

March 2009

Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition

A Coalition of Westside water districts and the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority providing Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program coverage for farmers and landowners

UPDATE

Grants Could Bring Millions to Region for BMP Installations

Two potential and one definite source of funding to assist in installing farm practices to protect surface water are available to Westside San Joaquin Valley growers. The Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition is offering its members a total of \$30,000 for constructing new tailwater silt ponds or to clean out existing silt ponds. The program will fund 50% of the costs of any single project, up to a maximum of \$1,500 per project. Applications for the funding are available from local water districts in the region. A second significant source of funding for BMP installations in the Central Valley is being held up by the state financial crisis. Nearly \$8 million in funding approved by California voters under Proposition 84 was put on hold in December along with millions of dollars in grants earmarked for state highway construction and other projects.

Once the funds are released, possibly by mid 2009, growers will be able to seek 75% cost share funding (25% match required) for practices such as sediment ponds, recirculation systems or support to purchase equipment for use of water quality improvement technology (i.e. PAM or enzymes). Projects must be located in watersheds under a Coalition Management Plan. Project proposals will be reviewed by a panel of state agencies, coalition representatives and the Water Board. A third source of funding is being sought through a grant supported by the USDA Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program. A funding proposal, submitted on March 2 and competing against other proposals nationwide, asks for \$10 million over five years to be used in Stanislaus and Merced Counties for BMP installations. USDA is expected to select projects for funding by April 15.

Monitoring for Fall 2008/Winter 2009 Finds Few Problems

Water monitoring in the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley in Fall 2008 found few exceedances of water

quality standards and only one currently used pesticide above state standards. In sampling for September 2008, chlorpyrifos (Lorsban, Lock-On, Govern) was found above state standards in Mud and Salt Slough and the San Joaquin River at Sack Dam (the latter just slightly above the standard). Another chlorpyrifos exceedance was logged in November in the Delta Mendota Canal at a site near the Del Puerto Water District office. DDE, the breakdown product for the legacy pesticide DDT was found only once, in November 2008. That exceedance occurred in Mud Slough. DDT was found in January 2009, the lone pesticide exceedance for that month. Other than these four exceedances, no other currently used pesticides were found above standards in the 26 sites sampled on the Westside from September 2008 through January 2009. Sampling did find frequent exceedances of EC, a measurement of salt levels in the water. High EC levels are common on the Westside, a result of higher salinity soils and elevated levels in surface water supplies.

2008 Sampling Season Completed

The Fall sampling period completed the 2008 requirement to measure water and sediment quality compliance under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. In the 2008 sampling period, the Westside Coalition tested for almost 3,700 pesticides. Pesticides were detected in 266 samples and 87 samples were above State Receiving Water Limits. Of the 87 exceedances, 47 were caused by legacy pesticides no longer in use (either DDT or the breakdown products DDD and DDE). Nine pesticides accounted for all the remaining exceedances. These include the insecticides chlorpyrifos, diazinon, methyl parathion, dimethoate and methidathion. Also found was the herbicide diuron. The remainder of exceedances were from the legacy pesticides listed above.

Long Term Irrigated Lands Program In Development

Discussions have begun between state regulators, agriculture and environmental groups on the direction of a Long Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. The current program is set to expire in 2011. The Regional Water Board is attempting to have a draft plan completed by December 2009. While much of the new program could end up looking similar to the existing ILRP, it appears groundwater regulation may be added. At a joint meeting of the State and Regional Water Boards in August 2007, members from both Boards directed staff to begin planning how to include groundwater in the long term program.

Coalition Management

A Regional Water Quality Management Steering Committee (part of San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority) oversees the Coalition activities.

Coalition Goals

- * To operate an efficient, economical program that enables members to be in compliance with the Irrigated Lands Waiver.
- * File required reports with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) to maintain conditional waiver coverage for Coalition members.
- * Implement an economical and scientifically valid water monitoring program for area creeks and agricultural drains (as required by the waiver).
- * 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 farmers and landowners are ultimately responsible for the success of the Westside Coalition. Failure 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 San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority 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.

Coalition Member Districts

Your local water district was instrumental in forming the Westside Coalition. They are committed to assisting landowners and farmers in reaching its goals and include:

- * Del Puerto Water District
- * Patterson Irrigation District
- * San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (including Central California Irrigation District, San Luis Canal Company, Firebaugh Canal Water District, and Columbia Canal Company)
- * Tranquillity Irrigation District
- * Fresno Slough Water District
- * Twin Oaks Irrigation District
- * West Stanislaus Irrigation District
- * Oak Flat Water District
- * Stevinson Water District
- * White Lake Mutual Water Company
- * Lone Tree Mutual Water Company
- * Turner Island Water District
- * San Luis Water District
- * Grassland Water District and Grassland Resource Conservation District, the California Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service representing wetland areas

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