

East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition  
1201 L Street  
Modesto, CA 95354

*For Immediate Release*

## **County Letter Informs Farmers of Farm Runoff Options**

*December 11, 2003* -- More than 4500 farmers in Stanislaus and Merced Counties will be receiving letters this week from their County Agricultural Commissioner asking them to make an important decision: sign-up with a new watershed coalition formed to comply with recently approved farm runoff regulations or deal directly with the Regional Water Board.

Farmers must make this choice under a new “conditional waiver” adopted by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board on July 11, 2003. A key “condition” for farmers to comply with the waiver is either joining a watershed coalition or filing a Notice of Intent with the Regional Water Board to participate in the conditional waiver as an individual. Filing an individual report is estimated at \$10,000 for the first year and \$3000 to \$6000 annually thereafter for monitoring and reporting.

The East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition was formed earlier this year to represent owners and operators of irrigated crop land east of the San Joaquin River in Stanislaus, Merced, Tuolumne and Mariposa counties. The Coalition filed its first official document with the Regional Board on November 1, naming its key contacts, listing 10 cooperating entities and committing to work with the Regional Water Board on farm-related water quality problems in the region.

“A main goal of the coalition is filing the necessary reports with the Regional Water Board to provide conditional waiver coverage for members of the coalition,” says Wayne Zipser, Director of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau and a co-signator to the November 1 filing. “That includes developing and implementing an economical and scientifically valid water monitoring program for area rivers and agricultural drains.”

To cover the cost of developing the monitoring plan and performing monitoring, the coalition is charging land owners or operators \$100 to join. The coalition estimates the first season

operating costs at more than \$100,000. “Water monitoring is required by the waiver and membership dues are our only way to cover those costs,” says Zipser. “Once the water monitoring starts next summer, it will be the Coalition’s responsibility to communicate with landowners where monitoring indicates problems then work to solve those problems.” The deadline for joining the Coalition is January 15, 2003.

The Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner’s office has scheduled a series of meetings on the conditional waiver and Coalition activities. Continuing education hours will be offered. The meeting dates and sites are:

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2003                      10:00 am - Noon  
Salida Fire Department  
4820 Salida Blvd.  
Salida

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003                      3:00pm-5:00pm.  
Oakdale Community Center  
280 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Oakdale

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003                      1:30pm-3:30pm  
Keyes Fire Department  
5625 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Keyes

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