigation credits.
- Develop and ensure implementation of a wetland restoration plan that involves creating or enhancing the affected wetland type.

## **C. Fisheries**

### **1. Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat**

This mitigation measure incorporates all measures identified in Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources. In each instance where particular management practices could result in impacts to special-status fish species (see “Regulatory Classification of Special-Status Species” in section 5.8.2 of the PEIR), Members should use the least impactful effective management practice to avoid such impacts. Where the Order’s water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without incurring potential impacts, individual farmers or third-party representatives will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels. Note that these measures may not be necessary in many cases and are dependent on the location of construction in relation to water bodies containing special-status fish.

- Where construction in areas that may contain special-status fish species cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of habitat conditions and the potential for presence of special-status fish species prior to construction; this may include the hiring of a qualified fisheries biologist to determine the presence of special status fish species.
- Based on the species present in adjacent water bodies and the likely extent of construction work that may affect fish, limit construction to periods that avoid or minimize impacts to special-status fish species.
- Where construction periods cannot be altered to minimize or avoid effects on special-status fish, undertake additional CEQA review and develop a restoration or compensation plan to mitigate the loss of the resources.

### **2. Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-2: Educate Members on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control**

The third-party will provide information on the potential risks to aquatic life, including special-status fish, that may result from the use of cationic or neutral PAMs during water management activities. Information in the form of leaflets and website information will be provided to Member, encouraging the use of anionic PAMs. Application of anionic PAMs at prescribed rates will be emphasized in the information provided to Members. Adoption of the United States Department of Agriculture National Conservation Practice Standard 450 also will be recommended in the information.

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## **D. Agriculture Resources**

### **1. Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1: Assist the Agricultural Community in Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance that would Allow Members to Keep Important Farmland in Production.**

The third-party will assist the agricultural community in identifying sources of financial assistance from existing federal, state, or local programs that promote water conservation and water quality through improved management practices. Funding received from grants, cost-sharing, or low interest loans would offset some of the local Members' expenditures for compliance with and implementation of the Order, and likely would reduce the estimated losses in irrigated acreage. Potential funding sources for this mitigation measure are discussed below. The programs described below are illustrative and are not intended to constitute a comprehensive list of funding sources.

#### **Federal Farm Bill**

Title II of the 2008 Farm Bill (the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, in effect through 2012) authorizes funding for conservation programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program. Both of these programs provide financial and technical assistance for activities that improve water quality on agricultural lands.

#### **State Water Resources Control Board**

The Division of Financial Assistance administers water quality improvement programs for the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board). The programs provide grant and loan funding to reduce non-point-source pollution discharge to surface waters.

The Division of Financial Assistance currently administers two programs that improve water quality associated with agriculture—the Agricultural Drainage Management Loan Program and the Agricultural Drainage Loan Program. Both of these programs were implemented to address the management of agricultural drainage into surface water. The Agricultural Water Quality Grant Program provides funding to reduce or eliminate the discharge of non-point-source pollution from agricultural lands into surface water and groundwater. It currently is funded through bonds authorized by Proposition 84.

The State Water Board's Clean Water State Revolving Fund also has funding authorized through Proposition 84. It provides loan funds to a wide variety of point-source and non-point-source water quality control activities.

#### **Potential Funding Provided by the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2010**

This act was placed on the ballot by the Legislature as SBX 7-2 and was scheduled for voter approval in November 2010. In August of 2010, the Legislature removed this issue from the 2010 ballot and intends to re-introduce it in November of 2012. If approved by the public,

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the new water bond would provide grant and loan funding for a wide range of water-related activities, including agricultural water quality improvement, watershed protection, and groundwater quality protection. The actual amount and timing of funding availability will depend on its passage, on the issuance of bonds and the release of funds, and on the kinds of programs and projects proposed and approved for funding.

### **Other Funding Programs**

Other state and federal funding programs have been available in recent years to address agricultural water quality improvements. Integrated Regional Water Management grants were authorized and funded by Proposition 50 and now by Proposition 84. These are administered jointly by the State Water Board and the California Department of Water Resources. Proposals can include agricultural water quality improvement projects. The Bureau of Reclamation also can provide assistance and cost-sharing for water conservation projects that help reduce discharges.

### **E. Mitigation Measure CC-MM-2: Apply Applicable California Attorney General Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions**

A 2008 report by the California Attorney General's office entitled *The California Environmental Quality Act: Addressing Global Warming at the Local Agency Level* identifies various example measures to reduce GHG emissions at the project level (California Department of Justice 2008). The following mitigation measures and project design features were compiled from the California Attorney General's Office report. They are not meant to be exhaustive but to provide a sample list of measures that should be incorporated into future project design. Only those measures applicable to the Order are included.

#### **Solid Waste Measures**

- Reuse and recycle construction and demolition waste (including, but not limited to, soil, vegetation, concrete, lumber, metal, and cardboard).
- Provide interior and exterior storage areas for recyclables and green waste and adequate recycling containers.
- Recover by-product methane to generate electricity.

#### **Transportation and Motor Vehicles**

- Limit idling time for commercial vehicles, including delivery and construction vehicles.
- Use low- or zero-emission vehicles, including construction vehicles.

## **ATTACHMENT D**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER FOR  
GROWERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER  
WATERSHED THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY  
GROUP**

## **FINDINGS OF FACT AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**

**ORDER R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~**

**December 2012**

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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2008 Farm Bill	Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008
CACs	county agricultural commissioners
CCR	California Code of Regulations
Central Valley Water Board	California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CRHR	California Register of Historic Resources
CV-SALTS	Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability
DO	dissolved oxygen
DPH	California Department of Public Health
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DPR	California Department of Pesticide Regulation
EIR	environmental impact report
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
ESA	federal Endangered Species Act
PEIR	Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Final Program EIR (incorporates Draft)
FWQMP	Farm Water Quality Management Plans
GHGs	greenhouse gasses
GQMPs	groundwater quality management plans
HAPs	hazardous air pollutants
ILRP	Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program
ILRP Framework Report	Recommended Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Framework Staff Report, March 2011
MLD	most likely descendant
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOA	naturally occurring asbestos
NPS	nonpoint source
NPS Policy	State Water Board's Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PAMs	polyacrylamides
PRC	California Public Resources Code
SB	Senate Bill
State Water Board	State Water Resources Control Board
TACs	toxic air contaminants
TMDLs	total maximum daily loads
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WDRs	waste discharge requirements





# Introduction

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code [PRC] sections 21002, 21002.1, 21081, 21081.5, 21100) and State CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a) provide that no public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an environmental impact report (EIR) has been certified when one or more significant environmental effects of the project have been identified, unless the public agency makes one or more written findings for each of those significant effects, accompanied by a brief explanation of the rationale for each finding. These findings explain the disposition of each of the significant effects, including those that will be less than significant with mitigation. The findings must be supported by substantial evidence in the record.

There are three possible findings under section 15091(a). The public agency must make one or more of these findings for each significant effect. The section 15091(a) findings are:

1. Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) Final Program EIR (PEIR) (ICF International 2011). Pub. Resources Code section 15091(a)(1).
2. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency. Pub. Resources Code section 15091(a)(2).
3. Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the PEIR. Pub. Resources Code section 15091(a)(3).

## Findings

The following findings discuss the significant direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the program to be adopted, which is referred to throughout as Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-party, Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ (Order). The Order is described in California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~ and supporting attachments, and is being approved consistent with the requirements of CEQA.

The requirements of this Order have been developed from the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR, and include regulatory elements contained within those alternatives. As described below (see Applicability of the Program EIR), there are no new effects that could occur or no new mitigation measures that would be required as a result of the Order that were not already identified and described in the PEIR. None of the conditions that would trigger the need to prepare a subsequent EIR under State CEQA Guidelines section 15162 exist with respect to the Order.

The findings adopted by the Central Valley Water Board address each of the Order's significant effects in their order of appearance in the PEIR certified for the Long-term ILRP. The findings also address the alternatives analyzed in the PEIR that were not selected as a basis for the Order.

For the purposes of section 15091, the documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings upon which the Central Valley Water Board based its decision are held by the Central Valley Water Board.

For findings made under section 15091(a)(1), required mitigation measures have been adopted for the Order. These mitigation measures are included in Attachment C of the Order. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for these measures has been included in the Order's Monitoring and Reporting Program R5-2012-0116-R43 (MRP).

Where mitigation measures are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency, the finding in section 15091(a)(2) should be made by the lead agency. In order to make the finding, the lead agency must find that the mitigation measures have been adopted by the other public agency or can and should be adopted by the other public agency.

Where the finding is made under section 15091(a)(3) regarding the infeasibility of mitigation measures or alternatives, the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations are described in a subsequent section.

Each of these findings must be supported by substantial evidence in the record.

The Order implements the Long-Term ILRP for irrigated lands in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. The Order is intended to serve as a single implementing order in a series of orders that will implement the Long-Term ILRP for the entire Central Valley.

## History of the Project

In 2003 the Central Valley Water Board adopted a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for discharges from irrigated agricultural lands. As part of the 2003 waiver program the Central Valley Water Board directed staff to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a long-term irrigated lands regulatory program (ILRP).

On 5 and 6 March 2003, CEQA scoping meetings were held in Fresno and Sacramento to solicit and receive public comment on the scope of the EIR as described in the Notice of Preparation (released on 14 February 2003). Following the scoping meetings, the Central Valley Water Board began preparation of the draft *Existing Conditions Report* (ECR) in 2004 to assist in defining the baseline condition for the EIR's environmental analyses. The draft ECR was circulated in 2006, public comment on the document was received and incorporated and it was released in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

In March and April 2008, the Central Valley Water Board conducted another series of CEQA scoping meetings to generate recommendations on the scope and goals of the long-term ILRP. Information was also gathered as to how stakeholders would like to be involved in development of the long-term program. Stakeholders indicated in these scoping meetings that they would like to be actively involved in developing the program. To address this interest, the Central Valley Water Board initiated the Long-term ILRP Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup. The Stakeholder Advisory

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<sup>1</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes. 2008. *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*. December. (ICF J&S 05508.05.) Sacramento, CA. Prepared for the State Water Resources Control Board and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Rancho Cordova, CA.

Workgroup assisted in the development of long-term program goals and objectives and a range of alternatives to be considered in the PEIR.

On 28 July 2010, the Central Valley Water Board, serving as the lead agency under CEQA, released the Draft PEIR for the long-term ILRP. The PEIR provides programmatic analysis of impacts resulting from the implementation of six regulatory alternatives. Five of the alternatives were developed with the Stakeholder Advisory Workgroup. The sixth alternative was developed by staff in an effort to fulfill program goals and objectives, meet applicable state policy and law, and minimize potentially adverse environmental impacts and economic effects. The PEIR does not analyze a preferred program alternative, but rather equally analyzes the environmental impacts of each alternative. Further discussion regarding the PEIR alternatives is included below in the section titled "Feasibility of Alternatives Considered in the EIR."

The Central Valley Water Board provided a 60-day period for submitting written comments on the Draft PEIR. In September 2010, Central Valley Water Board staff held public workshops in Chico, Modesto, Rancho Cordova, and Tulare to receive input. The Central Valley Water Board provided substantive responses to all written comments received on the Draft PEIR. The Central Valley Water Board provided public notice of the availability of the Final PEIR on 8 March 2011. The Central Valley Water Board certified the PEIR on 7 April 2011 (Central Valley Water Board Resolution R5-2011-0017). The requirements of the Order have been developed from the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR.

