



February 2014

Deadline Extended to May 1 for Farm Evaluation

An extension of the deadline for submitting a Farm Evaluation is all but assured by the Regional Water Board. A request for public comments on extending the deadline from March 1 to May 1 has so far met with no protests from organizations who might oppose such a move. A vote on the extension is scheduled for March 27 at the Regional Water Board meeting in Rancho Cordova. Seeking public comment is required before any changes

can be made in a coalition's Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) once the regulation is adopted.

The deadline extension was sought by ESJWQC after development of an online system for completing the Farm Evaluation was delayed when a company bidding for the work claimed such a system would violate their patent. The patent issue has been resolved and the online system is nearing completion by ESJWQC staff.

Farm Evaluation Mailings to Begin February 11

The first "wave" of Farm Evaluations is being mailed on February 11 to ESJWQC members in Merced County. Mailings to members in Stanislaus and Madera counties will be sent over the subsequent 3 weeks with all Farm Evaluations expected to be in member's hands by March 7. Contact ESJWQC if you have not received the Farm Evaluation by that date.

For those who are filling out the survey on the ESJWQC website, that function is expected to be operational by February 21. Only those members who have indicated on their membership renewal to receive all coalition correspondence via email or those who responded to a January email or mailing can complete the survey online. If a member wants to complete the survey online and has not notified ESJWQC, they must contact the coalition at esj_Admin@esjcoalition.org and indicate the change to online submittal. This step is necessary since only those members who have selected the online option will have their personalized Farm Evaluation accessible on the

website. Members wanting to complete the form online will use their email address to log-in along with their member ID number.

Workshops Set To Assist Members, If Needed

The Farm Evaluation was written with two major goals in mind: keep it simple and gather an inventory of practices that members use to protect surface and groundwater. The coalition has scheduled workshops in February and March to assist those members who may need help completing the forms. However, the vast majority of members should be able to complete the Farm Evaluation on their own. ESJWQC staff will be at the Stanislaus, Merced and Madera county farm bureau offices from 9 am to 4 pm on select days to provide assistance. A calendar of days and times will be included with the Farm Evaluation mailing and can also be found at www.esjcoalition.org/events.asp. No appointments are needed on the designated days. These workshops will not count toward the mandatory outreach event now required of all ESJWQC members.

ESJWQC Annual Meeting Attendance Sets Record

An all-time record of 1400 members attended the ESJWQC annual meetings held in Modesto, Merced and Madera in mid January. Helping boost the attendance was a new format of repeating the morning meeting in the afternoon at each venue with lunch splitting the sessions. Likely another contributor to the high attendance was the new requirement that coalition members must attend at least one outreach meeting per year. For those who could not attend the January meetings, ESJWQC

is scheduling a repeat of the sessions later this Spring followed by another series of outreach meetings in Fall 2014. Members will be notified in upcoming issues of ESJ Update and on the coalition website when the dates and locations are set. The slide show presentations given at the January meetings can be viewed on the coalition website by following this link:

<http://www.esjcoalition.org/presentations.asp>

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Expert Panel Set To Convene

An "Expert Panel," as recommended by the State Water Board in its report to California Legislature, is set to convene its first meetings in May to begin addressing issues related to the impact of nitrogen fertilizer on groundwater quality. The State Water Resources Control Board announced in mid-February it had begun seeking nominations for the up to 10-member Expert Panel and expects to hold three public meetings around the State in May. An Advisory Committee made up of various stakeholders will also be part of the process with participation open to any interested groups or individuals. After a series of public workshops, the Panel is expected to release a draft report the end of June, ask for public comments in July with a final report set to be released in September.

The Expert Panel will seek to answer a series of questions outlined in a State Water Board report to the California legislature. Among other issues, the panel will:

- Develop or endorse a methodology for determining when a particular farm poses a risk to loading nitrates to groundwater;
- Develop a template for nutrient balance determinations;
- Consider the best approaches to evaluate nitrate discharges to groundwater;
- Evaluate the selection of appropriate indicators of risk to water quality as one of the long-term, state-wide issues it considers;
- Consider appropriate structures and methodologies for monitoring that may support long-term nitrate control efforts;
- Consider both the receiving water and discharge monitoring approaches to identification of problem discharges.

GAR Workshop Set for February 26

The Regional Water Board is holding a public workshop on February 26 to air the Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR) recently submitted to the agency by the ESJWQC. Each Central Valley coalition is required to prepare and submit for review this detailed report that, among other things, proposes where high and low vulner-

ability regions are within the coalition boundaries. A final determination is made on those vulnerability areas by the Regional Water Board and is expected later this year. Maps of the proposed vulnerability areas were included in the ESJWQC annual report mailed to members in January. The GAR workshop is being held on Wednesday, February 26, from 10-12 am at the Stanislaus County Ag Center, Harvest Hall, in Modesto.

WDRs Approved for Westside and Westlands Coalitions

The Regional Water Board approved the third and fourth Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) for Central Valley coalitions when it adopted on January 9 the WDRs for the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition and the Westlands Water District. A WDR for the South San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition WDR was passed on September 13. As was the case for the ESJWQC, all existing coalitions in the Central Valley will need to apply to the Regional Water Board to represent growers in their respective regions. The regulations adopted to date have only minor changes compared to the order adopted for the ESJWQC in December 2012, primarily deadlines for growers to submit farm evaluations, nitrogen management plans and sediment and erosion control plans. At the March 11-12 meeting of the Regional Water Board, the following coalitions will have their own WDRs up for a vote:

- California Rice Commission
- San Joaquin County and Delta Coalition
- Sacramento River Water Quality Coalition

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