

SAC-VALLEY NEWS

SVWQC actions, accomplishments, and updates

1.1+ MILLION IRRIGATED ACRES

8,700+ PARTICIPANTS

12 SUBWATERSHEDS

Coalition Addresses Rising Cost of Compliance

While the Northern California Water Association, which manages the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition, works hard to keep the program and monitoring cost increases it controls in check, NCWA is also proactively addressing the rising cost in State Water Board fees. This past September the State Water Quality Control Board imposed a seventeen (17) cent increase to the fee, making it now \$1.29 an irrigated acre. In response, NCWA sent a letter to the State Budget Committee requesting it allocate \$10 million, a tiny portion of the historic General Fund Budget surplus, annually to mitigate the rising cost of compliance. With the Legislative Analyst's Office predicting another historic Budget surplus for 2022, Agricultural Coalitions and commodity groups are initiating talks with key decision-makers to ensure a General Fund allocation is included in the State Budget.

In the last decade, the State Water Quality fee on irrigated lands has doubled from 56 cents to \$1.12 an irrigated acre. Farmers and ranchers of irrigated lands in the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition fund over 20% of the annual costs statewide, despite our region showing a limited threat to water quality. The State Water Quality fee has increased so much that it is now 30-50% of the total per acre fee paid by farming and ranching families, placing an enormous burden on farmers and ranchers.

Farmers and ranchers in the Sacramento River Basin collectively spend millions of dollars every year protecting surface and groundwater to ensure Californians have safe drinking water and our healthy aquatic ecosystems flourish, which are habitat for 50% of the threatened and endangered species in California, including the winter-run and spring-run salmon, steelhead, and many other fish species. The working lands these farmers and ranchers manage include nature-based solutions such as planting cover crops and/or participating in healthy soils practices that sequester carbon, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and addresses climate change, as Governor Gavin Newsom highlighted in Executive Order 82-20.



The latest in this month's issue:

STATE WATER QUALITY FEE & COST OF COMPLIANCE

SURFACE WATER MONITORING UPDATE

EXEMPTION FOR MANAGED WETLANDS

COALITION VS. SUBWATERSHED

MEMBER INFORMATION

- DRINKING WATER WELL MONITORING
- DISTRIBUTION UNIFORMITY AND OUTREACH
- UPCOMING INMP SELF-CERTIFICATION TRAINING

2021 Monitoring Year Complete

Results Continue to Show Good Water Quality in the Sacramento Valley

On September 30, 2021, the 2021 Monitoring Year came to a close and the 2022 Monitoring Year began (monitoring years run from October-September). 2021 was an assessment year for Reduced Monitoring Subwatersheds (Napa, Lake, El Dorado, Upper Feather River, NECWA) and the last of two core monitoring years for the broader Coalition. 22 sites were

visited in the 12-month period. Additionally, pyrethroid baseline monitoring was performed at most monitoring sites as part of the Pyrethroid Basin Plan Amendment (BPA). Results from the 2021 monitoring year show that with limited exceptions, surface water quality in the Sacramento Valley is good. That being said, a particular area of concern is pyrethroid pesticides.

Pyrethroid pesticides are important tools in protecting crops from many types of pests. However, they adhere strongly to sediment particles, can be carried off-site in run-off, negatively impact aquatic species, and trigger exceedances and in turn management plans. **Under the Pyrethroid BPA, pyrethroid pesticides have VERY LOW exceedance thresholds.** As of now, the Coalition is in discussions with the Regional Board regarding pyrethroid exceedances and when those exceedances will trigger management plans. The bottom line is, exceedances will begin to trigger management plans VERY SOON, meaning just a small amount could have a huge impact. Consequences for mistakes during application expand beyond simply triggering management plans and adding to program costs; products could be restricted or prohibited, which would have far-reaching impacts. It is extremely important that proper precaution be taken by anyone handling pesticides. By adhering to best management practices, potential drift and run-off can be minimized, Coalition costs can be minimized, and harm to aquatic life and the agricultural community can be avoided.

**SVWQC 2021 Monitoring Year Summary:
October 2020 - September 2021**

Analyte	# of Analyses	# of Exceedances	% Exceedances
pH	87	2	2%
Dissolved Oxygen	90	11	12%
Salinity	94	24	26%
E. coli	58	6	10%
Nutrients	173	1	1%
Trace Metals	40	2	5%
Registered Pesticides (Non-pyrethroids)	112	0	0%
Ceriodaphnia and Selenastrum Toxicity	54	0	0%
Pyrethroid Baseline Monitoring			
Pyrethroids ¹	75	8	11%
Hyalella Azteca Toxicity	104	14	13%

[1] - Pyrethroid exceedance considers measured concentrations of six TMDL pyrethroids (deltamethrin, cyfluthrin, cypermethrin, estenvalerate, lambda-cyhalothrin, permethrin)

For more information on the Pyrethroid BPA, best management practices to reduce pyrethroid movement, or monitoring results in your specific area, please email sacvalleyinfo@gmail.com or contact your local Subwatershed.