## Applicability of the Program EIR

Pursuant to Guidelines Section 15168(c)(2), the Central Valley Water Board finds that the Order is within the scope of the project covered by the PEIR, and no new environmental document is required. There are no new effects that could occur or no new mitigation measures that would be required as a result of the Order that were not already identified and described in the PEIR. None of the conditions that would trigger the need to prepare a subsequent EIR under State CEQA Guidelines section 15162 exist with respect to the Order.

This Order represents one order in a series of orders that will be developed, based on the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR, for all irrigated agriculture within the Central Valley. The PEIR describes that potential environmental impacts of all six alternatives are associated with implementation of water quality management practices, construction of monitoring wells, and impacts to agriculture resources (e.g., loss of production of prime farmland) due to increased regulatory costs.

The PEIR describes and evaluates potential impacts of practices likely to be implemented to meet water quality and other management goals on irrigated lands. The representative water quality management practices analyzed include:

- Nutrient management
- Improved water management
- Tailwater recovery system
- Pressurized irrigation
- Sediment trap, hedgerow, or buffer
- Cover cropping or conservation tillage
- Wellhead protection

As discussed in Attachment A, the requirements of the Order have been developed from the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR. Because the Order includes regulatory elements that are also contained in the six alternatives analyzed in the PEIR, the actions by Members to protect water quality in response to the requirements of this Order are expected to be similar to those described for Alternatives 2-6 of the PEIR (Alternative 1 does not include groundwater protection). Therefore, the requirements of this Order would lead to implementation of the above practices within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed to a similar degree as is described for Alternatives 2-6 analyzed in the PEIR.

Specifically, project-level review of the requirements in the Order has revealed that the requirements of the Order most closely resemble those described for Alternatives 2 and 4 of the PEIR, but do include elements from Alternatives 2-5. The Order contains the third-party lead entity structure, regional surface and groundwater management plans, and regional surface water quality monitoring approach similar to Alternative 2 of the PEIR; farm planning, management practices tracking, nutrient tracking, and regional groundwater monitoring similar to Alternative 4 of the PEIR; sediment and erosion control plan (under Alternative 3, “farm plan”) recommendation/certification requirements similar to Alternative 3; prioritized installation of groundwater monitoring wells similar to Alternative 5; and a prioritization system based on systems described by Alternatives 2 and 4.

## Impact Findings

### Cultural Resources

#### **Impact CUL-1. Physical destruction, alteration, or damage of cultural resources from implementation of management practices (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

##### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

##### **Rationale for Finding**

Upon implementation of the Order, Members may implement a variety of management practices that include physical and operational changes to agricultural land in the Order’s regulated area. Such management practices may occur near cultural resources that are historically significant and eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR) or the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Implementation of these practices may lead to physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of cultural resources.

The location, timing, and specific suite of management practices to be chosen by Members to improve water quality are not known at this time. This impact is considered significant. **Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are included at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Impact CUL-2. Potential Damage to Cultural Resources from Construction Activities and Installation of Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes, including, installation of groundwater monitoring wells. The location of monitoring wells, as well as the location, timing, and specific suite of management practices to be selected by Members are not known at this time, and will not be defined until the need for additional monitoring wells is established. This impact is considered significant. Mitigation **Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are included at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Noise**

### **Impact NOI-1. Exposure of Sensitive Land Uses to Noise from Construction Activities in Excess of Applicable Standards (Responsibility of Other Agencies)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction noise impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require the use of heavy-duty construction equipment. Because management practices are a function of crop type and economics, it cannot be determined whether the management practices selected under this alternative would change relative to existing conditions. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine construction-related effects based on a quantitative analysis.

Noise levels from anticipated heavy-duty construction equipment are expected to range from approximately 55 to 88 A-weighted decibels (dBA) at 50 feet. These levels would be short term and would attenuate as a function of distance from the source. Noise from construction equipment operated within several hundred feet of noise-sensitive land uses has the potential to exceed local noise standards. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-1: Implement Noise-Reducing Construction Practices**, which is described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-1 is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies, who can and should implement these measures.

## **Impact NOI-2. Exposure of Sensitive Land Uses to Noise from Operational Activities in Excess of Applicable Standards (Responsibility of Other Agencies)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, a third-party group would perform regional surface water and groundwater quality monitoring. Surface and groundwater monitoring under the Order would be similar to the regional monitoring described for Alternatives 2 and 4 of the PEIR. The PEIR provides that operational noise from vehicle trips associated with water quality sampling for these alternatives is expected to be minimal.

Operation of new well pumps as part of tailwater recovery systems may result in increased noise levels relative to existing conditions. Noise generated from individual well pumps would be temporary and sporadic. Information on the types and number of pumps, as well as the number and distances of related vehicle trips, is currently unavailable.

Depending on the type of management practice selected, the Order also may result in noise benefits relative to existing conditions. For example, improved irrigation management may reduce the amount of time that pressurized pump generators are used. Enhanced nutrient application may minimize the number of tractors required to fertilize or plow a field. Removing these sources of noise may mediate any increases related to the operation of new pumps. However, in the absence of data, a quantitative analysis of noise impacts related to operations of the Order is not possible. Potential noise from unenclosed pumps located close to noise-sensitive land uses could exceed local noise standards. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures NOI-MM-1: Implement Noise-Reducing Construction Practices** and **NOI-MM-2: Reduce Noise Generated by Individual Well Pumps**, which are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures NOI-MM-1 and NOI-MM-2 are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies, who can and should implement these measures.

## **Air Quality**

### **Impact AQ-1. Generation of Construction Emissions in Excess of Local Air District Thresholds (Responsibility of Other Agencies)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.



### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes or the use of heavy-duty construction equipment. It is difficult to determine how management practices selected under this Order would change relative to existing conditions. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine construction-related effects based on a quantitative analysis. However, under the Order there would be selection and implementation of additional management practices to meet surface and groundwater quality goals. Consequently, implementation of the Order may result in increased criteria pollutant emissions from construction activities relative to existing conditions.

Construction emissions associated with the Order would result in a significant impact if the incremental difference, or increase, relative to existing conditions exceeds the applicable air district thresholds shown in Table 5.5-2 of the PEIR. Management practices with the greatest potential for emissions include those that break ground or move earth matter, thus producing fugitive dust, and those that require the use of heavy-duty construction equipment (e.g., backhoes or bulldozers), thus producing criteria pollutants from exhaust. The management practices fitting this description include sediment trap, hedgerow, or buffer; pressurized irrigation; and tailwater recovery systems.

While it is anticipated that any emissions resulting from construction activities would be minuscule on a per-farm basis, in the absence of a quantitative analysis, data are insufficient to determine whether emissions would exceed the applicable air district thresholds. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction Emissions below the District Thresholds**, which is described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-1 is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local air districts, who can and should implement these measures.

### Impact AQ-2. Generation of Operational Emissions in Excess of Local Air District Thresholds (Responsibility of Other Agencies)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, operational emissions would result from vehicle trips made by the third-party groups to perform surface water and groundwater monitoring, and from new diesel-powered pumps installed as part of tailwater recovery systems.

Any new emissions generated under the Order are not expected to be substantial or to exceed applicable air district thresholds. In addition, they may be moderated by emissions benefits related to management practices that reduce irrigation and cover crops (see Table 5.5-8 of the PEIR). However, the difference in emissions relative to existing conditions is not known at this time and therefore cannot be compared to the significance criteria. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-2: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Operational Emissions below the District Thresholds**, which is



described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-2 is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local air districts, who can and should implement these measures.

### **Impact AQ-3. Elevated Health Risks from Exposure of Nearby Sensitive Receptors to Toxic Air Contaminants/Hazardous Air Pollutants (TACS/HAPs) (Responsibility of Other Agencies)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the mitigation measures for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should implement the measures.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

Toxic air contaminants (TACs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) resulting from the Order include diesel particulate matter (DPM) from diesel construction equipment and new pumps, pesticides/fertilizers, and asbestos. Sensitive receptors near Members could be affected by these sources.

As discussed in Chapter 3 of the PEIR, one of the goals of the nutrient management and conservation tillage management practices is to reduce the application of pesticides/fertilizers. Because the Order would result in greater likelihood of these management practices being implemented, it is reasonable to assume that pesticides/fertilizers—and thus the potential for exposure to these chemicals—would be reduced under the Order.

It is expected that construction emissions may increase relative to existing conditions, thus resulting in minor increases of DPM. Elevated levels of construction in areas where naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) is common may also increase the likelihood of exposure to asbestos. New diesel-powered pumps also would increase DPM emissions relative to existing conditions. This is considered a potentially significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures AQ-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction Emissions below the District Thresholds**, **AQ-MM-2: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Operational Emissions below the District Thresholds**, and **AQ-MM-3: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce TAC/HAP Emissions**, which are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section, should reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Mitigation Measures AQ-MM-1, AQ-MM-2, and AQ-MM-3 are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local air districts, who can and should implement these measures.

## **Vegetation and Wildlife**

### **Impact BIO-1. Loss of Downstream Habitat from Reduced Field Runoff (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, management practices that reduce field runoff would result in beneficial impacts on water quality but may adversely affect downstream wildlife and vegetation that depend on agricultural surface runoff. These practices cause water to be recirculated or used at an agronomic rate, resulting in a minimal amount of agricultural runoff. This would result in a net loss of water entering waterways and potential habitat loss along runoff ditches and downstream water bodies.

Such habitat would be seasonally present, available only during times of irrigation, and unlikely to support sensitive communities or special-status plants. While reduced runoff leads to, or is the result of, reduced surface water diversions to fields, some regions rely largely on groundwater to irrigate. While it is anticipated that the loss of sensitive communities or special-status plants resulting from reduced runoff would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are included at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### Impact BIO-3. Potential Loss of Sensitive Natural Communities and Special-Status Plants from Construction Activities (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes, such as construction of water and sediment control basins, temporary water checks, tailwater return systems, vegetated drain systems, windbreaks, wellhead protection berms, and filter strips. It is difficult to determine to what extent management practices selected under the Order would change relative to existing conditions; thus, it is not possible to quantify any construction-related effects. However, it is logical to assume that implementation of the Order would result in selection of more management practices to meet water quality goals. Consequently, implementation of the Order may result in effects on vegetation from construction activities.

