

SAC-VALLEY NEWS

SVWQC actions, accomplishments, and updates

1.1+ MILLION IRRIGATED ACRES

7300+ PARTICIPANTS

10 SUBWATERSHEDS

Second Agricultural Expert Panel Report Finalized

The [Second Statewide Agricultural Expert Panel Report](#) has been finalized. The charge of the Expert Panel was to 1) Review the recommendations from the First Agricultural Panel and best currently available information on nitrogen application and removal rates; 2) Identify critical data gaps in A/R ratio values (ratios) and A-R difference values (difference values); and 3) Provide expert advice to the State Water Board on the development, if appropriate, of multi-year A/R ratio target values and A-R difference values to inform the California Irrigated Lands Regulatory Programs (ILRP).

The recommendations recognize the Regional characteristics of agriculture in California, the work that has been done in the Central Valley to address nitrate discharges to groundwater and most importantly does not create a statewide precedential approach.

The State Water Resources Control Board is expected to hold a workshop on the recommendations by early next year.



Calling for Nominations – NorCal Water Leaders Program

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) Board of Directors is preparing for our next NorCal Water Leaders Program in 2027 and needs your assistance to make the program a success. Please nominate a water leader in your area by November 15, 2026.

The program's objective is to inspire and cultivate the next generation of water leaders in the Sacramento Valley with a deeper understanding of this region. Next year, the NorCal Water Leaders Program will be a seven-month program with half-day seminars at various locations throughout the Valley that each focus on important water issues affecting Northern California water supplies and water quality. The first seminar will be in January 2027, and the program will meet monthly through July 2027.

To nominate, please send an email to Venus Tennell at vtennell@norcalwater.org with your nominee's:

- name
- address
- phone number
- email address
- any other background information you would like us to know about you have made the nomination.

The latest in this issue:

SECOND AG EXPERT PANEL

NORCAL WATER LEADERS PROGRAM

JUNE AND JULY RESULTS

RENEWED: REDUCED MONITORING OPTION

REGIONAL BOARD UPDATE

TOUR OF NAPA/PUTAH CREEK

2026 PARTICIPANT LIST

MEMBER INFORMATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR INMP SELF-CERT

CDFA FREP CONFERENCE

June and July Toxicity Monitoring Results

The Coalition is happy to report that no toxicity exceedances were observed during June 2026 surface water monitoring events. Unfortunately, the Coalition's July 2026 toxicity monitoring identified three Hyalella water-column test failures at Freshwater Creek (Colusa Glenn), Lower Snake River (BYS), and Pine Creek (BYS). Survival rates were 75%, 5%, and 65%, respectively, with the Lower Snake River result indicating a particularly strong toxicity response. All three sites have active Pyrethroid Pesticide Management Plans. Bifenthrin was detected at Freshwater Creek and Lower Snake River at levels that did not trigger a pyrethroid exceedance, but likely contributed to the observed toxicities. Bifenthrin was non-detect at Pine Creek.

On the positive side, all Ceriodaphnia tests passed, as did the Selenastrum test conducted at Lower Snake River.

If you have questions about the surface water monitoring, please contact Bruce Houdesheldt (916-442-8333, bruceh@norcalwater.org).

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Annual Update

Every August the Executive Officer of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control provides the Regional Water Quality Control Board with an overview of the 19 programs administered by the Regional Board. The [25/26 Year End Report](#) focused on progress on environmental justice goals. In January thru March of each year, the program managers develop their annual work plans, which are approved by Executive Management by June. The Groundwater Quality Protection Program (GQP2), formerly known as the Non-15 program, not only applies to the Irrigated Lands Program, but to most of the dischargers (e.g., stormwater, dairy, food processors, wastewater treatments operations, etc.) administered by the Regional Board. In the future the GQP2 will cover the Nut Huller General Order. For a perspective, the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program consists of approximately 21,000 operations on 5 million irrigated acres in the Central Valley.

