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Letter from the President

By Tom Aguilar

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.

Our founding president, Kirk Scilacci announced in our previous newsletter his retirement from the Board of Directors as acting President. Although he continues to maintain some business in Placer County, his main operation is "The DLX," a cattle ranch in Oregon. Kirk spent many hours meeting with both state and county officials concerned with monitoring ag water quality, finding volunteers to fill Board of Director positions, and providing leadership for this subwatershed group. Thank you, Kirk for your tireless efforts.

As of January 1st, I stepped into Kirk's big shoes as President, along with Ed Sills as Vice President, Bonnie Ferreira as Treasurer, and Jim Gates as Secretary, Frank Correia as Placer Co. Rep, Alan Lauppe as Sacramento Co. Rep, and Gerald Bushore as Nevada Co. Rep. We intend to follow Kirk's motto: **Keep It Simple Stupid** and I add **Keep It Cheap (KISS n KIC)**.

Looking ahead I believe our biggest challenge is to maintain our current fees. As of this writing, our 2008-09 membership is 616. For the past three years membership has declined because some people think they should not have to pay for water testing. Others believe they are organic or don't use certain chemicals or don't farm in or around the tested areas, so it is of no use to be a member. (See page 3 for more details.) The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Reg. Wtr. Bd.) believes only 53% of farmers and ranchers in Placer, No. Sacramento, So. Sutter, and Nevada counties are participating in this program. Based on our average membership of 700, this means there is approximately another 700 not paying their fair share for state required agricultural water testing. Should we raise our fees? I think not. Instead, working closely with the Reg. Wtr. Bd., we submitted a "cleaned up" database with correct assessor parcel numbers in the required format. Using advanced computer technology, the Reg. Wtr. Bd. plans to superimpose our members' parcel numbers onto their maps and find those parcels that should be included in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP).

Besides keeping our fees low, another goal the Board of Directors explored is the idea of funding Best Management Practices (BMP) implementations for members. We sent a survey in the 2008-09 membership packets to gather information that would help us identify projects as well as provide background information to pursue funding sources. More than half of PNSSNS members responded! Thank you very much for your support. We also thank Placer County Supervisor Robert Weygandt for funding this newsletter.

We are considered to be "low risk" (relatively clean) subwatershed (see page 2) but we need to stick together to keep it "low risk." Tell your friends and neighbors to join us in keeping our waters clean and safe.≈

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Recent Subwatershed Test Results

By Claus Suverkropp, Larry Walker Associates (the water testing guy)

Monitoring has been conducted from 2005-2008 for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP or “the Ag Waiver”) at two sites in the PNSSNS subwatershed. Coon Creek was selected as a water body that best represented the diversity of agriculture in this watershed, and the two sites are located at Striplin Road (2005-2006) and Brewer Road (2007-2008). These sites were each sampled for physical parameters and conventional pollutants, metals, insecticides and herbicides, nutrients, *E. coli* bacteria, and toxicity in water and sediment.

The water quality in Coon Creek has turned out to be good for most parameters, with only a few problems requiring follow-up actions. The ILRP requires these actions when there are exceedances of water quality objectives. These exceedances may trigger simple notification of growers and land owners, or they may require development of formal management plans if there is more than one exceedance. In Coon Creek, there were single exceedances of water quality objectives for copper, thiobencarb, water flea toxicity, algae toxicity, and pH. There were two or more exceedances for *E. coli*, dissolved oxygen, and chlorpyrifos. The most frequent problem observed so far is for *E. coli*, which exceeded the objective about 65% of the time at the Striplin Road site.

Monitoring Results

Site	Exceedances	
Coon Creek at Brewer	E. coli	<i>bacteria</i>
	Copper	<i>metal</i>
	Thiobencarb	<i>pesticide</i>
	<i>Ceriodaphnia</i>	<i>toxicity</i>
	Algae	<i>toxicity</i>
	pH	<i>physical</i>
Coon Creek at Striplin	E. coli	<i>bacteria</i>
	Chlorpyrifos	<i>pesticide</i>
	DO	<i>physical</i>
	pH	<i>physical</i>

The SVWQC has developed a management plan to evaluate and address these problems and it has been approved by the Regional Water Board.