In general, management practices would be implemented on existing agricultural lands and managed wetlands, which are unlikely to support native vegetation or special-status plants. However, construction that directly or indirectly affects natural vegetation communities adjacent to existing irrigated lands, particularly annual grasslands with inclusions of seasonal wetlands or vernal pools and riparian vegetation, could result in loss of sensitive wetland communities or special-status plants growing in the uncultivated or unmanaged areas. While it is anticipated that the loss of sensitive communities or special-status plants resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Impact BIO-4. Potential Loss of Wetland Communities due to Loss of Existing Sedimentation Ponds (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, the assumed decrease in the use of surface water management practices that may be harmful to groundwater could result in abandonment or fill of tailwater sedimentation ponds in areas that currently percolate water to groundwater basins. Although they are not natural features, sedimentation ponds can develop vegetation communities that support wetland species, depending on the specific hydrologic regime of individual ponds. Ponds that hold water intermittently or seasonally may support plant species adapted to seasonal wetland conditions, and ponds that are continually flooded may support emergent vegetation adapted to permanent wetland conditions. Thus, the loss of these ponds could result in drying of artificially created wetlands and an indirect loss of wetland habitat. The loss of wetland communities resulting from abandonment or fill of retention ponds would be small but cannot be quantified. It is also important to note that implementation of one of the potential management practices under the Order—installation of tailwater return systems—would result in creation of tailwater ponds that could develop the same wetland characteristics as the abandoned or filled sedimentation ponds. Creation of new tailwater ponds could result in no net loss or potentially an increase in these wetland communities. However, the final extent of the tailwater ponds that could be created under the Order cannot be quantified. Consequently, the loss of existing sedimentation ponds is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Impact BIO-5. Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species due to Loss of Existing Sedimentation Ponds (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, the assumed decrease in the use of surface water management practices that may be harmful to groundwater could result in abandonment or fill of tailwater sedimentation ponds in areas that currently percolate water to groundwater basins. Although they are not natural features, sedimentation ponds can provide habitat for special-status wildlife species. The banks of these ponds could support habitat for special-status burrowing wildlife species, including San Joaquin kit fox and western burrowing owl. Ponds that hold water intermittently or seasonally may support special-status wildlife species adapted to seasonal wetland conditions, such as vernal pool fairy shrimp and vernal pool tadpole shrimp, California red-legged frog, and California tiger salamander,

depending on the proximity of these ponds to natural habitats. The ponds also provide foraging habitat for many bird species. Ponds that hold water intermittently provide foraging habitat for wading birds, and ponds that are continually flooded may support foraging and nesting habitat for waterfowl. The abandonment or fill of retention ponds would be small and cannot be quantified but could affect wildlife species that are dependent on them. However, the creation of new tailwater ponds could mitigate part or all of this impact. Because the extent of new tailwater ponds cannot be quantified, the loss of existing sedimentation ponds is considered a potentially significant impact.

**Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact BIO-6. Loss of Sensitive Natural Communities and Special-Status Plants from Construction Activities and Installation of Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from installation of groundwater monitoring wells. The placement of monitoring wells cannot be predetermined; consequently, the potential impacts on sensitive natural communities and special-status plants cannot be quantified.

In general, management practices would be implemented on existing agricultural lands and managed wetlands, resulting in a less-than-significant impact. It was assumed that groundwater monitoring well placement also could be primarily limited to agricultural land and non-sensitive habitat. However, if construction related to installation of groundwater monitoring wells required changes to managed wetlands or to natural vegetation communities that are adjacent to existing irrigated lands, there would be a potential for loss of vegetation in sensitive wetland communities or loss of special-status plants growing in the uncultivated or unmanaged areas. While it is anticipated that the loss of sensitive communities or special-status plants resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Impact BIO-7. Loss of Special-Status Wildlife from Construction Activities and Installation of Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from installation of groundwater monitoring wells. The placement of monitoring wells cannot be predetermined; consequently, the potential impacts on special-status wildlife species and their habitat cannot be quantified.

In general, management practices would be implemented on existing agricultural lands and managed wetlands, resulting in a less-than-significant impact. It was assumed that placement of groundwater monitoring wells also could be limited primarily to agricultural land and non-sensitive habitat. However, construction of groundwater monitoring wells that requires changes to managed wetlands or to natural vegetation communities adjacent to existing irrigated lands could result in a loss of special-status wildlife species occurring in the uncultivated or unmanaged areas. While it is anticipated that the loss of special-status wildlife species resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Fisheries**

### **Impact FISH-2. Temporary Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, construction impacts would result from implementation of management practices that require physical changes to lands in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. These physical changes primarily include erosion and sediment controls with features such as construction of water and sediment control basins, temporary water checks, tailwater return systems, vegetated drain systems, windbreaks, wellhead protection berms, and filter strips. Physical changes may be associated with implementation of other management practices, such as construction of filter ditches for pesticide management. Installation of facilities for management practices such as pressurized irrigation and sediment traps is unlikely to significantly exceed the baseline disturbance

that occurs during routine field preparation. Construction of features associated with management practices may temporarily reduce the amount or quality of existing fish habitat in certain limited circumstances (e.g., by encroachment onto adjacent water bodies, removal of riparian vegetation, or reduction in water quality—such as increases in sediment runoff during construction). It is difficult to determine whether the management practices selected under the Order would change relative to existing conditions, and it is not possible to quantify any construction-related effects. Implementation of the Order may result in effects on fish habitat from construction activities related to management practices.

While it is anticipated that the loss of fish habitat resulting from construction activities would be small, if any, data are insufficient to determine how much loss would occur. Consequently, this is considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact FISH-3. Permanent Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

In some cases, permanent loss of fish habitat may occur as a result of construction required for implementation of management practices under the Order. Some of the impact may be due to loss of structural habitat (e.g., vegetation) whereas loss of dynamic habitat (e.g., wetted habitat) could be an issue where tailwater augments natural flows or makes seasonal streams into perennial systems. This may be of concern in areas where tailwater return flows are composed mostly of pumped groundwater. Because the extent of the loss is not known, the impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact FISH-4. Toxicity to Fish or Fish Prey from Particle-Coagulant Water Additives (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

Under the Order, polyacrylamides (PAMs) may be applied to reduce erosion and sediment runoff and thereby improve water quality (Sojka et al. 2000). Anionic PAMs are safe to aquatic life when



used at prescribed rates (Sojka et al. 2000). Because neutral and cationic PAMs may be toxic to fish and their prey (Sojka et al. 2000; Mason et al. 2005), application of anionic PAMs is recommended in areas with sensitive fish species (Mason et al. 2005). This impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-2: Educate Growers on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact FISH-6. Temporary Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices and Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

This impact is essentially the same as Impact FISH-2 except that, in addition to the temporary loss or alteration of habitat due to construction of management practices, further loss or alteration of fish habitat may occur from construction of groundwater monitoring wells under the Order. Accordingly, the impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### **Impact FISH-7. Permanent Loss or Alteration of Fish Habitat during Construction of Facilities for Management Practices and Groundwater Monitoring Wells (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

#### **Finding**

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### **Rationale for Finding**

This impact is essentially the same as Impact FISH-3 except that, in addition to the temporary loss or alteration of habitat due to construction of features associated with management practices, permanent loss or alteration of fish habitat may occur from construction of groundwater monitoring wells under the Order. Accordingly, the impact is considered potentially significant. **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.



## Agriculture Resources

### Impact AG-1. Conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to Nonagricultural Use (Significant and Unavoidable)

#### Finding

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

#### Rationale for Finding

Under the Order, irrigated lands operations would be required to achieve surface and groundwater quality goals, and to conduct monitoring and reporting to verify such achievement. It is anticipated many or most operations will implement new management practices to achieve these surface and groundwater quality goals. Consequently, operations under the Order will experience increased operational costs due to increased monitoring and reporting activities, as well as increased management practices, if such practices are needed to meet goals. Where such increased costs make agricultural operations unlikely or unable to continue, agriculture lands may be at risk of conversion to nonagricultural use, resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact to prime and/or unique farmland, as well as farmland of statewide importance.

As described in Attachment A of the Order under “California Water Code Sections 13141 and 13241,” the Order is based mainly on components of Alternatives 2-5 of the PEIR. It follows that, because the costs of the Order are similar to the costs of Alternative 4, economic impacts of the Order, including those causing potential loss of Important Farmland, may be estimated using the analysis of Alternative 4.

The PEIR describes that, under Alternative 1, described as full implementation of the previous conditional waiver program, 142 thousand acres of Important Farmland within the entire San Joaquin River Basin potentially would be removed from production. It is estimated that under Alternative 4, an additional 10 thousand acres of Important Farmland within the San Joaquin River Basin potentially would be removed from production because of the increased costs (total of 152 thousand acres). Applying the ratio of irrigated lands within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that would be regulated under this Order (est. 835,000 acres) to the total irrigated lands within the San Joaquin River Basin (est. 2,126,028 acres, Table 3-3, Economics Report),<sup>2</sup> it is estimated that approximately 56 thousand acres of Important Farmland potentially would be removed from production under Alternative 1 (full implementation of the current program). Under the Order (estimated using Alternative 4), an additional 4,100 acres of Important Farmland potentially would be removed from production because of increased costs (total of 60 thousand acres). It is unlikely that all of this acreage would be converted to a nonagricultural use, but it is reasonable to assume that some unknown quantity would be impacted.

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<sup>2</sup> ICF International 2010.

Because implementation of the Order potentially would result in conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use, this impact is considered significant. **Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1: Assist the Agricultural Community in Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance that would Allow Growers to Keep Important Farmland in Production** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce the magnitude of the impact, but no feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Impacts

### Cumulative Cultural Resource Impacts (Less than Cumulatively Considerable with Mitigation)

#### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant cumulative environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

#### Rationale for Finding

Use of ground-disturbing management practices under the Long-term ILRP alternatives could result in cumulatively considerable effects to cultural resources in concert with other, non-program-related agricultural enterprises and nonagricultural development in the program area. **Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce the Order's contribution to this impact to a level that is not cumulatively considerable. The mitigation measure calls for identification of cultural resources and minimization of impacts to identified resources. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

### Cumulative Climate Change Impacts (Significant and Unavoidable)

#### Finding

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementation of **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions** for this impact is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of other public agencies that can and should enforce the implementation of these measures. Further, as specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

#### Rationale for Finding

Unlike criteria pollutant impacts, which are local and regional, climate change impacts occur at a global level. The relatively long lifespan and persistence of GHGs (as shown in Table 5.6-1 of the PEIR) require that climate change be considered a cumulative and global impact. As discussed in the

PEIR, it is unlikely that any increase in global temperature or sea level could be attributed to the emissions resulting from a single project. Rather, it is more appropriate to conclude that, under the Order, GHG emissions would combine with emissions across California, the United States, and the globe to cumulatively contribute to global climate change.

Given the magnitude of state, national, and international GHG emissions (see Tables 5.6-2 through 5.6-4 of the PEIR), climate change impacts from implementation of the Order likely would be negligible. However, scientific consensus concludes that, given the seriousness of climate change, small contributions of GHGs may be cumulatively considerable. Because it is unknown to what extent, if any, climate change would be affected by the incremental GHG emissions produced by the Order, the impact to climate change is considered cumulatively considerable. **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions** is within the responsibility and jurisdiction of local agencies, who can and should implement these measures. **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-2: Apply Applicable California Attorney General Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions** has been incorporated into the Order; these measures will result in lower GHG emissions levels than had they not been incorporated, but they will not completely eliminate GHG emissions that could result from the Order. No feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## **Cumulative Vegetation and Wildlife Impacts (Significant and Unavoidable)**

### **Finding**

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

### **Rationale for Finding**

The Central Valley of California has been subjected to extensive human impacts from land conversion, water development, population growth, and recreation. These impacts have altered the physical and biological integrity of the Central Valley, causing loss of native riparian vegetation along river systems, loss of wetlands, and loss of native habitat for plant and wildlife species.

**Mitigation Measures BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources** and **BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands** have been incorporated into the Order to reduce the severity of these effects. The measures are sufficient to mitigate any program-related impacts to rare or endangered plant or wildlife species, and to habitat for these species; however, the cumulative impact of the reduction in quality habitat and the take of individual listed plants or wildlife species is potentially cumulatively considerable. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Fish Impacts (Less than Cumulatively Considerable with Mitigation)

### Finding

As specified in section 15091(a)(1) of the State CEQA Guidelines, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order that avoid or substantially lessen the significant cumulative environmental effect as identified in the PEIR.

