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*TO ALL CCID LANDOWNERS AND WATER USERS: We have reproduced below an important memo that describes changes in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program that will be taking place over the next couple of years. The Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition was set up in order to assist our landowners and water users to comply with the program's requirements.*

## SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY DRAINAGE AUTHORITY

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April 2014

### NOTICE OF REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW GENERAL ORDER

Dear Members of the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition:

Since 2004 the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition (Coalition) has been providing a way for landowners and farmers to comply with the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program as required by state law. The Coalition covers lands on the west side of the San Joaquin River from Tranquillity on the south to Vernalis on the north. At a Special Meeting of the Regional Water Quality Control Board on January 9, 2014, a new General Order of Waste Discharge for the Coalition area was adopted. This new order has additional requirements for landowners and farmers including a new requirement to control discharges to groundwater. The Coalition has applied for and received approval on March 17, 2014 to continue to serve as the third party representing landowners and farmers for the new program.

For the past 10 years, the Coalition has been conducting the required surface water testing for what was called the Agricultural Discharge Waiver and the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. With the adoption of the new General Order, the responsibilities of the landowner, farmer and the Coalition have increased considerably. The General Order now covers discharges to groundwater, and as such, the Regional Board considers all irrigated, commercial agriculture to be dischargers to groundwater. Therefore, all irrigators are now required to comply with the regulations.

#### **General Background:**

The Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition is formed under the umbrella of the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority. The offices of the Coalition are in Los Banos, California. The Coalition was formed under the leadership of the irrigation and water districts that serve land on the west side of the San Joaquin River from Mendota on the south to Vernalis on the north to provide the most cost effective way for farmers to comply with this regulation. The member districts include Central California Irrigation District, San Luis Canal Company, Columbia Canal Company, San Luis Water District, Del Puerto Water District, West Stanislaus Irrigation District, Patterson Irrigation District, Oak Flat Water District, Tranquillity Irrigation District, Fresno Slough Water District, Turner Island Water District, White Lake Mutual Water Company, Lone Tree Mutual Water Company, Twin Oaks Irrigation District, Grassland Water District and Grassland Resource Conservation District.

#### **Representation:**

The activities of the Coalition are governed by a Board of Directors and Steering Committee. The representatives on the Board/Steering Committee are selected by member districts to represent their own individual members and even if the individual member is not within such Member Districts, the new member has common interests with the other represented parties. You will be notified of the regular meetings of the Coalition if requested and are invited to participate freely at such meetings.

Individual members not represented by a district are required to execute a Memorandum of Understanding and the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority Regional Water Quality Activity Special Project Agreement for the Coalition.

**Cost of the program and how payment is made:**

The annual budget for the program is set every year by the Board/Steering Committee. Member districts collect the fees for the program and make payment on behalf of their members. Each district has a different method to collect the fees. Some make payments out of other fees collected by the district, some have a separate fee and some have a combination. Please contact your district to find out the specifics. If you are not represented by a district you are billed directly by the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Authority.

**New Requirements:**

To comply with the new General Order landowners and farmers will need to meet certain deadlines and requirements.

- Landowners or operators of all lands within the Coalition area will be required to confirm their intent to remain covered by the new program.
- Any lands electing not to be covered by the Coalition program will be required to seek individual coverage directly with the Regional Board. Individual coverage will be more expensive than Coalition coverage
- Growers will be required to submit to the Coalition a Farm Evaluation report specifying measures the farm is taking to protect water quality. These reports shall also be kept at the farming headquarters and must be provided to the Regional Board upon request.
- Growers will be required to implement management practices necessary to protect both surface and groundwater quality. Could include wellhead protection requirements.
- Growers will be required to attend annual Coalition sponsored education/outreach events.
- Growers with the potential to discharge sediment to surface waters during irrigation events or storm events must prepare and implement a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.
- Growers will be required to prepare a Nitrogen Management Plan summarizing the amount of nitrogen applied to the land and the amount of nitrogen used by the crop. Summary reports must be sent to the Coalition. Reporting requirements will vary based on threat to groundwater.
- Farming operations of less than 60 acres may be given additional time to comply with some of the new program requirements.
- Growers are required to maintain a copy of the Regional Board's irrigated lands general order at the farm headquarters including a summary provided by the Regional Board and shall be familiar with the contents of the Order.
- Growers shall permit representatives of the Regional Board, at reasonable hours, to enter premises to inspect, copy, or photograph any records or facilities. Growers shall provide phone numbers to the Coalition of individuals with the authority to provide consent to access facilities.
- The Regional Board is likely to continue to increase enforcement actions against growers and landowners that do not obtain regulatory coverage or effectively implement management practices.

**Grower Deadlines:**

- Notice of Confirmation of membership – existing members – 12/15/2014 - form will be provided by the Coalition
- Farm Evaluation – 12/15/2014 – template will be provided by the Coalition
- Nitrogen Management Plan – starting 4/15/2015
- Sediment Management Plan – 9/15/2015 if applicable
- Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Report – starting 3/1/2016

**This is a summary outline. Additional information will be sent to Members in advance of deadlines applicable to them, starting with the Notice of Confirmation and Farm Evaluation Plan by July, 2014**

**Questions can be directed to your water district or by contacting Joe McGahan, Watershed Coordinator of the Westside Coalition at 559-582-9237 or email at [jmcgahan@summerseng.com](mailto:jmcgahan@summerseng.com)**