Two samples (out of 34 collected) have caused toxicity. In each case, the specific cause of the toxicity could not be identified, except to

2008 – 2009 Fee Schedule

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**

determine that it was *not* any of the pesticides or trace metals that were monitored. Pesticides that were detected in Coon Creek include the insecticides chlorpyrifos and diazinon, and several herbicides (diuron, prometon, simazine, and thiobencarb). Simazine is the most frequently detected pesticide. Only thiobencarb and chlorpyrifos have exceeded water quality objectives, but were not associated with any toxicity. Concentrations of the other detected pesticides were not high enough to cause toxicity and didn't exceed objectives.

Going forward, ILRP monitoring in the PNSSNS subwatershed will continue in Coon Creek and will follow the new ILRP requirements approved by the Water Board in 2008. Monitoring for 2009-2011 is being conducted monthly and will alternate between two years of “Core” monitoring with fewer parameters followed by one year of “Assessment” monitoring. Brewer Road will continue to be the primary representative site, with additional management plan monitoring downstream at Striplin Road (chlorpyrifos) and upstream at the DLX Ranch (*E. coli* bacteria) in 2009. Although sampling frequency has increased in 2009 and includes additional management plan sampling, the cost of monitoring will be lower by about 9% (compared to 2008). This is because “Core” monitoring requires fewer expensive analyses. Beyond 2009, future requirements may be affected by new monitoring results or by new 303d listings proposed in the PNSSNS subwatershed.

3rd Annual Meeting Held

On February 11th, Board President Tom Aguilar conducted the 3rd annual membership meeting held for the first time in the *evening* at the Placer County Water Agency in Auburn. Despite steady rains and sudden blizzard conditions in the foothills, there were not enough chairs to accommodate the crowd that showed up.

Claus Suverkropp, the water testing guy, described ag pollutants found in our test results; Cindy Fake and Roger Ingram, UC Coop. ext. Farm Advisors advised attendees on how to decrease the pollutants found; and the Reg. Wtr. Bd. Environmental Scientists Susan Fregien and Brett Stevens presented an ILRP overview and current concerns. This newsletter contains articles on all the materials presented. ≈



New Faces: New PNSSNS Board Vice President and Sutter Co. diversified organic farmer, Ed Sills speaks with Bruce Houdesheldt, SVQWC's recently hired Director of Regulatory Affairs. Not pictured are Susan Fregien and Brett Stevens, Environmental Scientists newly assigned to the ILRP by the Regional Water board.

Questions from our Members . . .

Answered by Susan Fregien and Brett Stevens, Regional Water Board

Q: I'm not getting any advantage of these water tests because I'm 30 miles down stream. Why should I pay for this testing?

A: The Regional Water Board has worked with the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition to select monitoring sites that represent the water quality effects of discharges from irrigated agriculture. The regional monitoring program for the PNSSNS does not include monitoring downstream of every grower because this is neither feasible nor necessary. If this monitoring identifies water quality issues, those issues will be addressed through regional implementation of appropriate management practices.

The alternative to a regional monitoring program is to monitor each grower's discharges (i.e., tail water return flows and storm water). This alternative would be much more cumbersome and expensive for growers to implement. As Coalition Group members, growers receive the required regulatory coverage and the Coalition performs the required monitoring, reporting, and management plan development. Growers are responsible for implementing management practices to prevent pollution or address identified water quality problems. This approach benefits Coalition members by allowing them to share the costs of meeting the ILRP requirements.

Q: My neighbors who should be members of PNSSNS refuse to sign up. Yet they have never been contacted by anyone for proof of discharge waiver. What is being done to enforce membership?

A: Regional Water Board staff works diligently to mail postcards to growers who may need regulatory coverage under the Conditional Waiver. If the postcard is ignored, the Executive Officer issues California Water Code section 13267 Orders (Orders) that require growers to inform the Regional Water Board about any potential irrigation discharges from their property and their current compliance status. Growers who do not respond to these Orders may face monetary penalties.

Regional Water Board staff is aware of the need for more outreach to non-participants in the PNSSNS. Significant outreach is planned for the second quarter 2009.

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

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Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Irrigated Lands Program 916-464-4611
www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/index.html



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