### Rationale for Finding

The ongoing impacts of impaired water quality from irrigated lands are likely to cumulatively affect fish, in combination with contaminants that remain in the Order's coverage area from past activities. Such activities include mining and past use of pesticides such as DDT that remain within sediments. Because many of the existing effects discussed in the section "Existing Effects of Impaired Water Quality on Fish" are cumulative, it is difficult to determine the relative contribution of irrigated lands and other sources. For example, low dissolved oxygen (DO) in the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel is a result of contamination from upstream nonpoint sources (possibly including agricultural runoff) and discharges from the Stockton sewage treatment plant (Lehman et al. 2004; Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board 2005). Application of pesticides to nonagricultural lands such as urban parks and the resultant contaminant runoff also cumulatively contribute to impacts of inputs from irrigated lands.

Given the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) ongoing federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation process for pesticides as a result of recent court orders, it is reasonably foreseeable that further reasonable and prudent measures would be required by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that would improve water quality within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. Revision of water quality control plans and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) also can be expected to improve water quality. These and other measures, in combination with the likely beneficial effects of the Order, suggest that the cumulative effects of the Order are not cumulatively considerable with implementation of mitigation measures. **Mitigation Measures FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat** and **FISH-MM-2: Educate Growers on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control** have been incorporated into the Order to reduce these impacts to a less than cumulatively considerable level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Cumulative Agriculture Resources Impacts (Significant and Unavoidable)

### Finding

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15091(a)(1), changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Order, but these changes or alterations are not sufficient to reduce the significant environmental effect to less than significant as identified in the PEIR. As specified in section 15091(a)(3) of the Guidelines, specific considerations make mitigation and alternatives infeasible. A statement of overriding consideration has been adopted, as indicated in the Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Order presented below.

### Rationale for Finding

Since 1984, the average biennial net conversion of prime and unique farmland, and farmlands of statewide importance in California has been 28,344 acres (California Department of Conservation,

Division of Land Resource Protection 2008). However, conversion has increased substantially since 2000, with an average biennial net conversion of 114,003 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2008). During the 2002–2004 period, prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide importance was reduced by 133,024 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2006). The trend continued during the 2004–2006 period, with a net reduction of 125,495 acres (California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection 2008).

While conversion of important farmland may not continue at the accelerated rate of the past 10 years due to decreased demand for new housing, it is reasonably foreseeable that it will continue at a rate comparable to that seen since 1984. Given the magnitude of important farmland conversion expected from implementation of the Order, the Order could result in cumulatively considerable impacts to agriculture resources. **Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1** has been incorporated into the Order to reduce the severity of these effects. While implementation of AG-MM-1 could reduce these impacts to a level that is not a cumulatively considerable contribution to this statewide impact, such a reduction cannot be quantified. As such, the Order's contribution to this impact is potentially cumulatively considerable. No feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures are described at the end of the *Impact Findings* section.

## Mitigation Measures

### Cultural Resources

#### Mitigation Measure CUL-MM-1: Avoid Impacts to Cultural Resources

The measure described below will reduce the severity of impacts on significant cultural resources, as defined and described in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.3 of the PEIR. Avoidance of such impacts also can be achieved when Members choose the least impactful management practices that will meet the Order's water quality improvement goals and objectives. Note that these mitigation measures may not be necessary in cases where no ground-disturbing activities would be undertaken as a result of implementation of the Order.

Although cultural resource inventories and evaluations typically are conducted prior to preparation of a CEQA document, the size of the Order's coverage area and the lack of specificity regarding the location and type of management practices that would be implemented following adoption of the Order rendered conducting inventories prior to release of the draft Order untenable. Therefore, where the Order's water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without modifying or disturbing an area of land or existing structure to a greater degree than through previously employed farming practices, individual farmers or third-party representatives will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels.

- Where construction within areas that may contain cultural resources cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of the potential for damage to cultural resources prior to construction; this may include the hiring of a qualified cultural resources specialist to determine the presence of significant cultural resources.
- Where the assessment indicates that damage may occur, submit a non-confidential records search request to the appropriate CHRIS information center(s).

- Implement the recommendations provided by the CHRIS information center(s) in response to the records search request.
- Where adverse effects to cultural resources cannot be avoided, undertake additional CEQA review and develop appropriate mitigation to avoid or minimize the potential impact.

In addition, California state law provides for the protection of interred human remains from vandalism and destruction. According to the California Health and Safety Code, six or more human burials at one location constitute a cemetery (section 8100), and the disturbance of Native American cemeteries is a felony (section 7052). section 7050.5 requires that construction or excavation be stopped in the vicinity of the discovered human remains until the County Coroner has been notified, according to PRC section 5097.98, and can determine whether the remains are those of Native American origin. If the coroner determines that the remains are of Native American origin, the coroner must contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours (Health and Safety Code section 7050[c]). The NAHC will identify and notify the most likely descendant (MLD) of the interred individual(s), who will then make a recommendation for means of treating or removing, with appropriate dignity, the human remains and any associated grave goods as provided in PRC section 5097.98.

PRC section 5097.9 identifies the responsibilities of the project proponent upon notification of a discovery of Native American burial remains. The project proponent will work with the MLD (determined by the NAHC) and a professional archaeologist with specialized human osteological experience to develop and implement an appropriate treatment plan for avoidance and preservation of, or recovery and removal of, the remains.

Growers implementing management practices should be aware of the following protocols for identifying cultural resources.

- If built environment resources or archaeological resources, including chipped stone (often obsidian, basalt, or chert), ground stone (often in the form of a bowl mortar or pestle), stone tools such as projectile points or scrapers, unusual amounts of shell or bone, historic debris (such as concentrations of cans or bottles), building foundations, or structures are inadvertently discovered during ground-disturbing activities, the land owner should stop work in the vicinity of the find and retain a qualified cultural resources specialist to assess the significance of the resources. If necessary, the cultural resource specialist also will develop appropriate treatment measures for the find.
- If human bone is found as a result of ground disturbance, the land owner should notify the County Coroner in accordance with the instructions described above. If Native American remains are identified and descendants are found, the descendants may—with the permission of the owner of the land or his or her authorized representative—inspect the site of the discovery of the Native American remains. The descendants may recommend to the owner or the person responsible for the excavation work means for treating or disposing of the human remains and any associated grave goods, with appropriate dignity. The descendants will make their recommendation within 48 hours of inspection of the remains. If the NAHC is unable to identify a descendant, if the descendants identified fail to make a recommendation, or if the landowner rejects the recommendation of the descendants, the landowner will inter the human remains and associated grave goods with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further and future subsurface disturbance.



## Noise

### **Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-1: Implement Noise-Reducing Construction Practices**

Growers should implement noise-reducing construction practices that comply with applicable local noise standards or limits specified in the applicable county ordinances and general plan noise elements.

### **Mitigation Measure NOI-MM-2: Reduce Noise Generated by Individual Well Pumps**

If well pumps are installed, Members should enclose or locate them behind barriers such that noise does not exceed applicable local noise standards or limits specified in the applicable county ordinances and general plan noise elements.

## Air Quality

### **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction Emissions below the District Thresholds**

Growers should apply appropriate construction mitigation measures from the applicable air district to reduce construction emissions. These measures will be applied on a project-level basis and may be tailored in consultation with the appropriate air district, depending on the severity of anticipated construction emissions.

### **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-2: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Operational Emissions below the District Thresholds**

Growers should apply appropriate mitigation measures from the applicable air district to reduce operational emissions. These measures were suggested by the district or are documented in official rules and guidance reports; however, not all districts make recommendations for operational mitigation measures. Where applicable, measures will be applied on a project-level basis and may be tailored in consultation with the appropriate air district, depending on the severity of anticipated operational emissions.

### **Mitigation Measure AQ-MM-3: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce TAC/HAP Emissions**

Growers should apply appropriate TAC and HAP mitigation measures from the applicable air district to reduce public exposure to DPM, pesticides, and asbestos. These measures were suggested by the district or are documented in official rules and guidance reports; however, not all districts make recommendations for mitigation measures for TAC/HAP emissions. These measures will be applied on a project-level basis and may be tailored in consultation with the appropriate air district, depending on the severity of anticipated TAC/HAP emissions.



## **Vegetation and Wildlife**

### **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources**

Implementation of the following avoidance and minimization measures would ensure that the construction activities related to implementation of management practices and installation of monitoring wells on irrigated lands would minimize effects on sensitive vegetation communities (such as riparian habitat and wetlands adjacent to the construction area) and special-status plants and wildlife species as defined and listed in section 5.7.3 of the PEIR. In each instance where particular management practices could result in impacts on the biological resources listed above, Members should use the least impactful effective management practice to avoid such impacts. Where the Order's water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without incurring potential impacts, individual farmers or third-party representatives will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels.

- Where detention basins are to be abandoned, retain the basin in its existing condition or ensure that sensitive biological resources are not present before modification.
- Where construction in areas that may contain sensitive biological resources cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of habitat conditions and the potential for presence of sensitive vegetation communities or special-status plant and animal species prior to construction. This may include the hiring of a qualified biologist to identify riparian and other sensitive vegetation communities and/or habitat for special-status plant and animal species.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance of riparian and other sensitive vegetation communities.
- Avoid and minimize disturbance to areas containing special-status plant or animal species.
- Where adverse effects on sensitive biological resources cannot be avoided, undertake additional CEQA review and develop a restoration or compensation plan to mitigate the loss of the resources.

### **Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-2: Determine Extent of Wetland Loss and Compensate for Permanent Loss of Wetlands**

Prior to implementing any management practice that will result in the permanent loss of wetlands, conduct a delineation of affected wetland areas to determine the acreage of loss in accordance with current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) methods. For compliance with the federal Clean Water Act section 404 permit and WDRs protecting State waters from unauthorized fill, compensate for the permanent loss (fill) of wetlands and ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. Compensation ratios will be determined through coordination with the Central Valley Water Board and USACE as part of the permitting process. Such process will include additional compliance with CEQA, as necessary. Compensation may be a combination of mitigation bank credits and restoration/creation of habitat, as described below:

- Purchase credits for the affected wetland type (e.g., perennial marsh, seasonal wetland) at a locally approved mitigation bank and provide written evidence to the resource agencies (USFWS, NMFS) that compensation has been established through the purchase of mitigation credits.

- Develop and ensure implementation of a wetland restoration plan that involves creating or enhancing the affected wetland type.

## **Fisheries**

### **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Fish and Fish Habitat**

This mitigation measure incorporates all measures identified in Mitigation Measure BIO-MM-1: Avoid and Minimize Impacts on Sensitive Biological Resources. In each instance where particular management practices could result in impacts to special-status fish species (see “Regulatory Classification of Special-Status Species” in section 5.8.2 of the PEIR), Members should use the least impactful effective management practice to avoid such impacts. Where the Order’s water quality improvement goals cannot be achieved without incurring potential impacts, individual farmers or third-party representatives will implement the following measures to reduce potential impacts to less-than-significant levels. Note that these measures may not be necessary in many cases and are dependent on the location of construction in relation to water bodies containing special-status fish.

- Where construction in areas that may contain special-status fish species cannot be avoided through the use of alternative management practices, conduct an assessment of habitat conditions and the potential for presence of special-status fish species prior to construction; this may include the hiring of a qualified fisheries biologist to determine the presence of special status fish species.
- Based on the species present in adjacent water bodies and the likely extent of construction work that may affect fish, limit construction to periods that avoid or minimize impacts to special-status fish species.
- Where construction periods cannot be altered to minimize or avoid effects on special-status fish, undertake additional CEQA review and develop a restoration or compensation plan to mitigate the loss of the resources.

