

East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition

August 2007 **UPDATE**

www.esjcoalition.org

Coalition Sampling Finds WQ Problems

- Exceedances of water quality standards reported in 2006 for chlorpyrifos, *E. coli*; salts and other constituents. Sediment toxicity was also reported at several sites.
- Workshops are being scheduled for October – December 2007 to inform landowners of the 2007 irrigation season exceedances and discuss management practices to address problems detected. (Check the website or with cooperators listed on the back for meeting schedules.)

2006 Water Monitoring Results

Water monitoring results from 2006 have identified Coalition waterways that have exceeded state water quality standards. Multiple exceedances on 18 Coalition sampling sites has triggered the requirement to develop “Management Plans” for those waterways. Management plans are work plans, written by the Coalition and approved by the Water Board, that describe known and potential sources of a water quality problems and plan ways to begin addressing the problem. The plans outline approaches for *E. coli* and chlorpyrifos (Lorsban insecticide), the two most common exceedances plus constituents such as copper and other pesticides.

Contacting Landowners

A key component of a coalition Management Plan is targeting landowner communications to a limited land area near the impacted waterways. Over the past two years, the Coalition has been building a GIS data base of all landowners and farms in the Coalition coverage area. Landowner information was gathered from county tax assessor records and is then overlaid on a watershed map. Properties adjacent to or in close proximity to each waterway sampled by the Coalition are then separated into subwatershed mailing lists. Those landowners then become the primary focus of mailings and notices for local workshops that cover BMPs to solve the water quality problem. While farmers outside of the focus area could be contributing to water quality degradation, the coalition believes its priority should be working with landowners and operators who have the

highest potential impact on correcting a problem then add other areas as information becomes available.

***E. Coli* Study Results Indicate Human Source**

The most common exceedances of State water quality standards in the Coalition region are for *E. coli* bacteria. While we have no verifiable information on what caused these exceedances, results from a DNA mapping study commissioned by the Coalition found human sources contributing the highest amounts of bacteria in most waterways tested. Potential sources of human DNA are leaky urban septic systems, illegal dumping of human waste, water treatment plant discharges or other sources. The Coalition is funding a second study for winter 2007 to determine sources of *E. coli* during storm events (the previous study was irrigation season).

Coalition Membership

After a flurry of activity leading to the December 31 deadline to join, the Coalition membership stands at 2,654 landowner/operators with 646,435 acres of irrigated land. That compares to 475,000 acres in October 2006.

2007 Membership Dues

Membership dues in 2007 remained at \$50 per landowner plus \$1.50 an acre for all irrigated lands. The Coalition was required by the Water Board to increase its number of monitoring sites from 19 to 25 in 2007. The coalition has also expanded its list of pesticides, nutrients and metals that will be analyzed (based on State requirements). Adding the extra sites plus increased monitoring at sites under Management Plans is expected to increase by 30-40% the Coalitions’ operating costs for remaining in compliance with the waiver. The Coalition also paid the 12 cent per acre fee assessed on irrigated acreage by the State Water Resources Control Board. Fortunately, a surge in membership in late 2006 enabled the Coalition Board of directors to keep membership costs at the same level as last year. Members will be mailed renewal invoices in March 2007.

Coalition Management

A Board of Directors manages Coalition affairs. The Board Chairman and Executive Director is Parry Klassen, a fruit grower and also Executive Director of the Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship (CURES). Board members include:

- Julia D. Berry, Madera County Farm Bureau
- Lee Erickson, almond grower, Madera
- Richard Gemperle, Gemperle Enterprises
- Bill McKinney, almond grower
- Kevin Olsen, S & J Ranch
- Bruce Pace, A.L. Gilbert Co.
- Diana Westmoreland Pedrozo, Merced County Farm Bureau;
- Alan Reynolds, Gallo Vineyards, Inc.;
- Jim Wagner, Wilbur-Ellis
- Wayne Zipser, Stanislaus Co. Farm Bureau;

Ex-officio

- Dennis Gudgel, Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner;
- David Robinson, Merced County Agricultural Commissioner.
- Bob Rolan, Madera County Agricultural Commissioner

Coalition Goals

- To operate an efficient, economical program that enables members to be in compliance with the Irrigated Lands Waiver.
- File required reports with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) to maintain conditional waiver coverage for Coalition members.
- Implement an economical and scientifically valid water monitoring program for area rivers and agricultural drains (as required by the waiver).
- Spread costs equitably among owner/operators who are Coalition members.
- Communicate to landowners where water monitoring indicates problems and work to solve those problems.

Coalition Membership Responsibility

The individual members of the Coalition are ultimately responsible for the success of ESJWQC. Failure of the Coalition to meet deadlines, implement the proper monitoring programs or work to correct water quality problems would mean that individual land owners would be responsible for fulfilling those requirements. While Stanislaus County Farm Bureau and CURES representatives signed the notice of intent

for the Coalition, it is the Coalition participants who are ultimately responsible for participating in Coalition activities, paying their fair share of all costs to carry out the conditional waiver program and participating in efforts to solve problems identified through water monitoring.

Coalition Cooperating Entities

Cooperating entities are those local groups and organizations who are committed to assisting the Coalition in reaching its goals and includes:

- Calaveras County Agricultural Commissioner
- Chowchilla Irrigation District
- Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship
- Ducks Unlimited
- East Merced Resource Conservation District
- East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District
- Madera County Farm Bureau
- Madera County Agricultural Commissioner
- Mariposa County Agricultural Commissioner
- Mariposa County Farm Bureau
- Merced County Agricultural Commissioner
- Merced County Farm Bureau
- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Madera
- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Merced
- Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stanis.
- Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner
- Stanislaus Co. Department of Enviro. Resources
- Stanislaus County Farm Bureau
- Tuolumne County Agricultural Commissioner
- Tuolumne County Farm Bureau

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