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Our mission is to support our agricultural growers and producers, assisting them with compliance in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program through information, education and resources for technical assistance to ensure good water quality throughout the area.

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, water districts and some who simply support self-monitoring to keep our waters clean.

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Letter from the President

By Tom Aguilar

This is the hardest letter I've ever had to write. For the past 8 years, the Board of Directors and I have been adamant in not raising our fees. We pursued every avenue to keep costs at a minimum. Two things occurred that make it impossible to maintain the same fee structure.

- On Sep. 19th the State Water Resources Control Board approved fee increase from 12¢ to 56¢ per irrigated acre, a 367% increase to administer the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP).
- Over the past 8 years, PNSSNS membership dropped from a high of 875 members to 559.

PNSSNS will owe \$77,000 in water monitoring costs in November. However, we cannot pay this bill until we collect 2011-12 dues. We estimate the total number of farmers and ranchers irrigating in the four counties at 1000+. If all farmers and ranchers were in compliance, we would have no problem paying the water monitoring costs at the same low fee structure.

We strongly believe that it is the Reg.Wtr.Bd.'s responsibility to enforce this program, and through the years, pressured them to do so. Recently, the Reg.Wtr.Bd. sent Notice of Violations to three landowners in Placer and Nevada counties for not responding to postcards and registered letters requesting their ILRP compliance status. Potential fines ranged from \$89,000 to \$93,000. In other subwatersheds, the Reg.Wtr.Bd. fines reached \$193,000 and a lien was put on the property. If you receive any communications from the Reg.Wtr. Bd. respond as soon as possible. Do NOT ignore it.

Some might say, "We all know neighbors, friends and family who should be in this program but have skated free, let's turn them in." The Board of Directors and I are reluctant to turn in non-compliers. Yet, other subwatershed groups with high rates of participation can keep costs reasonable by spreading costs over larger number of members. At this point, 559 PNSSNS members are footing the "ILRP compliance bill" for the four county area.

We are at a crossroads. To remain in compliance, we must increase fees this year (see page 2). To reduce fees, we must increase membership. As a matter of survival, please attend the PNSSNS membership meeting Wednesday, February 22, 2012. We will discuss key issues affecting our costs: new groundwater requirements, new ILRP requirements, cost reduction efforts and ILRP compliance enforcement. We will take a vote at our membership meeting on whether "turning in" non-compliers is the right thing to do or not. I hope to see you in February.~

Questions & Answers

By Bruce Houdesheldt, Director of Regulatory Affairs, SVWQC

Question: What is the State planning to do with the 56¢ per acre fee (increased from 12¢) approved Sep. 19th?

Answer: The short answer is “to pay for State and Reg. Wtr. Bd. salaries and benefits.”

In 2003 the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) recommended that the State Water Resources Control Board’s (SWRCB) operating costs be shifted from the General Fund and covered instead by fees imposed on water right holders and various water quality permit holders. Later that year Governor Gray Davis signed SB 1049 authorizing water rights fees and SB 923 authorizing water quality fees, including fees on parties participating under a waiver (that’s farmers and ranchers complying with the ILRP).

In 2011, as part of the larger budget negotiations with Governor Jerry Brown, there were serious discussions about maintaining the General Fund for the SWRCB Budget authorization. Those negotiations broke down with the deadline for putting the tax extension on the ballot.

As part of the ultimate budget package, the Legislature--largely along partisan lines with the new requirements for a simple-majority vote budget--approved the budget (SB 87) without the General Fund, thus forcing the SWRCB to adopt fees to support the program. Over the objection of the

SVWQC and many others, the SWRCB on September 19, 2011 adopted the new fee structure.

Question: Why is the state raising \$2.3 million instead of the \$1.7 million originally covered by the General Fund?

Answer: While the Legislature shifted the cost of State and Reg. Wtr. Bd. salaries -**\$1.7 million** - for the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) to those in the program, they also shifted \$600,000, a partial cost for Basin Planning and TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) to farmers and ranchers complying with the ILRP. The Basin Planning and TMDL have nothing to do with agriculture.

Thus, a total \$2.3 million was adopted over the objections of the SVWQC who believe that Proposition 26 approved by the voters last November, redefine these fees as “taxes” that require a 2/3rds vote to be enacted. The SVWQC is exploring alternatives and options to the State Fee increase.

Question: What happens when an exceedance occurs but there is no evidence ag is responsible, as the case with chlorpyrifos detected on May 17th at Coon Creek/Striplin Road? (see Page 3)

Answer: Typically just report it to the Reg. Wtr. Bd. and list it in the SVWQC Annual Monitoring Report. Separate from our regular monitoring requirements the Regional Board requires us to do compliance monitoring as part of the Chlorpyrifos /Diazinon TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) Basin Plan amendment, the results of which can help us make the case agriculture is protecting water quality. However, if there is a second exceedance within the next 3 years, it will trigger a Management Plan, requiring additional expensive chlorpyrifos tests. Chlorpyrifos is an insecticide that has limited non-agricultural use. In this case, there are no reported chlorpyrifos applications in Sutter or Placer counties during the April to May timeframe. If chlorpyrifos is applied without notifying the Ag Commissioner it costs every PNSSNS grower by requiring us to continue sampling.

Growers who use chlorpyrifos, or any product, need to make sure to follow the label and use the proper management practices when applying. Check with your county Agricultural Commissioner office if you have questions.≈

Thank you to the Placer
County Ag. Department for
newsletter postage.