### **Mitigation Measure FISH-MM-2: Educate Growers on the Use of Polyacrylamides (PAMs) for Sediment Control**

The third-party will provide information to Members on the potential risks to aquatic life, including special-status fish, that may result from the use of cationic or neutral PAMs during water management activities. Information in the form of leaflets or website information will be provided to Members, encouraging the use of anionic PAMs. Application of anionic PAMs at prescribed rates will be emphasized in the information provided to Members. Adoption of the United States Department of Agriculture National Conservation Practice Standard 450 also will be recommended in the information.

## **Agriculture Resources**

### **Mitigation Measure AG-MM-1: Assist the Agricultural Community in Identifying Sources of Financial Assistance that would Allow Growers to Keep Important Farmland in Production**

The third-party will assist the agricultural community in identifying sources of financial assistance from existing federal, state, or local programs that promote water conservation and water quality through increased management practices. Funding received from grants, cost-sharing, or low-interest loans would offset some of the local Members expenditures for compliance with and implementation of the Order, and likely would reduce the estimated losses in irrigated acreage. Potential funding sources for this mitigation measure are discussed below. The programs described below are illustrative and are not intended to constitute a comprehensive list of funding sources.

#### **Federal Farm Bill**

Title II of the 2008 Farm Bill (the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, in effect through 2012) authorizes funding for conservation programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program. Both of these programs provide financial and technical assistance for activities that improve water quality on agricultural lands.

#### **State Water Resources Control Board**

The Division of Financial Assistance administers water quality improvement programs for the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board). The programs provide grant and loan funding to reduce non-point-source pollution discharge to surface waters.

The Division of Financial Assistance currently administers two programs that improve water quality associated with agriculture—the Agricultural Drainage Management Loan Program and the Agricultural Drainage Loan Program. Both of these programs were implemented to address the management of agricultural drainage into surface water. The Agricultural Water Quality Grant Program provides funding to reduce or eliminate the discharge of non-point-source pollution from agricultural lands into surface water and groundwater. It is currently funded through bonds authorized by Proposition 84.

The State Water Board's Clean Water State Revolving Fund also has funding authorized through Proposition 84. It provides loan funds to a wide variety of point-source and non-point-source water quality control activities.

#### **Potential Funding Provided by the Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2010**

This act was placed on the ballot by the Legislature as SBX 7-2 and was scheduled for voter approval in November 2010. In August of 2010, the Legislature removed this issue from the 2010 ballot and intends to re-introduce it in November of 2012. If approved by the public, the new water bond would provide grant and loan funding for a wide range of water-related activities, including agricultural water quality improvement, watershed protection, and groundwater quality protection. The actual amount and timing of funding availability will depend on its passage, on the issuance of bonds and the release of funds, and on the kinds of programs and projects proposed and approved for funding.

### **Other Funding Programs**

Other state and federal funding programs have been available in recent years to address agricultural water quality improvements. Integrated Regional Water Management grants were authorized and funded by Proposition 50 and now by Proposition 84. These are administered jointly by the State Water Board and the California Department of Water Resources. Proposals can include agricultural water quality improvement projects. The Bureau of Reclamation also can provide assistance and cost-sharing for water conservation projects that help reduce discharges.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

### **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-1: Apply Applicable Air District Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions**

Several of the standard mitigation measures provided by Central Valley local air districts to reduce criteria pollutant emissions would also help to minimize GHG emissions (please see section 5.6.5 of the PEIR). Measures to reduce vehicle trips and promote use of alternative fuels, as well as clean diesel technology and construction equipment retrofits, should be considered by the program applicants.

### **Mitigation Measure CC-MM-2: Apply Applicable California Attorney General Mitigation Measures to Reduce Construction and Operational GHG Emissions**

A 2008 report by the California Attorney General's office entitled *The California Environmental Quality Act: Addressing Global Warming at the Local Agency Level* identifies various example measures to reduce GHG emissions at the project level (California Department of Justice 2008). The following mitigation measures and project design features were compiled from the California Attorney General's Office report. They are not meant to be exhaustive but to provide a sample list of measures that could be incorporated into future project design. Only those measures applicable to the Order are included.

#### **Solid Waste Measures**

- Reuse and recycle construction and demolition waste (including, but not limited to, soil, vegetation, concrete, lumber, metal, and cardboard).
- Provide interior and exterior storage areas for recyclables and green waste and adequate recycling containers.
- Recover by-product methane to generate electricity.

#### **Transportation and Motor Vehicles**

- Limit idling time for commercial vehicles, including delivery and construction vehicles.
- Use low- or zero-emission vehicles, including construction vehicles.

## **Feasibility of Alternatives Considered in the EIR**

The following text presents findings relative to the project alternatives. Findings about the feasibility of project alternatives must be made whenever the project within the responsibility and jurisdiction of the lead agency will have a significant environmental effect.

In July 2010, the Central Valley Water Board released, for public review, the Draft PEIR and Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (Economics Report). In these reports, Alternatives 1-6 were evaluated considering environmental and economic impacts, and consistency with applicable state policies and law.<sup>3</sup> In Volume II: Appendix A of the PEIR, at page 136, each alternative was found to achieve some of the program evaluation measures but not others. As is shown in Table 11 of Appendix A, no single alternative of Alternatives 1-5 achieved complete consistency with all evaluation measures. However, after review of each of the alternatives and their common elements (lead entity, monitoring type), it was clear that a program that more completely satisfied the evaluation measures could be developed by selecting from the best-performing elements of the proposed alternatives. Alternative 6, described in Appendix A of the Draft PEIR, was developed by selecting these best-performing elements and became the draft staff recommended alternative.

In consideration of comments received concerning Alternative 6 during the Draft PEIR review process, staff developed the recommended ILRP Framework, and prepared the *Staff Report on Recommended Irrigated Lands Regulatory Framework*, or 'ILRP Framework Report' (Central Valley Water Board 2011). The Central Valley Water Board did not adopt the Framework, but advised staff to use the Framework as a starting point to support the development of ILRP Orders. The Framework is based upon the sixth alternative, and is composed of elements from the range of alternatives evaluated in the PEIR. The requirements of the Order were developed considering the Framework as a starting point per Central Valley Water Board direction (Central Valley Water Board hearing, June 2011). Project-level review of the requirements in the Order has revealed that the requirements of the Order most closely resemble those described for Alternatives 4 and 2 of the PEIR, but do include elements from Alternatives 2-5.

The Order implements the long-term irrigated lands program for irrigated lands in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. The Alternatives in the PEIR have been developed for implementation throughout the entire Central Valley Region. The Order is intended to serve as a single implementing order in a series of orders that will implement the long-term irrigated lands program for the entire Central Valley. The findings below summarize why particular program alternatives are not being pursued.

## **Alternative 1: Full Implementation of the Current Program - No Project**

Under Alternative 1, the Central Valley Water Board would renew the current program and continue to implement it into the future. This would be considered the "No Project" Alternative per CEQA guidance at Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 15126.6(e)(3)(A): "When the project is the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy or ongoing operation, the 'No Project' Alternative will be the continuation of the existing plan, policy, or operation into the future." Given the reasonably foreseeable nature of the extension or renewal of the ongoing waiver, which would allow continuation of the existing program, Alternative 1 is best characterized as the "No Project" Alternative. This approach best serves the purpose of allowing the Central Valley Water

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<sup>3</sup> Economic impacts of Alternatives 1-5 have been evaluated in the Economics Report. Staff was also able to use that analysis to estimate costs of the recommended program alternative (Alternative 6), since the recommended program alternative fell within the range of the five alternatives. This cost estimate is found in Appendix A of the PEIR.

Board to compare the impacts of revising the ILRP with those of continuing the existing program (14 CCR section 15126.6[e][1]).

Third-party groups would continue to function as lead entities representing growers (owners of irrigated lands, wetland managers, nursery owners, and water districts). This alternative is based on continuing watershed monitoring to determine whether operations are causing water quality problems. Where monitoring indicates a problem, third-party groups and growers would be required to implement management practices to address the problem and work toward compliance with applicable water quality standards. This alternative would not establish any new Central Valley Water Board requirements for discharges to groundwater from irrigated agricultural lands.

Monitoring under this alternative would be the same as the watershed-based monitoring required under the current ILRP. Under this monitoring scheme, third-party groups would work with the Central Valley Water Board to develop monitoring plans for Central Valley Water Board approval. These plans would specify monitoring parameters and site locations.

## Finding

An order based on Alternative 1 is not being pursued to regulate irrigated agricultural operations in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed instead of the Order because it would not substantially reduce or eliminate any of the significant adverse effects of the Order (listed in the findings above) and it would not meet all of the goals and objectives of the program (program goals and objectives are described in Appendix A of the PEIR). Because Alternative 1 does not address discharges of waste from agricultural lands to groundwater, it would not be fully consistent with Program Goals 1 and 2:

- **Goal 1**—Restore and/or maintain the highest reasonable quality of State waters considering all the demands being placed on the water.
- **Goal 2**—Minimize waste discharge from irrigated agricultural lands that could degrade the quality of State waters.

In addition, the lack of a groundwater discharge component to this alternative makes it inconsistent with Goal 4 of the program:

- **Goal 4**—Ensure that irrigated agricultural discharges do not impair access by Central Valley communities and residents to safe and reliable drinking water.

Alternative 1 is also inconsistent with sections 13263 and 13269 of the California Water Code, the State Water Board's nonpoint source (NPS) program, and the State's antidegradation policy. These inconsistencies are documented in detail in the (PEIR), Appendix A, at pages 96-130. The Order is considered superior to Alternative 1 for implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

## Alternative 2: Third-Party Lead Entity

Under Alternative 2, the Central Valley Water Board would develop a single mechanism or a series of regulatory mechanisms (WDRs or conditional waivers of WDRs) to regulate waste discharges from irrigated agricultural lands to ground and surface waters.



Third-party groups would function as lead entities representing growers. Regulation of discharges to surface water would be similar to Alternative 1 (the current ILRP). However, this alternative allows for a reduction in monitoring under lower threat circumstances and where watershed or area management objective plans are being developed. This alternative also includes requirements for development of groundwater quality management plans (GQMPs) to minimize discharge of waste to groundwater from irrigated lands. Under Alternative 2, local groundwater management plans or integrated regional water management plans could be utilized, all, or in part for ILRP GQMPs, with Central Valley Water Board approval. This alternative relies on coordination with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for regulating discharges of pesticides to groundwater.

Growers would be required to track implemented management practices and submit the results to the third-party group. Surface water monitoring under this alternative would be similar to Alternative 1. The third-party group would report summary results to the Central Valley Water Board. The third-party group would be required to summarize the results of groundwater and surface water monitoring and tracking in an annual monitoring report to the Central Valley Water Board.

## **Finding**

An order based wholly on Alternative 2 is not being pursued to regulate irrigated agricultural operations in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed instead of the Order because it would not substantially reduce or eliminate any of the significant adverse effects of the Order (listed in the findings above) and because it would not as consistently meet the Program's goals and objectives as would the Order. As indicated in Appendix A, pages 96–130 of the PEIR, Alternative 2 would be consistent with most of the Programs goals and objectives, but would be only partially consistent with the State Water Board's nonpoint source policy and the state's antidegradation policy. Alternative 2 includes third-party GQMPs, but does not require groundwater quality monitoring. The Order is considered superior to Alternative 2 for implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

## **Alternative 3: Individual Farm Water Quality Plans**

Under Alternative 3, growers would have the option of working directly with the Central Valley Water Board or another implementing entity (e.g., county agricultural commissioners [CACs]) in development of an individual farm water quality management plan (FWQMP). Growers would individually apply for a conditional waiver or WDRs that would require Central Valley Water Board approval of their FWQMP.

