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Letter from the President

By Kirk Scilacci

Our mission is to pay for water testing, educate members on better management practices to keep our waters clean, inform our members of troubled waters, and work with environmental and government organizations to maintain clean waters.

The PNSSNS Subwatershed Group is one of ten subwatersheds in the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition authorized to provide a discharge waiver as required by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Our diverse membership represents both large and small farmers, organic farmers, rural property owners, nature and hunting preserves, animal rescue groups, country clubs, water districts and some who simply support self-monitoring to keep our waters clean.

Welcome to our fifth year as a water quality coalition! Over the past two years, there has been mounting pressure to raise our fees to pay for water testing. Other subwatersheds are charging up to \$10.00 per irrigated acre and \$125 membership fees. Yet, our Board of Directors has been very vocal about doing whatever it takes to keep the costs to our farmers and ranchers from increasing.

Behind the scenes, the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (SVWQC) has been working closely with all the subwatersheds and the Regional Water Board to change the Monitoring and Reporting Plan Program (MRPP) to eliminate duplicate testing or reduce testing for certain constituents, thereby decreasing our monitoring costs. For example, two main rice pesticides will be dropped because the Rice Commission already tests for these. The new schedule will also reduce monitoring frequency. Metals, pesticides and toxicity testing will be “dropped” for two years. In the 3rd year, an “assessment monitoring” will be completed to make certain there are no exceedances of parameters. Other pesticides that will be reduced are the legacy pesticides such as DDT and DDE. These chemicals have been banned since 1972 and will not break down for years. With the new projected monitoring costs, I am happy to report that our fees remain unchanged since our founding 5 years ago.

Besides keeping our fees low, another goal the Board of Directors explored is the idea of funding Best Management Practices (BMP) implementations for members. First we must identify members with potential projects eligible for such funding. To accomplish this task, a survey is included in the 2008-09 membership packets. We encourage every member to fill it out and return it with your renewal application.

To create a solid foundation for disseminating and receiving current data, we sought funding for a revamped website that will incorporate our newsletters, important links, exceedance reports, water monitoring reports as well as an online survey. We thank the United Auburn Indian Community for supporting our mission for a second consecutive year by funding our new website.

Finally, I must announce that I will be retiring from the Board of Directors as acting President. Although I maintain some business in Placer County, my main concern is “The DLX,” a cattle ranching operation in Oregon. Nevertheless, as a founding member and first President of this organization, I will continue to be available for consultation anytime it is needed. It has been an honor to serve and I know I am leaving the organization in good hands with new board members that will continue to look out for the interests of agriculture and the self-monitoring necessary to maintain our clean waters. ≈

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Recent Subwatershed Test Results

Taken from May 2008 SVWQC Report to the Regional Water Board - This year water monitoring was conducted at one test site on Coon Creek at Brewer Road. The site was monitored for multiple parameters and showed a marginally high pH measurement. The cause of the pH exceedance was not determined. Based on the time of year, flows, and water temperatures, the exceedance was not likely to have been caused by instream algae respiration. Because there is no significant agricultural activity occurring in the drainage during this season (sample taken 2/22/08), there is no apparent likely agricultural cause of the exceedance. The measured pH of 8.87 was less than 1 pH unit above the relatively high average pH observed at this site (approximately 8.0). Therefore the pH measured may not be an unusual value for this water body.≈

California Water Quality: The Role of Agriculture

This article is excerpted from a study completed by Hossein Farzin and Kelly Grogan and published in "Agricultural and Resource Economics UPDATE," Vol 11, No. 6, August/September 2008, University of California, Davis. The authors note that:

While California's agriculture has been vibrant and growing, the quality of the state's water bodies has weakened. However, despite the common perception that agricultural production is a principal culprit, our study shows that this is not generally true. It shows that only a very small portion of water pollutants attributed to agricultural production are actually positively correlated with agricultural production while the majority of the pollutants have *no* relationship, and some of them are even *negatively* correlated.

While agriculture can be an easy target for those looking to place the blame for poor water quality, this study shows that agriculture is *not* the main culprit of some typical agricultural pollutants found in surface water. People commonly associate *soil erosion* with agriculture, and soil erosion leads to increased total suspended solids (TSS). We find that crops do not contribute to total suspended solids, and that animal production even appears to decrease TSS. Ammonia is another pollutant commonly

associated with agricultural production, but we find no connection between the two when considering surface water. Some of the misconception with regard to agriculture and surface water quality may stem from agriculture's impact on *groundwater* quality.

