



Second Year of Progress In Targeted Watersheds

The ESJWQC approach for addressing water quality problems continues to show positive results. As described in the 2010 annual report, seven waterways in the coalition region where frequent exceedances of water quality standards were recorded between 2004 and 2008 are now showing very few to no exceedances since 2009, after Coalition representatives held more than 115 individual grower visits in 2009 and 2010. Coalition members with fields along these waterways deserve much credit since they adopted practices that keep farm inputs from leaving their property.

Work continues in 2011 as Coalition staff meets with members who farm in the next set of priority watersheds: Dry Creek and Berenda Slough in Madera County and Livingston Drain and Lateral 2 ½ in Merced County.

Winter Storms Don't Net Negative Results

Despite the heavy rains in November and December, monitoring during the period didn't indicate any abnormal toxicity test results except for Deadman's Creek south of Merced. Toxicity to water flea and fathead minnow and high ammonia levels in that waterway on November 16 were likely caused by a release from a dairy lagoon or other confined animal facility in the watershed. Regional Water Board enforcement staff made a follow-up investigation but did not report any additional action as of press time. Not unusual in the Coalition region was the reporting of six dry sites in November. Coming out of an exceptionally dry summer and fall, runoff doesn't typically begin until well into December which did in fact occur following heavy rains during the year end holiday period.

Assessment Monitoring Resumes in 2011

Every third year, the ESJWQC changes its water and sediment sampling approach to what is called "assessment monitoring." This is where waterways in the six coalition "zones" are sampled on a monthly cycle; beginning in January and continuing through December (see annual report for a detailed description of the program). With each sample, a full suite of constituents are analyzed such as multiple pesticides, metals, nutrients, hardness and organic carbon. Also performed are toxicity tests on water flea, fathead minnow and algae. Sediment samples are taken in the spring and fall with the *Hyalella* organism used as the indicator of toxicity. If toxicity occurs, a sediment chemistry test is performed to identify chemicals potentially responsible for the toxicity.

In 2009 and 2010, the Coalition performed "core monitoring" at only half of the locations. Core monitoring focuses on basic physical parameters (pH, EC, DO) and nutrients and analyzes for constituents that have been found above state standards during prior years' assessment monitoring.

This assessment and core monitoring strategy was developed by the Coalition as a more cost effective way to track water quality in the region over time. The Regional Water Board agrees and approved the strategy in 2006.

So if you see more activity at the Coalition sampling sites in 2011, you'll know it is part of the Coalition approach designed to get the most from member dues.

Monitoring Results Available on Quarterly Basis

The Coalition is offering members quarterly updates of monitoring results from sites being sampled in 2011. In 2010, more than 200 members signed up to receive the updates either through the mail or via email. The one page summary of results shows exceedances and flow rates of waterways sampled in the previous three months. The next quarterly report will be sent out in February and will cover the period from October through December 2010. While toxicity test results are available several days after a sampling event, chemistry analysis can take 45 to 60 days to receive, depending on the workload at our contract laboratories. Contact us via phone or email (listed at the end of this newsletter) if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

Coalition Membership

ESJWQC membership remained relatively stable in 2010, with 2294 landowners operating 546,134 acres of irrigated crop land. A slight decline 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.

2011 Membership Dues Remain Unchanged

Membership dues in 2011 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, 2011. 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.

2010 Annual Report Mailed in January

The Coalition Annual Member Report is being mailed out in January. The annual report includes water and sediment monitoring results from 2010 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. The password is ESJwater.

Coalition Board Adds New Members in 2010

The Coalition Board of Directors added four new members in 2010: Al Brizard, a retired farmer and former sitting member of the Regional Water Board; John Eisenhut of Hilltop Ranch; Amanda Carvajal, the new director for Merced Co. Farm Bureau; and Diana Waller, the new district conservationist for NRCS in Modesto. 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).

The current Board includes:

- Julia D. Berry, Madera County Farm Bureau
- Al Brizard, retired farmer
- Amanda Carvajal, Merced Co. Farm Bureau
- John Eisenhut, Hilltop Ranch
- 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
- David Robinson, Merced County Agricultural Commissioner
- Bob Rolan, Madera County Agricultural Commissioner
- Diana Waller, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Modesto

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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