On-farm implementation of effective water quality management practices would be the mechanism to reduce or eliminate waste discharged to state waters. This alternative would provide incentive for individual growers to participate by providing growers with Central Valley Water Board certification that they are implementing farm management practices to protect state waters. This alternative relies on coordination with DPR for regulating discharges of pesticides to groundwater.

Unless specifically required in response to water quality problems, owners/operators would not be required to conduct water quality monitoring of adjacent receiving waters or underlying groundwater. Required monitoring would include evaluation of management practice effectiveness. The Central Valley Water Board, or a designated third-party entity, would conduct annual site inspections on a selected number of operations. They also would review available applicable water



quality monitoring data as additional means of monitoring the implementation of management practices and program effectiveness.

## Finding

An order based wholly on Alternative 3 is not being pursued to regulate irrigated agricultural operations in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed instead of the Order because it would not substantially reduce or eliminate any of the significant adverse effects of the Order (listed in the findings above) and because it would not as consistently meet the ILRP's goals and objectives as would the Order. As indicated in Appendix A, pages 96–130 of the PEIR, Alternative 3 would be only partially consistent with the Central Valley Water Board's program objectives (Objectives 4 and 5) to coordinate with other programs such as TMDL development, CV-SALTS and WDRs for dairies; and promote coordination with other agriculture-related regulatory and non-regulatory programs of the DPR, the California Department of Public Health (DPH), and other agencies. These objectives are:

- **Objective 4**—Coordinate with other Central Valley Water Board programs, such as the Grassland Bypass Project WDRs for agricultural lands, total maximum daily load development, CV-Salts, and WDRs for dairies.
- **Objective 5**—Promote coordination with other regulatory and non-regulatory programs associated with agricultural operations (e.g., DPR, DPH Drinking Water Program, the California Air Resources Board, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Resource Conservation Districts, the University of California Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Organic Program, California Agricultural Commissioners, State Water Board Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment program, U.S. Geological Survey, and local groundwater programs [Senate Bill (SB) 1938, AB 3030, Integrated Regional Water Management Plans]) to minimize duplicative regulatory oversight while ensuring program effectiveness.

Alternative 3 makes it more difficult to coordinate with these programs because it involves direct interaction by the Central Valley Water Board with individual growers, rather than with third-party entities. Also, the lack of mandatory surface and groundwater quality monitoring and the primary reliance on visual inspection of management practices reduces this alternative's ability to be consistent with the State Water Board's nonpoint source program. The Order is considered superior to Alternative 3 for implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

## Alternative 4: Direct Oversight with Regional Monitoring

Under Alternative 4, the Central Valley Water Board would develop WDRs and/or a conditional waiver of WDRs for waste discharge from irrigated agricultural lands to groundwater and surface water. As in Alternative 3, growers would apply directly to the Central Valley Water Board to obtain coverage ("direct oversight"). As in Alternative 3, growers would be required to develop and implement individual FWQMPs to minimize discharge of waste to groundwater and surface water from irrigated agricultural lands. Alternative 4 would also allow for formation of responsible legal entities that could serve a group of growers who discharge to the same general location and thus could share monitoring locations. In such cases, the legal entity would be required to assume responsibility for the waste discharges of member growers, to be approved by the Central Valley Water Board, and ultimately to be responsible for compliance with ILRP requirements.

Discharge of waste to groundwater and surface water would be regulated using a tiered approach. Fields would be placed in one of three tiers based on their threat to water quality. The tiers

represent fields with minimal (Tier 1), low (Tier 2), and high (Tier 3) potential threat to water quality. Requirements to avoid or minimize discharge of waste would be the least comprehensive for Tier 1 fields and the most comprehensive for Tier 3 fields. This would allow for less regulatory oversight for low-threat operations while establishing necessary requirements to protect water quality from higher-threat discharges. This alternative relies on coordination with DPR for regulating discharges of pesticides to groundwater.

For monitoring, growers would have the option of enrolling in a third-party group regional monitoring program. In cases where responsible legal entities were formed, these entities would be responsible for conducting monitoring. All growers would be required to track nutrient, pesticide, and implemented management practices and submit the results to the Central Valley Water Board (or an approved third-party monitoring group) annually. Other monitoring requirements would depend on designation of the fields as Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3. Similar to Alternative 3, this alternative also includes requirements for inspection of regulated operations.

## Finding

An order based wholly on Alternative 4 is not being pursued to regulate irrigated agricultural operations in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed instead of the Order because it would not substantially reduce or eliminate any of the significant adverse effects of the Order (listed in the findings above) and because it would not as consistently meet the Program's goals and objectives as would the Order. As indicated in Appendix A, pages 96–130 of the PEIR, Alternative 4 would meet most of the Program goals and objectives. However, it relies on Central Valley Water Board staff interaction directly with each irrigated agricultural operation, making it less effective at meeting the coordination objectives (Objectives 4 and 5) (page 103 of Appendix A in the PEIR):

- **Objective 4**—Coordinate with other Central Valley Water Board programs, such as the Grassland Bypass Project WDRs for agricultural lands, total maximum daily load development, CV-Salts, and WDRs for dairies.
- **Objective 5**—Promote coordination with other regulatory and non-regulatory programs associated with agricultural operations (e.g., DPR, DPH Drinking Water Program, the California Air Resources Board, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Resource Conservation Districts, the University of California Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Organic Program, California Agricultural Commissioners, State Water Board Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment program, U.S. Geological Survey, and local groundwater programs [SB 1938, AB 3030, Integrated Regional Water Management Plans]) to minimize duplicative regulatory oversight while ensuring program effectiveness.

Alternative 4 makes it more difficult to coordinate with these programs because it involves direct interaction by the Central Valley Water Board with individual growers, rather than with third-party entities. The Order is considered superior to Alternative 4 for implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

## Alternative 5: Direct Oversight with Farm Monitoring

Alternative 5 would consist of general WDRs designed to protect groundwater and surface water from discharges associated with irrigated agriculture. All irrigated agricultural operations would be required to individually apply for and obtain coverage under the general WDRs working directly with the Central Valley Water Board (“direct oversight”). This alternative would include

requirements to (1) develop and implement a FWQMP; (2) monitor (a) discharges of tailwater, drainage water, and storm water to surface water; (b) applications of irrigation water, nutrients, and pesticides; and (c) groundwater; (3) keep records of (a) irrigation water; (b) pesticide applications; and (c) the nutrients applied, harvested, and moved off the site; and (4) submit an annual monitoring report to the Central Valley Water Board. Similar to Alternative 3, Alternative 5 also includes requirements for inspection of regulated operations.

## Finding

An order based wholly on Alternative 5 is not being pursued to regulate irrigated agricultural operations in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed instead of the Order because it would not substantially reduce or eliminate any of the significant adverse effects of the Order (listed in the findings above) and it would not as consistently meet the Program's goals and objectives as would the Order. As indicated in Appendix A, pages 96–130 of the PEIR, Alternative 5 would be only partially consistent with the Central Valley Water Board's Program objectives (Objectives 4 and 5) to coordinate with other programs such as TMDL development, CV-SALTS and WDRs for dairies; and promote coordination with other agriculture-related regulatory and non-regulatory programs of the DPR, the California Department of Public Health, and other agencies. These objectives are:

- **Objective 4**—Coordinate with other Central Valley Water Board programs, such as the Grassland Bypass Project WDRs for agricultural lands, total maximum daily load development, CV-Salts, and WDRs for dairies.
- **Objective 5**—Promote coordination with other regulatory and non-regulatory programs associated with agricultural operations (e.g., DPR, DPH Drinking Water Program, the California Air Resources Board, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Resource Conservation Districts, the University of California Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Organic Program, California Agricultural Commissioners, State Water Board Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment program, U.S. Geological Survey, and local groundwater programs [SB 1938, AB 3030, Integrated Regional Water Management Plans]) to minimize duplicative regulatory oversight while ensuring program effectiveness.

Alternative 5 makes it more difficult to coordinate with these programs because it involves direct interaction by the Central Valley Water Board with individual growers, rather than with third-party entities.

Also, an order based on Alternative 5, due to its high relative cost as compared to the Order, would not be consistent with Program Goal 3:

- **Goal 3**—Maintain the economic viability of agriculture in California's Central Valley.

As indicated in the Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ICF International 2010), the program costs funded by growers and operators would be significantly higher than other alternatives (see Economics Report Tables 2-18 through 2-22). This high cost could affect the viability of thousands of acres of irrigated agricultural land throughout the Central Valley. The Order is considered superior to Alternative 5 for implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

## Alternative 6: Staff Recommended Alternative in the Draft PEIR

Under Alternative 6, 8–12 general WDRs or conditional waivers of WDRs would be developed that would be geographic and/or commodity-based. The alternative would establish requirements for waste discharge from irrigated agricultural lands to groundwater and surface water. Similar to Alternatives 1 and 2, third-party groups would be responsible for general administration of the ILRP. The alternative would establish prioritization factors for determining the type of requirements and monitoring that would be applied. The prioritization would be applied geographically as a two tier system, where Tier 1 areas would be “low priority,” and Tier 2 would be “high priority.”

Program requirements, monitoring and management would be dependent on the priority (Tier 1 or 2). Generally, this alternative requires regional management plans to address water quality concerns and regional monitoring to provide feedback on whether the practices implemented are working to solve identified water quality concerns. In Tier 1 areas, irrigated agricultural operations and third-party groups would be required to describe management objectives to be achieved, report on management practices implemented, and make an assessment of ground and surface water quality every 5 years. In Tier 2 areas, irrigated agricultural operations and third-party groups would be required to develop and implement ground and/or surface water quality management plans, as appropriate to address water quality concerns, report on management practices, and provide annual regional ground and surface water quality monitoring. Similar to Alternative 2, Alternative 6 would allow local groundwater management plans or integrated regional water management plans to substitute, all, or in part for ILRP GQMPs, with Central Valley Water Board approval.

Alternative 6 would establish a time schedule for compliance for addressing surface and groundwater quality problems. The schedule would require compliance with water quality objectives within five to ten years for surface water problems and demonstrated improvement within five to ten years for groundwater problems.

### Finding

An order based wholly on Alternative 6 is not being pursued to regulate irrigated agricultural operations in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed instead of the Order because it would not substantially reduce or eliminate any of the significant adverse effects of the Order (listed in the findings above) and does not adequately reflect the clarifications and minor adjustments that were requested in comments on the Draft PEIR. The Order is considered superior to Alternative 6 for implementation in the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed.

# **Statement of Overriding Considerations Supporting Approval of the Waste Discharge Requirements General Order for Growers Within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group**

Pursuant to the requirements of CEQA (PRC sections 21002, 21002.1, 21081) and State CEQA Guidelines (15 CCR 15093), the Central Valley Water Board finds that approval of the Order, whose potential environmental impacts have been evaluated in the PEIR, and as indicated in the above findings, will result in the occurrence of significant effects which are not avoided or substantially lessened, as described in the above findings. These significant effects include:

- Conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use.
- Cumulative climate change.
- Cumulative vegetation and wildlife impacts.
- Cumulative conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use.

Pursuant to PRC section 21081(b), specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects. The specific reasons to support this approval, given the potential for significant unavoidable adverse impacts, are based on the following.