However, practices like agricultural buffers can prevent much surface water contamination, while few mitigative measures exist to protect groundwater. Surface water pollutants like nitrites, nitrates, sulfates, phosphorous, and specific conductivity are, however, significantly positively correlated with agricultural production. This suggests that agriculturally targeted surface water quality programs should focus on these pollutants in counties with high agricultural intensities, while groundwater quality programs may need to target a wider range of pollutants.≈

Mr. Farzin is a professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UC Davis. He can be contacted by e-mail at farzin@primal.ucdavis.edu. Kelly Grogan is a Ph.D. student in the ARE department at UC Davis who can be reached at grogan@primal.ucdavis.edu. You may view the entire study at http://www.agecon.ucdavis.edu/extension/update/articles/v11n6_4.pdf

2008 – 2009

Fee Schedule

Due before Nov. 30, 2008

Annual Dues = \$55.00

After Nov. 30 = \$80.00

Irrigated Acreage Fees

0 – 10 acres = \$10.00

11 – 20 acres = \$15.00

21 – 40 acres = \$20.00

41 – 80 acres = \$40.00

More than 80 acres =

50¢ per acre

\$55 + Acreage Fee =

Total Membership Dues

2nd Annual Meeting Held

On February 6th and 7th, Board President Kirk Scilacci conducted the 2nd annual membership meetings held in Placer and Nevada counties respectively. Several guest speakers including Tina Lunt, SVWQC; Parry Klassen, CURES; and Jodi Pontureri, Regional Water Board presented information regarding the Irrigated Lands Program future concerns. On February 7th at the Nevada County meeting, Charlie Hoppin, State Board Member, joined the group and shared water concerns in California. He expressed gratitude to the Board of Directors for providing a low cost, self-monitoring option for agriculture to maintain clean waters.≈



Surrounded by PNSSNS Board of Directors, Charlie Hoppin, State Board Member spoke at the 2nd annual meeting. From left: Gerald Bushore, Kirk Scilacci, Charlie Hoppin, Frank Correira, Bonnie Ferreira, and Tom Aguilar.

Ag Chemicals Endanger Salmon . . .

Excerpted from (AP) article, Grants Pass, Oregon -

Three pesticides commonly used on farms and orchards throughout the West are jeopardizing the survival of Pacific salmon, the federal agency in charge of saving the fish from extinction has found.

Under the settlement of a lawsuit brought by anti-pesticide groups and salmon fishermen, NOAA Fisheries has issued a draft biological opinion that found the way chlorpyrifos, diazinon and malathion get into salmon streams at levels high enough to kill salmon protected by the Endangered Species Act. The chemicals interfere with salmon's sense of smell, making it harder for them to avoid predators, find food, and even find their native spawning streams.

Banned from many household uses, tens of millions of pounds of the chemicals are still used throughout the range of Pacific salmon on a wide range of fruits, vegetables, forage crops, cotton, fence posts and livestock to control mosquitoes, flies, termites, boll weevils and other pests, according to NOAA Fisheries.

Jim Lecky, head of the office of protected resources for NOAA Fisheries Service, said his team has until a court-imposed deadline of Oct. 31 to work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to find new ways to safely use the chemicals. Lecky would not speculate whether the pesticides might ultimately be banned, but acknowledged that scientists have found that even with careful use under current guidelines, the chemicals are finding their way into streams at levels harmful to salmon. The chemicals are the first of 37 that NOAA Fisheries and EPA must evaluate by 2012 under terms of a settlement reached last week in a lawsuit brought by Northwest Coalition Against Pesticides and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, which represents California commercial salmon fishermen. A total of 28 species of Pacific salmon are classified as threatened or endangered from overfishing, dams, logging, grazing, urban development, pollution, irrigation, misguided hatchery practices and other threats. Lecky said he could not say where pesticides rank in the threats to salmon, but eliminating the harm from pesticides would boost efforts to save them.≈

PNSSNS Comment: Chlorpyrifos is used in California and has in the past exceeded water quality standards in Coon Creek. If all three of these chemicals are banned, it will be challenging for the commercial farmer. Larvacide for mosquitoes is used and when mosquitoes are really bad, farmers tend to use malathion. Please follow all proper use instructions and environmental safety precautions when using these chemicals.≈

Contact Information

Board of Directors

Effective January 1, 2009

President - Tom Aguilar

Placer County, mandarin grower

Vice President - Ed Sills

Sutter County, organic diversified farmer

Treasurer - Bonnie Ferreira

Placer County, diversified/cattle rancher

Secretary - Jim Gates

Nevada County, organic cattle rancher

Director - Frank Correia

Placer County, cattle rancher

Director - Gerald Bushore

Nevada County, rancher

Director - Alan Lauppe

Sacramento County, diversified farmer

Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition

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Northern California Water Association

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Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship (CURES)

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Sutter County -

Mark Quisenberry mquis@co.sutter.ca.us

Sacramento County -

Frank Carl carlf@saccounty.net

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Irrigated Lands Program 916-464-4611

www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/index.html



PNSSNS

SUBWATERSHED GROUP

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