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Watershed Connection

*A publication for members of the El Dorado Subwatershed Coalition
 A member of the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition*

Presidents Message

By Dedrian Kobervig

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 Organic Specialty
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Jana Rapetti
 At Large

Bob Akins
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Dear El Dorado County Agriculture Water Quality Management Corp. Members,

We have successfully submitted our first Irrigated Nitrogen Management Plan Summary Reports to the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition. We only had one member that did not turn in their summary report. We had a few corrections to make concerning harvest amounts (yield per acre was requested not total yield). Other than a few minor corrections, the process went rather smoothly for our first time. Congratulations on a job well done!

This will be an ongoing annual report, due every year. We have updated our website so that going forward you can complete the form online and submit it electronically, located under Forms (eldoradoagwater.org).

As of July 2021, we have 2,921.83 irrigated acres enrolled in the program, 323 parcels and 219 members.

Because of the added workload and time required to keep up with the increase in paperwork and data required of you and the coalition, the Board of Directors made the decision to hire Melissa Neal as a part time employee. With Melissa as an employee, we can set up regular office hours, so if you have any questions, Melissa can either talk to you by phone, email or in person. She has made herself a valuable asset to the coalition and is quickly learning all the nuances of the ILRP program. I feel very lucky to have her as a part of our coalition.

The Northern California Water Association, which enforces the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program in the Sacramento and the Northern California region, has finally realized that not all agriculture pursuits are detrimental to surface and underground water supplies. David J. Guy, President of the Northern California Water Association, has proposed that some irrigated pasture operations should be exempt from the program. As stated in his letter to the Central Valley Regional Board:

“The ILRP is now entering its third decade. As is documented by the research conducted by the University of California, Davis (UCD), monitoring data collected under the ILRP, and county Agricultural Commissioner’s Pesticide Use Reports collectively indicate that irrigated pastures in the Goose Lake watershed are of low risk to beneficial water.”

Ag. Water Quality Member Update

President's message (cont.)

"The adoption of the Goose Lake recommendations, quickly followed by similar recommendations, where research justifies, for irrigated pasture in the Upper Feather River Watershed, Pit River Basin, Western Shasta County and Sierra Foothills, has long been viewed by the Coalition as a needed revision to the WDR General Order."

What this means is that the Northern California Water Association is proposing to remove irrigated pasture from the program and that finally they are willing to look at the data from the last 30 years, that this program has been in existence, and for the first time consider removing acreage. We hope that they continue to look at the data and expand their exemptions for low threat crops, and geographical areas.

This will be my last year as president. Hopefully a current board member or a new board member will step forward to hold the position. With Melissa's continued exposure to the program and her growing knowledge of the program she will make the President's position a relatively easy one.

Treasurer's Report

By Carolyn Mansfield

Treasurer's Report Ending June 30, 2021

Income:

Membership Dues	\$29,474.91
Checkbook balance	\$2,068.78
Savings balance	\$60,533.39
Total:	\$62,602.17

Expenses:

Net Income:	\$-13,874.10
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Dry Farm VS Fallow

The question has been raised if dry farmed crops (e.g., winter wheat) need to be enrolled in the Irrigated Lands Program? Before raising this question with the Regional Board it would be good to know how many acres are dry farmed? How many landowner who dry farm are also Members with irrigated acreage?

Dry farm operations apply pesticides and nitrogen and their storm runoff could trigger exceedances. If these parcels are not enrolled we aren't capturing their management practices (e.g., sediment and erosion control) and are limited in making the case that actions of growers are protective of surface water and groundwater quality.

We know the Regional Board interprets duck clubs and some wildlife refuges as needing coverage under the ILRP. In most if not all cases they don't apply pesticides and/or only flood irrigate.

For more information or to provide information on your dry farming operation contact Melissa Neal,
mjneal16@gmail.com

Ag. Water Quality Member Update

Controlling Cost of Compliance

With Mother Nature presenting a different set of challenges for agriculture in 2021 than the pandemic did in 2020, there is the potential for some long overdue cost containment on the horizon. Both the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) have launched initiatives to look at the rising and in some cases duplicative regulatory costs borne by agriculture.