## **Economic Benefits**

The water quality improvements expected to occur in both surface and groundwater throughout the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed as a result of implementing the Order is expected to create broad economic benefits for residents of the State. Control of pollutants contained in agricultural discharges, as summarized in pages 18–21 of Appendix A in the PEIR and documented in detail in the *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*, should reduce water treatment costs for some communities in the Central Valley. Pages 5-3–5-5 of the *Draft Technical Memorandum Concerning the Economic Analysis of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program* (ICF International 2010) identifies the potential costs of upgrading wells or treating well water that is affected by nitrate contamination. The nitrate contamination is believed to be coming from a variety of sources, including fertilizers used on agricultural lands.

## **Consistency with NPS Policy and State Water Board Resolution 68-16 (Antidegradation Policy)**

Waste discharges from irrigated agricultural operations have the potential to affect surface and groundwater quality. As documented in the *Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Existing Conditions Report*, many state waters have been adversely affected due in part to waste discharges from

irrigated agriculture. State policy and law requires that the Central Valley Water Board institute requirements that will implement Water Quality Control Plans (California Water Code sections 13260, 13269), the State Water Board's Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program (NPS Policy) and applicable antidegradation requirements (State Water Board Resolution 68-16). The Order is a necessary component of the Central Valley Water Board's efforts to be consistent with state policy and law through its regulation of discharges from irrigated agriculture. As documented in the PEIR Hydrology and Water Quality analysis, implementation of a long-term ILRP, of which the Order is an implementing mechanism, will improve water quality through development of farm management practices that reduce discharges of waste to state waters.

After balancing the above benefits of the Order against its unavoidable environmental risks, the specific economic, legal, and social benefits of the proposal outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, and these adverse environmental effects are considered acceptable, consistent with the Order, Central Valley Water Board Order R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~.

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**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL VALLEY REGION**

**ATTACHMENT E TO ORDER R5-2012-0116-R~~43~~  
DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS, & ABBREVIATIONS**

**WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS GENERAL ORDER  
FOR  
GROWERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN RIVER WATERSHED  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF THE THIRD-PARTY GROUP**

The following definitions, acronyms and abbreviations apply to this Order as related to discharges of waste from irrigated lands. All other terms shall have the same definitions as prescribed by the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code Division 7), unless specified otherwise.

1. Anonymous Member ID – A unique, anonymous identifier permanently assigned to each Member.
2. Anonymous APN ID – A unique, anonymous identifier permanently assigned to each Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) that is partially or completely overlaid by irrigated lands in the region.
- 1.3. Antidegradation Policy– State Water Board Resolution 68-16, "*Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality Waters in California*," requires existing high quality water to be maintained until it has been demonstrated that any change will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state, will not unreasonably affect present and anticipated beneficial use of water, and will not result in water quality less than that prescribed in Resolution No. 68-16. The Central Valley Water Board must establish standards in its orders for discharges to high quality waters that result in the implementation of best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to avoid pollution or nuisance and to maintain the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state. Resolution No. 68-16 has been approved by the U.S. EPA to be consistent with the federal anti-degradation policy.
- 2.4. Aquifer – A geologic formation, group of formations, or portion of a formation capable of yielding usable quantities of groundwater to wells or springs (40 CFR Part 257.3-4).
- 3.5. Back flow prevention devices– Back flow prevention devices are installed at the well or pump to prevent contamination of groundwater or surface water when fertilizers, pesticides, fumigants, or other chemicals are applied through an irrigation system. Back flow prevention devices used to comply with this Order must be those approved by U.S. EPA, DPR, DPH, or the local public health or water agency.<sup>1</sup>
- 4.6. Basin Plan – The Basin Plan is the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins. The Basin Plan describes how the quality of the surface and groundwater in the Central Valley Region should be managed to ensure

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Public Health, Approved Backflow Prevention Devices List at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/drinkingwater/pages/publications.aspx>. Requirements for backflow prevention for pesticide application are located in 6 CCR §6610.

reasonable protection of beneficial uses. The Basin Plan includes beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and a program of implementation.

~~5.7.~~ Certified Nitrogen Management Specialist – Certified nitrogen management plan specialists include Professional Soil Scientists, Professional Agronomists, Certified Crop Advisors<sup>2</sup> certified by the American Society of Agronomy, or Technical Service Providers certified in nutrient management in California by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); or other specialist approved by the Executive Officer.

~~6.8.~~ Degradation – Any measurable adverse change in water quality.

~~7.9.~~ Durov Diagrams – A graphical representation of water quality. The Durov diagram is an alternative to the Piper diagram. The Durov diagram plots the major ions as percentages of milli-equivalents in two base triangles. The total cations and the total anions are set equal to 100% and the data points in the two triangles are projected onto a square grid which lies perpendicular to the third axis in each triangle. This plot reveals useful properties and relationships for large sample groups. The main purpose of the Durov diagram is to show clustering of data points to indicate samples that have similar compositions.

~~8.10.~~ Exceedance – For the purposes of this Order, an exceedance is a reading using a field instrument or detection by a California state-certified analytical laboratory where the detected result indicates an impact to the beneficial use of the receiving water when compared to a water quality objective for the parameter or constituent. Exceedances will be determined based on available data and application of the appropriate averaging period. The appropriate averaging period may be defined in the Basin Plan, as part of the water quality criteria established by the U.S. EPA, or as part of the water quality criteria being used to interpret a narrative water quality objective. If averaging periods are not defined as part of the water quality objective or the water quality criteria being used, then the Central Valley Water Board may use its best professional judgment to determine an appropriate period.

~~9.11.~~ Farming Operation – A distinct farming business, organized as a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, limited liability company, cooperative, or other business entity that owns or operates irrigated lands.

~~10.12.~~ Farm Operator – The person or entity, including, but not limited to a farm/ranch manager, lessee or sub-lessee, responsible for or otherwise directing farming operations in decisions that may result in a discharge of waste to surface water or groundwater. If a person or entity rents land to others or has land worked on shares by others, the person or entity is considered the operator only of the land which is retained for their own operation.

~~11.13.~~ Fertigation – The process of applying fertilizer through an irrigation system by injecting the fertilizer into the irrigation water.

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<sup>2</sup> “Certified crop adviser” (CCA) means any person who is (1) recognized as a CCA by the American Society of Agronomy and is in compliance with its education requirements, and (2) issued a Nitrogen Management Certificate by the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP), and is in compliance with its continuing education requirements. Should the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Certified Crop Adviser’s establish a specific nitrogen management certification, any Certified Crop Adviser who certifies a nitrogen management plan must have a nitrogen management certification.

~~42.14.~~ Groundwater – Water in the ground that is in the zone of saturation. The upper surface of the saturate zone is called the water table.

~~43.15.~~ High vulnerability area (groundwater) – Areas identified in the approved Groundwater Quality Assessment Report “...where known groundwater quality impacts exist for which irrigated agricultural operations are a potential contributor or where conditions make groundwater more vulnerable to impacts from irrigated agricultural activities.” (see section IV.A.3 of the MRP) or areas that meet any of the following requirements for the preparation of a Groundwater Quality Management Plan (see section VIII.H of the Order): (1) there is a confirmed exceedance<sup>3</sup> (considering applicable averaging periods) of a water quality objective or applicable water quality trigger limit (trigger limits are described in section VIII of the MRP) in a groundwater well and irrigated agriculture may cause or contribute to the exceedance; (2) the Basin Plan requires development of a groundwater quality management plan for a constituent or constituents discharged by irrigated agriculture; or (3) the Executive Officer determines that irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to a trend of degradation of groundwater that may threaten applicable Basin Plan beneficial uses.

~~44.16.~~ High vulnerability area (surface water) – Areas that meet any of the following requirements for the preparation of a Surface Water Quality Management Plan (see section VIII.H of the Order): (1) an applicable water quality objective or applicable water quality trigger limit is exceeded (considering applicable averaging periods<sup>4</sup>) twice in a three year period for the same constituent at a monitoring location (trigger limits are described in section VIII of the MRP) and irrigated agriculture may cause or contribute to the exceedances; (2) the Basin Plan requires development of a surface water quality management plan for a constituent or constituents discharged by irrigated agriculture; or (3) the Executive Officer determines that irrigated agriculture may be causing or contributing to a trend of degradation of surface water that may threaten applicable Basin Plan beneficial uses.

~~45.17.~~ Hydraulic conductivity – The volume of water that will move through a medium (generally soil) in a unit of time under a unit hydraulic gradient through a unit area measured perpendicular to the direction of flow (a measure of a soils ability to transmit water).

~~46.18.~~ Hydraulic gradient – The change in total hydraulic head per unit distance in a given direction yielding a maximum rate of decrease in hydraulic head.

~~47.19.~~ Hydraulic Head - The height relative to a datum plane (generally sea level) of a column of water that can be supported by the hydraulic pressure at a given point in a groundwater system. For a well, the hydraulic head is equal to the distance between the water level in the well and the datum plane (sea level).

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<sup>3</sup> A “confirmed exceedance of a water quality objective in a groundwater well” means that the monitoring data are determined to be of the appropriate quality and quantity necessary to verify that an exceedance has occurred.

<sup>4</sup> Exceedances of water quality objectives or water quality triggers will be determined based on available data and application of the appropriate averaging period. The averaging period is typically defined in in the Basin Plan, as part of the water quality standard established by the U.S. EPA, or as part of the criteria being used to interpret narrative objectives. If averaging periods are not defined in the Basin Plan, U.S. EPA standard, or criteria, or approved water quality trigger, the Central Valley Water Board will use the best available information to determine an appropriate averaging period.

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~~18-20.~~ Impaired water body – A surface water body that is not attaining water quality standards and is identified on the State Water Board's Clean Water Act section 303(d) list.

~~19-21.~~ Irrigated lands – Land irrigated to produce crops or pasture for commercial purposes;<sup>5</sup> nurseries; and privately and publicly managed wetlands.

~~20-22.~~ Irrigation return flow/runoff – Surface and subsurface water which leaves the field following application of irrigation water.

~~21-23.~~ Kriging – A group of geostatistical techniques to interpolate the value of a random field (e.g., contaminant level in groundwater) at an unobserved location from observations of its value at nearby locations

~~22-24.~~ Low vulnerability area-(surface and groundwater) – are all areas not designated as high vulnerability for either surface or groundwater.

~~23-25.~~ Management practices to protect water quality – A practice or combination of practices that is the most effective and practicable (including technological, economic, and institutional considerations) means of controlling nonpoint pollutant sources at levels protective of water quality. Member – Owners and operators of irrigated lands within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are members of the third-party group implementing this Order.

~~26.~~ Monitoring – Monitoring undertaken in connection with assessing water quality conditions, and factors that may affect water quality conditions. Monitoring includes, but is not limited to, water quality monitoring undertaken in connection with agricultural activities, monitoring to identify short and long-term trends in water quality, nutrient monitoring, active inspections of operations, and management practice implementation and effectiveness monitoring. The purposes of monitoring include, but are not limited to, verifying the adequacy and effectiveness of the Order's requirements, and evaluating each Member's compliance with the requirements of the Order.

~~27.~~ Nitrogen Applied – Nitrogen Applied includes all nitrogen proactively added to a field from any source, such as organic amendments, synthetic fertilizers, manure, and irrigation water.

~~28.~~ Nitrogen Removed – Nitrogen Removed includes all nitrogen taken from the field in harvested or other materials. Other materials may include wheat straw, orchard prunings, almond hulls, etc. In the case of perennial crops, Nitrogen Removed also includes the nitrogen annually sequestered in the permanent wood.

