



Coalition Makes Progress Correcting WQ Problems in Region

Sampling for pesticides from February through September 2009 in three priority watersheds showed the Coalition's watershed approach works! Only one pesticide exceedance was found in Dry Creek in September and we believe it was an application by a non-coalition member participating in another Water Board program. Neither Duck Slough nor Prairie Flower Drain had a single pesticide exceedance or toxicity to test organisms during 2009!

The three waterways – Dry Creek (Stanislaus County), Duck Slough/Mariposa Creek (Merced County) and Prairie Flower Drain (Stanislaus County) – were selected as top priority Management Plans by the ESJWQC in 2008. These three waterways had more pesticide exceedances and toxicity to test organisms than any of the 20 waterways monitored by the Coalition.

Coalition Approach in Management Plan Watersheds

In 2008, the Coalition identified all parcels owned by coalition members bordering the three priority waterways. In winter/spring 2009, coalition staff met with 100% of the member property owners/operators to discuss practices used on the fields and additional practices that could be implemented. A survey was also completed so information on current practices and recommendations could be documented on a watershed level. The Coalition's effort paid off!

Work Begins on Next Priority Watersheds

Coalition staff recently began visiting members on the next four priority waterways on its list of 20: Cottonwood Creek in Madera County and three waterways in Merced County: Bear Creek, Duck Slough (western stream segment) and Highline Canal. Once those visits are completed in 2010, the effort will continue in the other waterways where coalition water and sediment monitoring have resulted in Management Plans. Follow-up calls will also be made in 2010 to landowners in the initial three watersheds to gather information on practices used in 2009.

Coalition Membership

ESJWQC membership remained relatively stable in 2009, with 2371 landowners operating 547,912 acres of irrigated crop land. The biggest drop in acres came from dairy operations who continue to transfer their irrigated land into their individual permit, a separate program required by the Regional Water Board.

2010 Membership Dues Remain Unchanged

Membership dues in 2010 remain at \$50 per landowner plus \$2.00 an acre for all irrigated lands. In November, invoices were mailed out to members with a deadline for renewal set for February 28, 2010. Member dues pay for managing the coalition and performing the monitoring and reporting required by the Regional Water Board. The dues also cover the 12 cent per acre fee assessed on irrigated acreage by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Groundwater Regulations Moving Forward

A first glimpse at new potential groundwater regulations is expected in June 2010. The Regional Water Board is working on an Environmental Impact Report for its Long Term Irrigated Lands Program which will replace the current program that expires in 2011. In June, the Water Board is scheduled to release its "staff recommended program" for public comment. The draft program will include what staff believes is a workable program for irrigated agriculture. While the surface water component is expected to look similar to the current program, the question is how groundwater, in particular use of nutrients in farming, will be regulated. Read more in the Groundwater Issue of *Watershed Coalition News* available on request from the Coalition or at

<http://www.curesworks.org/WCNGround09.pdf>.

2009 Annual Report Mailed in December

The Coalition Annual Member Report is being mailed out in mid to late December. The annual report includes water and sediment monitoring results from 2009 plus information on the sites collected since the Coalition began sampling in 2005 or when the site was added to the list. Extra copies can be ordered by contacting us at www.esjcoalition.org. Electronic versions of the current and past reports can be read or downloaded from the Members Only section of the website.

Coalition Board Seeking New Members

The coalition is seeking members who are interested in participating on the Board of Directors. The Board manages Coalition affairs and typically meets every four to six weeks. Anyone interested can contact us through the website or by calling the numbers at the end of this newsletter. Currently, 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
- Brian Franzia, West Coast Grape Farming, Inc.
- Richard Gemperle, Gemperle Enterprises
- Bill McKinney, almond grower
- Alan Reynolds, Gallo Vineyards, Inc.
- Jim Wagner, Wilbur-Ellis Co.
- Wayne Zipser, Stanislaus Co. Farm Bureau

Non-Voting members

- Gary Caseri, Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner
- Christopher Hartley, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Modesto
- 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 Regulatory Program. (ILRP)
- File required reports with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) to maintain ILRP coverage for Coalition members.

- Implement an economical and scientifically valid water monitoring program for area rivers and agricultural drains (as required by the ILRP).
- 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 Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program and participating in efforts to solve problems identified through water monitoring.

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