Renewed: Reduced Monitoring Option for El Dorado, Lake, and Napa/Putah Creek Subwatersheds

On June 19, 2026 the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board approved the Reduced Monitoring Option (RMO) Renewal Request for El Dorado, Lake, and Napa/Putah Creek Subwatersheds for another five-year period through 2031. The Renewal Requests were approved based on the following specific conditions in the Subwatersheds:

- There is a low threat of pesticide discharges from irrigated lands causing or contributing to a surface water quality exceedance or trend of degradation.
- The parameters associated with any existing management plans in the Subwatershed do not include toxicity, pesticides, copper, or nutrients.
- There is a low intensity of agricultural land use in the Subwatershed.

The RMO allows enrolled Subwatersheds to reduce the frequency of Assessment monitoring from once every three years to once every five years, resulting in significant cost savings. However, an exceedance of any pesticide, toxicity, copper, or nutrient water quality objective or trigger limit still requires follow-up monitoring. Any Management Plan eliminates the Subwatersheds eligibility to qualify.

El Dorado initially enrolled in the RMO in November 2015. Lake initially enrolled in February 2016. Napa/Putah Creek has been enrolled in December 2015. All three are currently conducting Assessment monitoring for the 2026 water year (ends September 30, 2026). The next Assessment monitoring will take place during the 2031 water year. By the end of November 2031, the Coalition must submit another renewal request for the three Subwatersheds to continue operating under the RMO.

To request a copy of the Renewal Requests or for more information on them, please contact Bruce Houdesheldt (916-442-8333, bruceh@norcalwater.org).

Welcome Serena Onate, New ILRP Coordinator in Lake County



Serena Onate is the new Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Coordinator for the Lake County Farm Bureau. A Lake County local, Serena has called the area home for more than 16 years. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems from UC Davis.

Serena has been with the Lake County Farm Bureau for more than two years, most recently serving as Executive Director. In her new role, she is committed to assisting growers with regulatory compliance while continuing to advocate for and support the local agricultural community. She also serves on several local committees dedicated to strengthening agriculture in Lake County.

The Coalition is excited to welcome Serena to this position. Her educational background in sustainable agriculture, combined with her passion for serving the local farming community, will help protect and promote the future of agriculture in Lake County.

Central Valley Regional Board Staff Tour Putah Creek

On Monday, July 14th, 2026, the Napa County Farm Bureau Putah Creek watershed members hosted staff from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board for a firsthand look at agriculture in the Napa Valley. Rather than talk about good stewardship in the abstract, SVWQC wanted the Water Board to see it: the working landscape, the people farming it, and the data documenting decades of care for the watershed.

The day started at Pope Valley Farm Center, where members walked staff through the land use patterns, membership base, and outreach work that shapes agriculture in this corner of Napa County. The group then drove out to the monitoring site on Pope Creek, upstream of Lake Berryessa, for a closer look at years of surface water data gathered there. The data is enough proof: no exceedances have been significant to trigger an action plan since the monitoring program began. The tour wrapped up at Somerston Estate Winery, where Director of Vineyard Operations and PCWSG member Jake Knobloch, spoke candidly about what it actually takes to farm responsibly in this watershed day to day.

Growers in Napa County have a deep commitment to stewardship and protecting the land, which is exactly why regulation doesn't make their practices more responsible, it simply adds the cost of documenting what they're already doing. What came through in every conversation was the weight of what Napa County growers already carry. Viticulture has faced mounting regulatory scrutiny, and growers describe the cumulative effect as "death by a thousand cuts."

Conversations like this one don't resolve in a single afternoon, and SVWQC isn't expecting the Water Board's thinking on the Putah Creek Subwatershed's role in the ILRP to shift overnight. What the tour did accomplish is a shared frame of reference, a set of specific sites, data, and people that both sides can point back to as this conversation continues. That's the foundation SVWQC intends to keep building on with Water Board staff in the months and years ahead.

2026 Participant List Submitted on July 31, 2026

The Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition submitted the 2026 Participant List on July 31, 2026. The Participant List is an annual requirement of all agricultural Coalition's Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) (except the California Rice Commission) and is an accounting of all active members, irrigated aces, and dropped members for the entire Coalition. The irrigated acreage reported in the Participant List is used to generate the Coalition's bill for the State Oversight fee, which is paid directly to the State Water Board at a per acre fee. The List is also used to inform enforcement actions by the Water Boards to dropped members, late reporters, and unenrolled landowners.