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this Order, commercial irrigated lands are irrigated lands that have one or more of the following characteristics:

- The landowner or operator holds a current Operator Identification Number/ Permit Number for pesticide use reporting;
- The crop is sold to a third party including, but not limited to, (1) an industry cooperative, (2) harvest crew/company, or (3) a direct marketing location, such as farmers' markets;
- The landowner or operator files federal taxes using federal Department of Treasury Internal Revenue Service Form 1040, Schedule F *Profit or Loss from Farming*.

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~~24-29.~~ Nonpoint source waste discharge – The Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basin Plan states that “*A nonpoint source discharge usually refers to waste emanating from diffused locations.*” Nonpoint source pollution generally results from land runoff, precipitation, atmospheric deposition, drainage, seepage or hydrologic modification. The term "nonpoint source" is defined to mean any source of water pollution that does not meet the legal definition of "point source" in section 502(14) of the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act (CWA) defines a point source as a discernible, confined, and discrete conveyance, such as a pipe, ditch, or channel. Irrigated agricultural return flows and agricultural storm water runoff are excluded from the CWA's definition of point source. Nonpoint pollution sources generally are sources of water pollution that do not meet the definition of a point source as defined by the CWA.

~~25-30.~~ Nuisance – “Nuisance” is defined at section 13050 of the Water Code as “*...anything which meets all of the following requirements:*  
(1) *Is injurious to health, or is indecent or offensive to the senses, or an obstruction to the free use of property, so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property.*  
(2) *Affects at the same time an entire community or neighborhood, or any considerable number of persons, although the extent of the annoyance or damage inflicted upon individuals may be unequal.*  
(3) *Occur during, or as a result of, the treatment or disposal of wastes.*”

~~26-31.~~ Nutrient – Any element taken in by an organism which is essential to its growth and which is used by the organism in elaboration of its food and tissue.

~~27-32.~~ Off-property discharge – The discharge or release of waste beyond the boundaries of the agricultural operation or to water bodies that run through the agricultural operation.

~~28-33.~~ Perched groundwater – Groundwater separated from an underlying body of groundwater by an unsaturated zone.

~~29-34.~~ Piper Diagram – A graphical representation of the chemistry of a water sample. The relative abundance of cations as percentages of milli-equivalents per liter (meq/L) of sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium are first plotted on the cation triangle. The relative abundance of chloride, sulfate, bicarbonate, and carbonate is then plotted on the anion triangle. The two data points on the cation and anion triangles are then combined into the quadrilateral field that shows the overall chemical property of the water sample.

~~30-35.~~ Pollution – Defined in section 13050(l)(1) of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act as “*...an alteration of the quality of the waters of the state by waste to a degree which unreasonably affects either of the following: (A) The waters for beneficial uses. (B) Facilities which serve these beneficial uses.*”

~~34-36.~~ Qualified scientist – A person who has earned a professional degree in a scientific discipline that relates to engineering, environmental science, or chemistry with additional experience related to pesticides and water quality. This person should be familiar with the related local, state, and federal regulations.

~~32-37.~~ Receiving waters – Surface water or groundwater that receives or has the potential to receive discharges of waste from irrigated lands.

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- ~~33.38.~~ Requirements of applicable water quality control plans – Water quality objectives, prohibitions, total maximum daily load implementation plans, or other requirements contained in water quality control plans adopted by the Central Valley Water Board and approved according to applicable law.
- ~~34.39.~~ Small Farming Operation –Refers to Farming Operations that operate less than 60 total acres of irrigated land within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed. A parcel is not part of a Small Farming Operation if the total acres of irrigated land within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed managed by the Farming Operation and any of its Subsidiary or Affiliated Operations is 60 acres or greater.
- ~~35.40.~~ Stiff Diagram - A graphical representation of the chemistry of a water sample. A polygon shaped figure created from four parallel horizontal axes using the equivalent charge concentrations (meq/L) of cations and anions. Cations are plotted on the left of the vertical zero axis and anions are plotted on the right.
- ~~36.41.~~ Stormwater runoff – The runoff of precipitation from irrigated lands.
- ~~37.42.~~ Subsidiary or Affiliated Operation – a Subsidiary or Affiliated Operation of a specified Farming Operation means a Farming Operation of which the principal(s) of the specified Farming Operation or the shares possessed by the specified Farming Operation have a controlling interest. A controlling interest is having 50 percent or more of the voting or management authority of the operation.
- ~~38.43.~~ Subsurface drainage – Water generated by installing and operating drainage systems to lower the water table below irrigated lands. Subsurface drainage systems, deep open drainage ditches, or drainage wells can generate this drainage.
- ~~39.44.~~ Surface water – Water pooled or collected at or above ground level. Surface waters include, but are not limited to, natural streams, lakes, wetlands, creeks, constructed agricultural drains, agricultural dominated waterways, irrigation and flood control channels, or other non-stream tributaries. Surface waters include all waters of the United States and their tributaries, interstate waters and their tributaries, intrastate waters, and all impoundments of these waters. For the purposes of this Order, surface waters do not include water in agricultural fields.
- ~~40.45.~~ Tailwater – The runoff of irrigation water from an irrigated field.
- ~~41.46.~~ Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) - From the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 40 CFR 130.2(i), a TMDL is: "*The sum of the individual WLAs [wasteload allocations] for point sources and LAs [load allocations] for nonpoint sources and natural background. ... TMDLs can be expressed in terms of either mass per time, toxicity, or other appropriate measure. ...*".
- ~~42.47.~~ Toxicity – Refers to the toxic effect to aquatic organisms from waste contained in an ambient water quality sample.
- ~~43.48.~~ Unsaturated Zone – The unsaturated zone is characterized by pore spaces that are incompletely filled with water. The amount of water present in an unsaturated zone varies widely and is highly sensitive to climatic factors.

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~~44.49.~~ Vadose Zone – See unsaturated zone.

~~45.50.~~ Waste – Includes sewage and any and all other waste substances, liquid, solid, gaseous, or radioactive, associated with human habitation, or of human or animal origin, or from any producing, manufacturing, or processing operation, including waste placed within containers of whatever nature prior to, and for purposes of, disposal as defined in California Water Code section 13050(d). Wastes from irrigated lands that conform to this definition include, but are not limited to, earthen materials (such as soil, silt, sand, clay, rock), inorganic materials (such as metals, salts, boron, selenium, potassium, nitrogen, phosphorus), organic materials such as pesticides, and biological materials, such as pathogenic organisms. Such wastes may directly impact beneficial uses (e.g., toxicity of metals to aquatic life) or may impact water temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen.

~~46.51.~~ Waste discharges from irrigated lands – The discharge or release of waste to surface water or groundwater. Waste discharges to surface water include, but are not limited to, irrigation return flows, tailwater, drainage water, subsurface (tile) drains, stormwater runoff flowing from irrigated lands, aerial drift, and overspraying of pesticides. Waste can be discharged to groundwater through pathways including, but not limited to, percolation of irrigation or storm water through the subsurface, backflow of waste into wells (e.g., backflow during chemigation), discharges into unprotected wells and dry wells, and leaching of waste from tailwater ponds or sedimentation basins to groundwater.

A discharge of waste subject to the Order is one that could directly or indirectly reach waters of the state, which includes both surface waters and groundwaters. Direct discharges may include, for example, discharges directly from piping, tile drains, wells, ditches or sheet flow to waters of the state, or percolation of wastes through the soil to groundwater. Indirect discharges may include aerial drift or discharges from one parcel to another parcel and then to waters of the state. See also the definition for “waste”.

~~47.52.~~ Waters of the State – Is defined in Water Code section 13050 as “*any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the State.*”

~~48.53.~~ Water Quality Criteria – Levels of water quality required under section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act that are expected to render a body of water suitable for its designated uses. Criteria are based on specific levels of pollutants that would make the water harmful if used for drinking, swimming, farming, fish production, or industrial processes. The *California Toxics Rule* adopted by U.S. EPA in April 2000 sets numeric water quality criteria for non-ocean surface waters of California for a number of toxic pollutants.

~~49.54.~~ Water Quality Objectives – Defined in Water Code section 13050 as “*limits or levels of water quality constituents or characteristics which are established for the reasonable protection of beneficial uses of water or the prevention of nuisance within a specified area.*” Water quality objectives may be either numerical or narrative and serve as water quality criteria for purposes of section 303 of the Clean Water Act.

~~50.55.~~ Water quality problem – Exceedance of an applicable water quality objective or a trend of degradation that may threaten applicable Basin Plan beneficial uses.

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~~54.56.~~ 56. Water Quality Standards – Provision of state or federal law that consist of the designated beneficial uses of a waterbody, the numeric and narrative water quality criteria that are necessary to protect the uses of that particular waterbody, and an antidegradation statement. Water quality standards include water quality objectives in the Central Valley Water Board's two Basin Plans, water quality criteria in the California Toxics Rule and National Toxics Rule adopted by U.S. EPA, and/or water quality objectives in other applicable State Water Board plans and policies. Under section 303 of the Clean Water Act, each state is required to adopt water quality standards.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

2008 Farm Bill	Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008
Basin Plan	<i>Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)</i>
BPTC	best practicable treatment or control
CAC	county agricultural commissioner
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CEDEN	California Environmental Data Exchange Network
Central Valley Water Board	California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
COC	constituent of concern
CRHR	California Register of Historic Resources
CTR	California Toxics Rule
CV RDC	Central Valley Regional Data Center
CV-SALTS	Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability
CWC	California Water Code
DO	dissolved oxygen
DPH	California Department of Public Health
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DPR	California Department of Pesticide Regulation
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
ECR	Existing Conditions Report
EDD	electronic data deliverable
EIR	environmental impact report
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
ESA	federal Endangered Species Act
ESJ WQC	East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition
FWQMP	farm water quality management plan
GeoTracker ESI	GeoTracker Electronic Submittal of Information Online System
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
GQMP	groundwater quality management plan
HAPs	hazardous air pollutants
ILRP	Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program
MDL	method detection limit
MLD	most likely descendant
MMRP	mitigation monitoring and reporting program
MRP	monitoring and reporting program
MRPP	monitoring and reporting program plan
MWICR	Monitoring Well Installation Completion Report
MWISP	Monitoring Well Installation and Sampling Plan
NAD83	North American Datum 1983

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NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NAVD88	North American Vertical Datum 1988
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOA	notice of applicability
NOC	notice of certification
NOI	notice of intent
NOT	notice of termination
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	nonpoint source
NPS Policy	State Water Board's Policy for Implementation and Enforcement of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NTR	National Toxics Rule
PAMs	polyacrylamides
PCPA	Pesticide Contamination and Prevention Act
PEIR	Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Final Program EIR (Final and Draft) (Certified by Resolution R5-2011-0017)
PRC	California Public Resources Code
PUR	pesticide use report, CA DPR
QAPP	quality assurance project plan
QA/QC	quality assurance and quality control
MPEP	management practice evaluation program
RL	reporting limit
RWD	report of waste discharge
SB	Senate Bill
SIP	<i>Policy for Implementation of Toxics Standards for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays, and Estuaries of CA</i> (State Implementation Plan)
SQMP	surface water quality management plan
State Water Board	State Water Resources Control Board
SWAMP	surface water ambient monitoring program
TAC	toxic air contaminant
TDS	total dissolved solids
TIE	toxicity identification evaluation
TMDL	total maximum daily load
TST	test of significant toxicity (USEPA method)
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WDRs	waste discharge requirements

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