Regional Board Approves ILRP Exemption for Managed Wetlands

On October 15, 2021, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board took action to exempt managed wetlands across the Central Valley from the ILRP. The exemption applies to fields operated exclusively as managed wetlands, not managed wetlands where irrigated agriculture and wetland operations are rotated on the same land. The Coalition has roughly 28,500 acres of managed wetlands that are now exempt from the ILRP, marking another victory for growers in the Central Valley.

Coalition vs. Subwatershed

History, Benefits, and Looking Forward

History

The framework of the SVWQC is unique when compared to other Central Valley Water Quality Coalitions. Whereas other Coalitions have one contact organization for all their members, the SVWQC is sub-divided into Subwatershed Groups.

Why is that? The framework was established in 2014 when the Regional Board adopted the Sacramento River Watershed WDR and MRP (R5-2014-0030). In response, the Northern California Water Association (NCWA) filed for and was issued a Notice of Applicability (NOA) to be designated the third-party entity for the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition representing growers in the Sacramento River Watershed. However, with over 1 million acres, 8,700+ landowners, and recognizing the diversity of agriculture in the Sacramento River Watershed, the Coalition decided to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with 13 subsidiary groups, which were called Subwatershed Groups. These Subwatershed Groups became the local face of the Coalition. They assist members in their respective areas with reporting and compliance as well as perform personalized outreach. However, behind the Subwatershed Group is the broader Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition. At the Coalition level, NCWA coordinates the Subwatersheds and manages consultants, and develops the budget. Perhaps most relevant to members, member data from reports are ultimately sent to the Coalition for analysis.



Benefits

In the end, the Coalition-Subwatershed Framework has worked out well for the Coalition. The needs of irrigated pasture in the upper watersheds are vastly different from the needs of walnut orchards on the valley floor. Additionally, the Subwatershed Groups are divided geographically based on surface water drainages, and with the historical focus of the ILRP being on surface water monitoring, the designation method seemed natural.

Looking Forward

With 12 Subwatershed Groups working towards a common goal, the Coalition has begun to identify areas that could be consolidated and streamlined. For example, trainings and meetings are now being coordinated at the Coalition-level and the Coalition has begun preparing outreach materials for distribution to all Subwatersheds (such as this newsletter). Additionally, in the last 5 years, the Waterboards (both State and Regional) have shifted their focus from surface water to groundwater and a slough of groundwater protection elements have been inserted into WDRs across the Central Valley. Groundwater boundaries are not the same as surface water boundaries. As a result, the Coalition has begun to rethink the Subwatershed boundaries themselves in efforts to best serve members throughout the Coalition and protect both surface water and groundwater quality.



Coalition Member Information Hub



PREVIEW : Drinking Water Well Monitoring in 2022

High levels of nitrates in groundwater have been found in some agricultural areas, which if consumed, can cause serious health effects (such as methemoglobinemia or "blue baby syndrome"). In response, the State Water Board adopted a precedential order revising WDRs to include a drinking water well monitoring requirement. The purpose is to identify wells with unsafe nitrate levels and notify well users of potential impacts to human health. The monitoring requirement applies to wells used for drinking or cooking on **ENROLLED** parcels of the ILRP only.

Beginning in 2022, SVWQC members will be required to sample their drinking wells annually unless:

1. Nitrate + nitrite as nitrogen results are **less than 8mg/L** for 3 consecutive years - continue sampling once every 5 years
2. Nitrate + nitrate as nitrogen results are **above 10mg/L** - must notify users and provide a clean water alternative
3. You have well data from Nitrate + nitrate as nitrogen from the last 5 years from an ELAP certified laboratory.

Much more information will be provided in the coming months. Members may also visit https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/drinking_water/#overview.

New Distribution Uniformity Questions Will Help Guide Outreach

Members in the BYS, CGSP, Dixon-Solano, PNSSNS, SAWQA, STWEC, and Yolo County Subwatersheds will notice 10 new questions relating to distribution uniformity (DU) when they log-in to complete their annual reporting for the 2021 crop year. DU measures how uniformly water is applied across a field during irrigation. It has implications for irrigation efficiency which in turn is related to nitrate leaching and groundwater quality, a major concern of growers, the Coalition, and the Regional Board. Members in the above-mentioned Subwatersheds will see these 10 questions beginning with reporting for the 2021 crop year. These questions will not only help the Coalition and members meet the Groundwater Management Practice Implementation Report requirements but also help guide Coalition and Subwatershed outreach.

Upcoming!

Grower INMP Self-Certification Training Webinar

Tuesday, January 25, 2022 - 8 am to 12 pm

The Training is an online webinar. Tech requirements are: computer or smartphone with internet connection and an active email address **To Register: Call or email 916-778-0993 or svwqcinfo@gmail.com or visit www.svwqc.org**

General Questions

sacvalleyinfo@gmail.com
www.svwqc.org

DIRECTORY

Bruce Houdesheldt,
 Director of Water Quality
 Email: bruceh@norcalwater.org
 Phone: 916-442-8333

Chelsie Bryden,
 Program Coordinator
 Email: svwqccordinator@gmail.com
 Phone: 916-778-0993

Central Valley Regional
 Quality Control Board,
 ILRP Division
 Phone: 916-464-4611
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/