According to the 2025 Participant List, the Coalition comprises of **7293 participants**, encompassing **19,582 APNs** and **1,029,070 irrigated acres**. Acreage reported in the 2026 Participant List was down about 13,200 acres from 2025. Much of the lost acreage is due to sold parcels, parcels no longer being irrigated or commercial, and members who failed to pay their membership dues and were subsequently dropped.

As with past years, the 2026 Participant List demonstrated high overall reporting rates and continued engagement by members in all Subwatersheds. Please be sure to thank your Subwatershed staff for their thorough work, which helps builds an effective relationship with the Regional Board, allowing us to advance streamlining and other regulatory proposals to reduce Regional Board oversight.

Subwatershed	2026 Acreage
BYS	219,965.6
CGSP	270,497.6
Dixon/Solano	119,481.4
El Dorado	2,113.2
Lake County	10,690.7
Napa/Putah Creek	4,315.9
PNSSNS	27,896.4
SAWQA	96,904.5
STWEC	85,008.6
Yolo	192,196.0
Grand Total	1,029,070

Central Valley Water Board Settles Two ACL Cases

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board recently finalized two Administrative Civil Liability (ACL) settlements involving irrigated agricultural properties in San Joaquin County. In both cases, the landowners failed to obtain required regulatory coverage following December 20, 2024 directives, with a January 8, 2025 deadline. The Board initially proposed \$28,665 penalties in each case. Both landowners subsequently enrolled their properties in the San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition on January 29, 2026. The cases were settled for \$5,000 each, with the settlements citing compliance, settlement efforts, and the risks of contested proceedings as reasons for the reduced penalties.

The cases underscore the importance of maintaining required irrigated lands regulatory coverage and responding promptly to Water Board directives.



Coalition Member Information Hub



Continuing Education for the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Training Program

To remain eligible to self-certify INMP Worksheets, participants in the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Training Program must complete 3 hours of continuing education (CE) within the 3-year eligibility period. CDFA FREP has a list of courses that can be taken for credit at any time. Simply watch a selection of videos or listen to some podcasts that pique your interest. Once you have watched or listened to the material, use the post-test link to complete a short quiz. Passing the post-test is how you earn your continuing education credits. Once you pass your post-test, you will be sent a record of course completion. Records of course completion are sent out once a month.

A wide variety of topics are available in video and podcast form:

- Basic Fertilizer Chemistry and Vocabulary, Video (1 hour)
- Uniform Irrigation and Fertigation, Video (1 hour)
- Irrigation Management with Plant Stress, Podcast (0.5 hours)
- Water Losses from Agricultural Systems, Podcast (0.5 hours)
- AND MANY MORE!



**Scan to visit
CDFA FREP
Self-Study
Courses**



Registration is open for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) 34th Annual Nutrient Management Conference hosted by CDFA's Fertilizer and Research and Education Program (FREP) and Western Plant Health (WPH). This year's conference will be held at the Hilton Stockton in Stockton, CA, October 28-29, 2026, and includes an optional pre-conference tour of the Port of Stockton 1-4 p.m. October 27.

Each year, the Nutrient Management Conference brings together industry professionals and academic researchers to learn about and share the latest research and innovative practices related to fertilizing materials and irrigation management. This year's conference agenda includes presentations on irrigation and nutrient management in annual and perennial crops, cover crop adoption, potassium management in almond, irrigation scheduling, updates on outreach impacts of the Nitrogen and Irrigation Initiative, biostimulants and the role of silicon in plant nutrition. Panel discussions will focus on the outcomes from the Second Agricultural Expert Panel and addressing irrigation challenges across differing regions and cropping systems.

Upon registration, conference attendees may sign up for the pre-conference tour on October 27 (limited space available). To view the agenda, call for posters or register online, visit the conference website: www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/FREPConference. For more information, please contact FREP staff at frep@cdfa.ca.gov.



**Scan To
Register**

General Questions

sacvalleyinfo@gmail.com
www.svwqc.org

DIRECTORY

Bruce Houdesheldt,
Director of Water Quality
Email: bruceh@norcalwater.org
Phone: 916-442-8333

Chelsie Bryden,
Program Coordinator
Email: svwqccordinator@gmail.com
Phone: 916-778-0993

Central Valley Regional
Quality Control Board,
ILRP Division
Phone: 916-464-4611
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/