In the 2021 Budget proposal released in January, CDFA requested \$6 million one-time General Fund for regulatory alignment and efficiencies, including \$4 million in 2020-21 to engage a consultant to evaluate and implement the alignment of regulatory reporting activities across state agencies to reduce unnecessary burdens to farmers and ranchers in their efforts to meet regulatory compliance. Details can be found here [Impact Assessment and Alignment of Regulatory Reporting Requirements for Agriculture \(ca.gov\)](#).

In response to the nearly 700% increase in State Water Quality Fees (FY 20-21 Fee Schedule [ca.gov](#)) on irrigated lands in the last decade (12 cents an irrigated acre in 2010 - \$1.12 in 2020), the Fee Branch of the SWRCB has agreed to work with the Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR [final ca.gov](#)) Ad Hoc group to look at the 2013 recommendations to reduce the cost of compliance to identify new areas for cost efficiency. In 2013, the Irrigated Lands water quality fee was 56 cents an irrigated acre and the cost of groundwater quality elements of the WDRs for Irrigated Lands weren't yet known.

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA), representing the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (Coalition), is in discussions with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board staff about aligning surface water quality monitoring to reflect the limited exceedances of water quality demonstrated in the 15 years of monitoring results. If approved this could result in a \$200-300,000 cost reduction beginning in 2023.

Contact Bruce Houdesheldt, Director of Water Quality, Northern California Water Association at bruceh@norcalwater.org or (916) 952-1287.

Tightening the Nitrogen Cycle in Organic Agriculture:

How to meet crop nitrogen needs without adverse environmental impacts

This summarized article from the Feb/March edition of Organic Farmer was brought to our attention by a fellow member and is a good read that could add "evidence to the file" of our efforts to expand learning on the topic of best practices in nitrogen additions and our efforts to limit excess N pollution to groundwater, wetlands, rivers and streams in our region.

Before Haber and Bosch invented atmospheric nitrogen fixation, farmers used manure, compost, cover crops and crop rotations to keep their soils fertile. Farmers relied on biological processes to feed their crops, and limited nitrogen availability often compromised yields. Mineral N fertilizer revolutionized farming, bypassing microbial decomposition to directly feed the crop surplus levels of nitrogen. Virtually unlimited nitrogen availability produced drastically higher yields, but the excess N began polluting groundwater, rivers, wetlands and oceans.

The green revolution demonstrated agricultural crops' impressive yield potential and heightened consumers' quality expectations. Modern organic practices seek to minimize nitrogen pollution while attaining yield and crop quality metrics comparable to conventionally produced crop. Carbon-based organic materials provide initial protection against nitrate leaching when first applied; however, once microbes convert organic N to nitrate, it leaches just as easily. Over-applying quickly mineralizing organic fertilizer negates any environmental benefit provided by organic amendments.

By carefully managing organic fertilizer use and fostering a robust microbial community, growers can provide all the environmental benefits organic farming offers without compromising crop yield or quality. The full article can be found at our website: <http://eldoradoagwater.org/wp/index.php/news-and-events/newsletters/>



EL DORADO AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT CORP

PROTECTING OUR PRECIOUS RESOURCE

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IMPORTANT NOTICES

1. Irrigation & Nitrogen Management Summary Reports for the 2021 growing season will be asked for again in 2022.
2. An Irrigation & Nitrogen Management workshop will be scheduled for the fall. Look for details to come.
3. Keep track of your "Outreach", any articles, newsletters, trainings etc., you participate in for 2021.
4. This is a monitoring year for El Dorado's Coalition. Larry Walker & Associates, our water testing entity, is looking at all pesticides and contaminants that could potentially degrade our waters. Be vigilant on your good management practices.
5. If you are interested in serving on the Board please contact Melissa Neal.
6. Office Hours will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am - 3pm. Please contact Melissa Neal to make an appointment.

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