**2011-2012
Fee Schedule**
Due before Dec. 31, 2011

Annual Dues\$100.00
PNSSNS Water Monitoring70¢ per acre
State Board Oversight Fee56¢ per acre
\$100 + PNSSNS Water Monitoring + State Board Oversight Fee = Total Membership Dues	

Fall/Winter Fertilization and Water Quality

By Cindy Fake, UC Cooperative Extension

Nitrogen is a key plant nutrient; however, it is very mobile in the soil in most fertilizer forms. N is easily moved down through the soil profile with rainfall or irrigation water, especially in sandy (decomposed granite) soils. Given the high rainfall and shallow soils in the foothills very little fall or winter-applied nitrogen will be captured by crop roots, most of which function at a very low level when soils are cold and wet. Plant roots take up N most readily when their needs are high, such as when plants are leafing out or growing rapidly.

Most fall and winter-applied N will be washed off with runoff water or leached through the soil profile and enter ground waters. This causes unnecessary expense to growers and impacts water quality. Nitrates are now the most common groundwater contaminant in California. Excess nitrogen in water can cause algal blooms, reduce dissolved oxygen levels, and lead to unacceptable pH changes, all of which are water quality parameters for which PNSSNS must test for at the Coon Creek water monitoring sites.

For most perennial crops, it is best to apply nitrogen fertilizers from March (or when rainfall diminishes) through mid-summer. It is important to match the plant's nitrogen needs with the fertilizer applications. Dividing up the needed fertilizer into three or more applications over the growing season maintains nitrogen in the root zone and contributes to the most effective use of nitrogen by the plant. This reduces grower costs and potential for contamination of surface or groundwater from leaching or runoff losses.

References and Resources

- UC IPM Pest Management Guidelines: Fertilizer and Water Quality guidelines
Citrus: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r107901211.html>
Lettuce: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r441311611.html>
Peach: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r602902211.html>
Tomato: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r783900711.html#PLANTING>
Walnut: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/C881/m881bcferttime.html> : N budget:
http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/C881/walnut_nitrogen_budget.pdf
UC Center for Water Resources. *Dynamics of Nitrogen Availability and Uptake*.
<http://ucanr.org/sites/wrc/pdfs/HIDynamics.pdf>

For more BMP info, call UC Cooperative Extension
Farm Advisors for Placer and Nevada Counties 530-889-7385~

Chlorpyrifos Exceedance Detected in PNSSNS Subwatershed

On May 17, 2011 chlorpyrifos exceedance was detected in Coon Creek at Striplin Road. When compared to the trigger limit of 0.015 µg/L, the exceedance of 0.021 µg/L is not considered extremely high. In fact, that concentration is not guaranteed to cause toxicity, but is definitely a concern. It is a clear legal exceedance of the Water Quality Objectives and a trigger. The previous sampling event on April 20 also detected chlorpyrifos at 0.014 µg/L, just below that trigger limit. While this is not an exceedance, it is a concern.

The Pesticide User Registrations from Placer and Sutter counties showed not one single application of chlorpyrifos pesticide reported between April 17 and May 17. However, chlorpyrifos is no longer available for retail sale, so it is unlikely that it originated in runoff from nearby residential areas. It is possible that agricultural use occurred without notification. Another possibility is that although rainfall was limited and irrigation minimal at the time of our sampling events, chlorpyrifos is moderately persistent and strongly adsorbs to soil particles, so runoff may have been sufficient to mobilize residual chlorpyrifos in erosion from agricultural fields.~

Treasurer's Report

**PNSSNS
Budget 2011-12
Financial Year Oct 1st to Sep 30th**

Expenses

Water Monitoring	\$61,000
SVWQC	\$ 5,960
State Oversight Fee	\$16,800

Program Expense	\$ 1,700
Office Expense	\$ 1,120
Communications	\$ 1,550

Emergency/Contingency \$ 2,000

Professional Services \$15,375

Taxes \$ 2,400

Total Expenses \$107,905

Income

Carryover \$15,000

Total Needed \$92,905

Membership	559
Irrigated Acres	30,000

The chart to the left summarizes 2011-12 expenses. Last year (2010-11) we collected \$49,599. To pay the 2011-12 the newly approved State Oversight Fee, assessment year water monitoring, and PNSSNS program expenses, fee collection must increase by 188%.

You will notice 3 line items on your invoice.

- Irrigated Acre Fee at 70¢ per acre goes towards the water monitoring bill.
- Annual Membership Fee at \$100 covers the remainder of the water monitoring and SVWQC. Any overage goes towards program expense.
- State Oversight Fee at 56¢ per acre passes directly to the Reg. Wtr. Bd.

On the one hand, the PNSSNS Board of Directors believes that agriculture must do its part to maintain clean waters. However, it is also important that the cost to comply with the state mandated Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) is reasonable. Please attend our annual membership meeting on Wednesday, February 22, 2012. Invitations will be sent to all members with time and location. More information regarding fees and our efforts to reduce costs will be presented. We will also discuss the status of the new ILRP requirements for surface and ground water.≈



Linda's Corner ...

I received phone calls from landowners who received a postcard from the Reg.Wtr.Bd. requesting status on their ILRP compliance. If they did not belong to a coalition (PNSSNS), then they would need to file for an individual waiver. The cost for a 200 or less acre property ranged from \$7000 to \$14,000 for initial set up, plan preparation, analytical costs, limited monitoring and annual reporting costs. If you need to be in compliance, fill out the "Application for Regional Water Board Approval to Join a Coalition" with \$50 and send to Reg.Wtr.Bd. as soon as possible.

You can download this form on
www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley.

We need to Raise \$92,905

We have 559 Members

We are 30,000 irrigated acres

State Oversight Fee:

30,000 acres x .56 \$16,800

Annual Membership Fee:

559 members x \$100 \$55,900

PNSSNS Irrigated Acre Fee:

30,000 x .70 \$21,000

Total Projected Income: \$93,700